

Not Following Fables

2 Peter 1:16-21



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FOCAL Read Responsively 2 Peter 1:16-21^{KJV} For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. (17) **For he received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. (18) And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount. (19) We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: (20) Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation. (21) For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.**

Every year as we get closer to the two Christian holy days - Christmas and Resurrection Sunday - we notice that certain professors from certain universities begin to attack our faith. These *sincere* people, instead of properly using their time to research important things (like finding a cure for cancer, Alzheimer's, or some other terrible disease), waste their time and ours by coming up with ridiculous theories designed to discredit Jesus Christ or God's Holy Word. I know *why* they do this. The Scripture says:

1 Corinthians 2:14 But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of

God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

Unbelievers are *natural men*, and are absolutely unable to understand the things of God. They are spiritually dead. **God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship Him in Spirit and in truth (John 4:24)**. Those who have not accepted Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord do not possess the facilities to understand the things of God. These professors and doctors who attack God's Word do so because they are spiritually ignorant. Let me give you some examples.

A few years ago a certain "doctor" came out and said that he researched the time when Israel crossed the Red Sea, and discovered that, at that time in history, there was a *great drought* in the land. Because of this Israel was able to cross over the Red Sea as it were on *dry land*. This "doctor" then pointed out that this was no miracle, no subduing of nature by the hand of God, but a mere illusion. When Christians heard this they began to panic and be upset. Could it be true? Well, what if it was? You see, the Bible not only tells us that the Israelites crossed over the Red Sea on dry land, but also:

Exodus 14:28 And the waters returned, and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, and all the host of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them; there remained not so much as one of them.

If there *were* mere inches of water under the feet of the Israelites, then God used these *mere inches* to drown one of the greatest armies this world have ever seen. The water rolled over the Egyptian chariots and covered them, so that **there remained not so much as one of them**. Either way you look at it, this was a miracle.

Not too long ago another "doctor" with a string of degrees came out with another "cunningly devised fable". It seems that Jesus went walking, not on water, but on *ice*. Allegedly this so called scientist has discovered that there was an unusual *cold snap* on the day when Jesus walked on water. Because of this, the pseudo-scientist speculates, the Sea of Galilee actually *froze* hard enough for Jesus to walk on ice. The inference once more is that Christianity is a religion of fools, easily disprovable if put to the test. There's only two problems with this theory. First of all, the disciples were out on their fishing boat when this happened, and the Bible says:

Matthew 14:24 ... the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary.

The sea itself was "tossed with waves" - that doesn't sound to me like the Sea of Galilee was frozen over. This was a windy, rough sea that Jesus walked on. To make it more interesting, though, think about Peter. Peter himself stepped out of the boat and on to the water (**Matthew 14:28-31**). He even walked on that water until he looked down, realized what he was doing, then began to sink.

With one touch the Master returned Peter to the boat. If Jesus was walking on ice, Peter should have had no trouble at all. What we are seeing, dear Ones, is another instance of **cunningly devised fables** falling through once they are examined in the light of God.

By the way, the same Peter who walked on water along with Jesus Christ is the same Peter who, under the guidance of God the Holy Spirit, pens the words we are reading today.

FOCAL 2 Peter 1:16 For we have not followed cunningly devised¹ fables², when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty.

Though the world may create **cunningly devised fables** to explain away Christianity, we who know Jesus Christ as both Lord and Savior are careful not to do the same thing. **Dr. Voddie Baucham of Union University** made the statement:

"{The Bible} is a reliable collection of historical documents written down by eye witnesses during the lifetime of other eyewitnesses. They report to us supernatural events that took place in fulfillment of specific prophecies, and claim that their writings are

- 1 Perfect Passive Participle of G4679, σοφίζω, sophizō, *sof-id'-zo*, From G4680; to *render wise*; in a sinister acceptance, to *form* "sophisms", that is, *continue plausible error*: - cunningly devised, make wise.
- 2 G3454, μῦθος, *muthos, moo'-thos*, Perhaps from the same as G3453 (through the idea of *tuition*); a *tale*, that is, *fiction* ("myth"): - fable.

Divine rather than human in origin."³

The Christian faith is not based "a collection of sophisticated myths" or, as the King James puts it, **cunningly devised fables**. Some of the more liberal seminaries and colleges today have taken to calling Christianity a *myth*. Christianity is, by it's own witness, *not* a myth but a reality. This faith is based on *real* eyewitnesses who reported on what they saw *in the midst of other real eyewitnesses*. Let's examine these claims. First of all,

1. Christianity Is Based On Physical Eyewitness Accounts

FOCAL 2 Peter 1:16-18 For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses⁴ of his majesty. (17) For he received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. (18) And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount.

- 3 Southern Baptist Convention Pastor's Conference, Dr. Voddie Baucham, 06/19/2005, "Why I Choose To Believe The Bible". Quoted from spoken message.
- 4 G2030, ἐποπτης, *epoptēs, ep-op'-tace*, From G1909 and a presumed derivative of G3700; a *looker on*: - eye-witness.

Peter tells us that **we were eyewitnesses⁴ of His majesty**. Peter and the other Apostles actually walked and talked with Jesus, then reported on what they saw. God gave Israel (and Peter was an Israelite) a very strict Law on eyewitnesses. One person could not be an eyewitness to an event so that that event would hold up in a court of Law. The Bible says:


Deuteronomy 19:15 One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, or for any sin, in any sin that he sinneth: at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established.

The matter or evidence *could not be established* unless at least *two witnesses* rose up to testify. Jesus remarked on this when He said:

John 8:17 It is also written in your law, that the testimony of two men is true.

Two people had to witness a thing then be willing to testify to it in order for it to be ruled true. Before long a movie based on a book called **The DaVinci Code** will come out, and I expect to be overwhelmed with people asking me "is it true"? No, it's not! **Dan Brown**, the author of this book, is *not* a Christian, no more than the pseudo-professors are that I mentioned during the introduction of this sermon. Brown claims that Jesus Christ was a *mere mortal man* who took Mary Magdalene to be His wife. Brown goes on to tell us that Mary had a number of children by Jesus, and these

children are all over the world today, though predominantly in France. The problem with this hypothesis is that it is *not supported* by eyewitness accounts.

 Jesus was *born of a virgin*, in fulfillment of Bible prophecy. We read:

FOCAL 2 Peter 1:19 We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts ..

Isaiah 7:14-16 Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. (15) Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good. (16) For before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the land that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings.

Jesus Christ was *born of the virgin Mary*. There were a number of eyewitnesses to this event, but I'll just mention the main two people **Joseph and Mary (Matthew 1:23)**. The fact of the virgin birth of Christ was not only established by those who were *on the scene when He was born into this world*, but also established

by those who came afterwards. Jesus grew into manhood sinless, always choosing the good over the evil. Before Jesus was born Israel was taken into captivity, just as Isaiah prophesied. He said **The land that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings.** Jesus was born to a virgin in a time when Israel was in bondage to Rome.

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Jesus had twelve men around Him most of the time, though He kept *three men* by His side more than any others. The three disciples **Peter, James, and John** were part of an *inner circle* of men who saw some of the greatest miracles our Lord ever performed. Peter mentions one of the more notable events in:

FOCAL 2 Peter 1:17-18 {Jesus} received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. (18) And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount.

Peter is speaking of the event that we call **the Mount of Transfiguration**. Our Lord took Peter, James, and John to this Mountain and, while He was there, they saw and heard the following:

Matthew 17:2-5 {Jesus} was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the

sun, and his raiment was white as the light. (3) And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elijah talking with him. ... (5) While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.

As we stated before, it is a principle of God's Law that:

Matthew 18:16 ... in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.

Peter, James, and John became the witnesses - the three *trusted sources* - that saw Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration. They saw the Master *transfigured*, and heard God the Father say **this is My Beloved Son**. Many people saw the miracles of Jesus, and reported on those miracles. When John the Baptist was in prison he sent his disciples to ask Jesus if He was indeed the Messiah. Jesus told John's disciples:

Luke 7:22 ... Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is

preached.

The Bible is a Book of Witnesses, and each witness gives testimony with the next that **Jesus Christ is indeed the very real Messiah, very God of very God.**



The greatest of all miracles that Jesus performed was accomplished on **Resurrection Sunday.**

FOCAL 2 Peter 1:16 For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty.

Some people attack the resurrection of Jesus Christ by saying that He *never really died* on that Cross, that He merely swooned. This shows an ignorance of both the *Roman soldier's professionalism* as well as in *ancient burial customs*.

John 19:32-35 Then came the soldiers, and broke the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him. (33) But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they broke not his legs: (34) But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water. (35) And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true:

and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe.

Just as an executioner today would listen to the heart of a convicted person prior to pronouncing them dead, the ancient Roman soldier had his own method. These soldier, familiar with the ritualistic execution we call *crucifixion*, developed a method for checking to see if a person was dead or not. They took a spear and jammed it into the soft side of the crucified. If blood and water came out they knew that the victim was dead. The Bible tells us that there were *several witnesses* to the fact that **blood and water came out of Christ's side**. He was dead, not pretending, but dead! Only a fool would believe that a hardened Roman soldier could be fooled by what he saw on that hill called Calvary. Jesus was dead. Furthermore, He was removed from the Cross and wrapped in

John 19:39-40 ... a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pound weight. (40) Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury.

Jesus was dead, mummified in spices and linen, laid out in a tomb, and then the tomb was sealed and guarded. **Wilbur Smith** writes:

"We know more about the burial of the Lord Jesus than we know of the burial of any single character in

all of ancient history. We know infinitely more about His burial than we do the burial of any Old Testament character, of any king of Babylon, Pharaoh of Egypt, any philosopher of Greece, or triumphant Caesar. We know who took His body from the cross; we know something of the wrapping of the body in spices and burial clothes, we know the very tomb in which this body was placed, the name of the man who owned it, Joseph, of the town of Arimathaea. ... We have four records of this burial of our Lord, all of them in amazing agreement ...⁵

Jesus died - that was clearly seen. Did Jesus rise from the dead? If so, who were the witnesses to this event - and were they reliable witnesses? The Bible tells us:

1 Corinthians 15:3-8 For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; (4) And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures: (5) And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: (6) After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. (7) After that, he was seen of James; then of

all the apostles. (8) And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.

Peter saw Jesus, then *all twelve disciples* saw Him in His resurrected body. Next **over five hundred believers saw Jesus**, many of whom were still alive while Paul wrote these words. Jesus was seen by **James**, His stepbrother, who would one day lead the Church at Jerusalem. Jesus was seen again by **all the apostles**, and finally by **the Apostle Paul on Damascus Road**.

But were these *reliable witnesses*? They were not only reliable, but they were commissioned by Jesus Himself. We read:

Luke 24:46-48 {Jesus said} unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: (47) And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. (48) And ye are witnesses of these things.

These *are reliable witnesses* for they stood by their testimony through *extremely hazardous times*. Listen to the testimony of just one of these witnesses, the Apostle Paul:

⁵ Evidence that Demands a Verdict, volume 1, compiled by Josh McDowell, pgs 212-213

2 Corinthians 11:25-27 Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; (26) In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; (27) In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.

It is one thing to profess an untruth when it costs you nothing, and quite another thing to lie when that lie will lead to grievous suffering. Every witness to the resurrection of Jesus Christ suffered *terribly* to continue in their faith. Even the **Apostle John** who died a natural death was boiled in oil, imprisoned, made to work as slave labor, and exiled to the island of Patmos to die. Yet the Christian faith, rather than withering and dying, grew greater and greater. More and more people flocked to its teachings, believing on the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation. Why?

2. Christianity Is Based On Spiritual Eyewitness Accounts

In today's world too many Christians respond to "Why

do you believe in Jesus Christ as Savior?" with **because I tried it, and it works for me**. This by itself is not a good defense for our faith. The *alcoholic* has tried liquor, and it works for him. The *drug addict* has tried drugs and they work for him.

FOCAL 2 Peter 1:16, 19 For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. ... (19) **We have also a more sure word of prophecy**; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts...

What the Christian says is **we have a more sure Word of prophecy**. Our faith is built on physical eyewitness accounts as well as *spiritual* eyewitness accounts. The founders of our faith *physically saw Jesus* and *spiritually experienced Jesus*. We who believe first came to faith based on the testimony of Scripture. But we have *stayed in the faith* because God has come *into our lives* and changed them for the better. We can say along with believing Job:

Job 19:25-26 For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: (26) And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God:

How do we know this? We have tried Jesus, tested Jesus, proved Jesus, and continue to live in Jesus. Compare Christianity to a few of its pseudo-competitors. Compare Christianity to the Islamic religion. Not too long ago a Dutch newspaper carried cartoons making fun of Mohammad and Islam. What followed was some of the worst rioting in the Islamic communities you ever did see. When is the last time you saw Christians rise up and burn whole neighborhoods in protest of the fools who say that "Jesus walked on ice and not water". Yes, you may find the odd nut here or there who ignores the teachings of Christ and Christianity and kills in the name of religion. But you'll not see this type of foolishness in the Christian community. You'll never hear the pastor of Rock Hill Baptist Church telling you to get your weapons so we can storm Lexington. It won't happen. Those who are in Christ have Christ in them. Those who have accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior operate in accordance with His command to "love one another":

John 13:34-35 A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. (35) By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

We know an apple is an apple because of its shape, taste, and coloring. We know a grape to be a grape because of its size, taste, and grouping. No one confuses a grape with an apple (though I know Wal-Mart sells something

they call a *grapple*, which to me tastes like an apple with a funny name). A young child, if sent tottering to a fruit bowl, can distinguish between an apple and a grape. God has made the apple different from the grape, and we know the difference.

You can point to religion, and point to Christianity, and in seconds tell the difference between the two. You can point to a *religious person* and point to a *Christian* and, in mere moments, quickly distinguish between the two. Our faith is based on *spiritual eyewitness accounts*, a series of conversions by God in the life of individuals that has been going on for over two thousand years. A Christian is someone who has *personally experience God* in his or her life. A Christian is a person who has *called on Jesus Christ for salvation*, and has been saved. A Christian is a person who *knows* that this life is not all there is - there is a greater life beyond this one, a life that Jesus Christ secured for us on Calvary. I beg you, make sure you of where you're standing, dearly Beloved. Make sure you are standing, walking, and living your lives for Jesus Christ. A Christian is someone who has **heard this sure word of prophecy** preached and, because of that preaching, has surrendered their lives to Jesus Christ. The Christian has proved the text:

Romans 10:9-13 ... if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. (10) For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the

mouth confession is made unto salvation.
(11) For the Scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.

(12) For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. (13) For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

Have you called upon the Name of the Lord? Have you believed that Jesus Christ died for your sins, and rose again on the third day according to the Scripture? If so, you will one day stand with this Jesus in glory. I pray that you have made the right decision this Resurrection Sunday.

May God touch your hearts with these words.

