

Title: Fable, Fairytale, or Fact? (Part 1)

Passage: 2 Peter 1:16

Theme: It is certain that Christ will return; until then give yourselves to the prophetic Word of God

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{{Read Passage}}

As believers in t/absolutes of God's Word – the prophetic voice of God – we above all men ought to be about truth.

John 8:32 (freed by the truth)

John 17:17 (sanctified by the truth)

We are those who run hard after truth – not inventing or innovating it, but guarding and living the truth of God's Word.

There have always been those who accuse us of following after myths and fairy tales.

I don't believe in God because I don't believe in Mother Goose

--Clarence Darrow

"Religion is simply a community of people who gather together on a regular basis to reassure each other that it is okay to continue believing in absurdities. But for me it is far better to see the world as it really exists, rather than persist in delusion, no matter how comforting that may seem." Carl Sagan

In Christianity neither morality nor religion come into contact with reality at any point. - Friedrich Nietzsche

Religions are all alike - founded upon fables and mythologies.

(conflicting) Thomas Jefferson (cf. letter to danbury baptists)

Believing with you that religion is a matter which lies solely between man and his God;

We could quote the likes of Sam Harris and Richard Dawkins, but the point is made —> there were, are, and will be those who accuse we who pursue truth of believing in things that are not.

For the most part, those are quotes by atheists and agnostics. But what about those who call themselves "Xn"? What about the central truths of the faith – what about the promised return of Christ?

There are those who call themselves Xns who believe that there will neither be a second coming or a future resurrection of believers.

Hyper-Preterists.

Emergent Church guru Brian McLaren was quoted as saying ==>

"I believe all predictive prophecies were fulfilled in the destruction of the Jewish Temple in AD 70 under the Roman Empire."

What does that mean?

For McLaren it amounts to the denial of the supernatural.

Closed vs. open system.

Entire denominations can weigh in on this. For example, the UMC, in answering what they believe about the return of Christ, write ==>

[We] have varied interpretations and understandings of the second coming of Christ as referenced in scripture. While you would find many who take a literal approach to belief in the second coming, most United Methodists would be uncertain about the meaning of the second coming.

[umc.org]

Yet, historically, the CH of JC (remnant) has unswervingly upheld t/central truths of the faith as facts based on history. We don't divorce historical reality from faith.

Does it matter that God created the worlds ex nihilo? (Genesis myth?)
Does it matter that JC really rose from the dead? (spiritual reality imp.?)
Does it matter if heaven or hell are real? (some sort of allegory)
Does it matter if Christ is returning, really returning in power and glory?
(spiritualize these as meaning something else?)

Is there really going to be a future judgement? Is this essential?

Note the first word of the verse

For . . .

The word points out something important (looks forward) and it also points back in making a connection or a further elaboration on a prev. point.

What has Peter said to this point in his letter?

1. There are two words or phrases that relate to the context

THEREFORE, I will always be ready to remind you concerning THESE THINGS . . .

a. "Therefore" = conjunction διὸ (saw it earlier in verse 10)

Of course, it's one of those words that works like a bridge that connects streams of thought, generally pointing backwards.

(1) Here it refers back to what we saw earlier in vv. 3-11

We spent 10 weeks in those 9 vv. (0.9 vv. per wk. for you statisticians).

There was a lot to cover in those 9 vv.

And since Peter is talking about reminders & since we haven't been there in a month let's take a brief look at that passage by way of review.

I. Salvation's Sufficiency: The Believer's Inheritance (3-4)

A. An Inheritance Granted by Grace (3)

B. An Inheritance Gained Through a Knowledge of Christ (3)

C. An Inheritance Grounded in God's Call (3)

D. An Inheritance Guaranteed to Sanctify (4)

1. This gift includes precious and great promises (4)

a. Positively: We become partakers of the divine nature (4)

b. Negatively: We escape the world's corruption (4)

II. Salvation's Service: The Believer's Fruitfulness (5-9)

A. Seven Virtues of a Fruitful Life (5-7)

1. Moral Excellence (5)
2. Knowledge (5)
3. Self control (6)
4. Perseverance (6)
5. Godliness (6)
6. Brotherly kindness (7)
7. Love (7)

B. Staying Out of the Danger Zone (8-9)

- 1 A Positive Exhortation (v. 8)
2. A Negative Warning (v. 9)

III. Salvation's Surety: The Believer's Assurance (10-11)

A. Being Certain about Your Calling and Election

1. What does it mean? (v. 10)
2. How do we do it? (v. 10)
3. Why do we do it? (v. 10)
- 4.. What is the Goal? (v. 11)

THEREFORE, I will always be ready to remind you concerning these things . . .

. . . although you have come to know them and have been established in the truth which is present with you—

Even though you know these things, I'm going to keep on reminding you of them!

Why?

Back when we were immersed in this section of t/letter ==>

A. It Fuels Our Passion for the Supremacy of Christ (13)

**but I consider it right, as long as I am in this temporary dwelling,
to stir you up by way of reminder,**

By reminding them of the essential truths of the faith Peter will "stir them up"

Very picturesque word: διεγείρω = to arouse, stir up, to wake up.
Word that was used of a of a calm sea become stormy or turbulent,
something Peter would have been quite familiar with.

B. It is the Rightful Role of Shepherds (13)

**but I consider it right, as long as I am in this temporary dwelling,
to stir you up by way of reminder,**

δικαιος - just, righteous, proper.

This is the rightful role of pastor-elders who have as their duty preaching and teaching.

Acts 20:20 . . . I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you . . .

That's what we do - Doctrine matters.

Repetition and constant reinforcement are essential.

It was Chrysostom who said ==>

"My work is like that of a man who is trying to clean a piece of ground into which a muddy stream is constantly flowing."

C. The Time We Have to Live Our Lives is Brief and Final (13-15)

knowing that the removal of my dwelling is imminent, as also our Lord Jesus Christ made clear to me.

And I will also be diligent that at any time after my departure you may be able to remember these things.

All of this points to what we've said is really the central theme of the letter – verses 10-11

Is truth important? Do we really need to understand the Bible literally? BTIM – Grammatically, Historically? Understanding the words used, the context, what we call "authorial intent."

Really, for t/purposes of 1:16-21 ==>

ISSUE: Is JC really returning to judge the living and the dead and establish His KD?

Cf. 3:2-7. 2:1-3 — judgement /condemnation theme of vv. 4-9.

In these closing vv. of chapter 1 Peter is giving an initial defense against t/errors and accusations of t/false teachers of chapter 2.

Peter here is particularly establishing the factual basis of the faith (namely the future return of Christ in judgement and glory) as well as t/foundational role of prophetic Scripture.

Why is this important?

What was Peter's goal in vv. 12-15?

To remind us of t/essential truths of the faith.

To see that we who name X really know X. That we will endure in discipline & reflect t/fruit of faith (vv. 5-11) thus proving we are called and elect

Always goes back to the Gospel.

If we are to be sure of our C&E (v. 10) and it's alla bout

If there's no parousia and final judgement, then Peter's emphasis on pursuing Christ to receive an eternal reward collapses.

Now go back to verse 16 . . .

For we did not follow ingenious myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty.

Two main points ==>

I. An Eyewitness Testimony to the Factuality of the Faith (16-18)

II. An Enduring Testimony to the Factuality of the Faith (19-21)

When we refer to the central truths of Scripture, especially t/parousia of X and t/fulfillment of t/OT prophecies concerning Him . . .

Is it ==> Fable, Fairytale, or Fact?

That's the issue before us.

Peter begins in vv. 16 with ==>

I. An Eyewitness Testimony to the Factuality of the Faith (16-18)

He gives a negative followed by a positive.

A. Negatively: Christ's Return is not a Myth We Followed (16)

For we did not follow ingenious myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ . . .

1. Five times Peter uses the word "we" in this passage (once - v. 19; 2x - v. 18; 2x. here in v. 16)

He uses it in different ways. There's what we call "exclusive 'we'" and an "inclusive 'we'".

Exclusive "we" means "'we'" not you."

Inclusive "we" means "'we' you and me / us."

These first 2 uses of the word "we" are exclusive. He's talking about the Apostles who were much like the OT prophets.

For we did not follow ingenious myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ . . .

2. Some think that Peter has in mind the incarnation when he refers to "the power and coming" of Christ (John Calvin)

3. Most would say (I agree) Peter has in mind Christ's second coming

The use of "first coming" or "first advent" in relationship to Christ's incarnation wasn't generally used in the first century. That was later language.

We'd point to the context (which we've seen) – context is eschatological (cf. 3:4, 11-12).

Third - The word παρουσία. Used 24x, Majority of its uses refers to X's 2d coming. It's nowhere used of His 1st coming.

παρουσία. was a word that commonly referred to the official visit of a dignitary, such as a King. A King coming in power (hendiadys – powerful coming) fits Christ's second coming, not his first when he came as the humble servant.

He entered the world as a babe, in weakness.

He will come again in power and glory

Few bowed before Him in his incarnation.

All will bow before Him in his Return.

Philippians 2:5–11

5 Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus
[humility]

6 who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality
with God a thing to be grasped,

7 but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being
made in the likeness of men.

8 Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by
becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Yes, God the Father exalted Him in His resurrection and ascension.

Culmination of all that will be in his glorious return.

11 And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war. 12 His eyes are a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems; and He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself. 13 He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. 14 And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses. 15 From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. 16 And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS."

a. This is what the false teachers were denying

They weren't just denying it, they were accusing Peter and the rest of t/Apostles of following myths in their proclamation of it!

b. Peter says ==>

When we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, we weren't pursuing after ingenious myths. . .

(1) "Myths" transliterated from the Greek noun μύθος

(a) The word could be understood in different ways

It could refer to fables. Fables were stories that people knew weren't actually true, but they conveyed a timeless message.

That's how many religionists treat the Bible. They follow in the footsteps of Rudolph Bulltman t/20th c. German Lutheran theologian who referred "a blind acceptance of New Testament mythology . . ."

Bultmann practiced the "demythologizing of Scripture" [phrase directly related to him].

You reduce the miraculous in the Bible, what which is considered "myth" to a kernel of enduring truth. Treating the Bible like a book of fables.

To those who do that "myth" can be something positive and redeemable (though we would say to do this to the Bible isn't redeemable, it's damnable).

By the time Peter wrote this letter the word $\mu\upsilon\theta\omicron\varsigma$ was almost always used in a negative, derogatory way to denote fairytales & wishful thinking. Things that aren't true and have no redeeming value, but only serve to deceive.

Lots of example in that regard ==>

[Strabo, the Greek geographer-historian who condemned the idea of myth as some sort of aid to understanding history.](#)

The only place o/s of Peter's use here that we find the word is by Paul in the pastoral epistles. He uses it 4x.

* As something speculative that is contrary to faith that hinders the work of X (1 Tim. 1:4)

* As something that has nothing to do with godliness and therefore to be avoided (1 Tim. 4:7)

* As that which will resound from many pulpits in the latter days (2 Tim. 4:4).

* As that which is the mere voice of men, contrary to the truth of God (Tit. 1:14).

Peter adds the participle form of the verb $\sigma\omicron\phi\iota\zeta\omega$ meaning "ingenious" "cleverly devised" "deceitful" "crafty"

Idea is Dupery; chicanery; duplicity; trickery; sophistry.

Truth is ==> 2:3.

I. An Eyewitness Testimony to the Factuality of the Faith (16-18)

A. Negatively: Christ's Return is not a Myth We Followed (16)

B. Positively: Christ's Return is Prefigured in His Transfiguration Which we Witnessed (16-18)

... but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty.

$\epsilon\pi\omicron\pi\tau\eta\varsigma$ = spectator, eyewitness Only used here in the NT. Interestingly, t/corresponding word, $\epsilon\pi\omicron\pi\tau\epsilon\upsilon\omega$ is found only in 1 Peter 2:12, 3:2 (another evidence of common authorship).

Importance of eyewitness testimony. Foundational to our legal system.

1 Corinthians 15:3–8 3 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, 5 and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. 6 After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep; 7 then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles; 8 and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also.

1 John 1:1–3 1 What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life— 2 and the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us— 3 what we

have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.

4:14 We have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world.

1. Here the "we" refers to Peter, James, and John

a. What did they see and hear?

Verse 16 says ==>

... we were eyewitnesses of His majesty.

Verse 17 ==>

They saw Him

... [receive] honor and glory from God the Father
and heard ==>

... a voice was borne to Him by the Majestic Glory: "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

Where did this happen? Verse 18==>

And we heard this voice borne out of heaven when we were with Him in the holy mountain.

That account is recorded in the 3 synoptic Gospels . . . take a look at Matthew's account & how that fits into Peter's argument . . . next week.

μεγαλειότητος. (μεγαλειότης, η = grandeur, majesty || Noun: Feminine Genitive Singular). Only Peter and Luke use this rare NT word (Luke 9:43; Acts 19:27, both used of "the majesty of the divine.").