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I Believe

2 PETER 1:16-21

Introduction

1. Have you ever been accused of making something up, of telling a fanciful tale?
2. Perhaps as a child someone told you that you had quite the imagination.
3. I am a fan of the old Andy Griffith Show from the 1960's and the episode which began season three is a perfect illustration of where I am going with this morning's lesson.
 - a. The episode is titled, "Mr. McBeevee," and in it Opie, Andy's son talks about a new friend, Mr. McBeevee.
 - b. Opie's descriptions of Mr. McBeevee are rather difficult to believe.
 - c. According to Opie, Mr. McBeevee is a man who walks in the treetops, wears a silver hat, has twelve extra hands, blows smoke from his ears, and jingles when he walks.
 - d. At first, Andy and Barney laugh off this "friend" of Opie's until one day he comes back with a quarter and claims that it was given to him by Mr. McBeevee.
 - e. Andy tells Opie that the stories must come to an end and threatens to spank Opie if he persists.
 - f. However, Opie promises his dad that this friend truly exists.
 - g. Finally, Andy decides to go out to the area where Opie supposedly has seen his friend.
 - h. He just happens by the very same tree that Mr. McBeevee, a telephone lineman, is working in.
4. How do you know that Scripture is true?
5. Can we believe what we read or is Scripture a collection of fanciful tales?

6. Our faith is based upon the answer to these questions.
7. The Christians of Peter's day were being challenged on this very point.
8. There were those who accused them of following "myths," "cleverly devised tales," "invented stories" which they had just made up.
9. They were familiar with the Greek & Roman religions of their day which were saturated with myths of gods and goddesses, some dating back for centuries.
10. They questioned how the things which Peter and the rest of the apostles were saying could be any different?
11. How did Peter respond? How do we respond?

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I. "We Were Eyewitnesses"

A. THEY SAW IT WITH THEIR OWN EYES

"For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty." (2 Peter 1:16, NASB95)

1. Peter and the rest of the apostles were present when Jesus . . .
 - a. Caused the blind to see, the lame to walk, the lepers to be cleansed, and the deaf to hear (Matthew 11:5).
 - 1) At least one man had been blind since his birth (John 9:2), a fact acknowledged by his own parents.
 - 2) Another man by the Pool of Bethesda had been lame for 38 years (John 5:5). He too had been seen by many over the years.
 - b. Fed 4,000 people on one occasion and 5,000 on another
 - 1) They each had seen the small amount of food with which He started — five loaves and two fish for the 5,000, seven loaves for the 4,000.
 - 2) They also collected the leftovers into large baskets — twelve full

baskets for the 5,000, seven baskets for the 4,000.

c. Raised three who had died:

1) Daughter of Jairus, a synagogue official (Matthew 9:18-26; Mark 5:22-43; Luke 8:41-56).

a) Jesus only took three of the apostles with him — Peter, James and John.

b) However, the little girl and her parents would also serve as witnesses later when the story was circulated.

2) The son of the widow from Nain (Luke 7:11-17).

a) Not only did His disciples witness the event, but so did the “large crowd” accompanying Jesus (Luke 7:11) and the “sizeable crowd” in the funeral procession (Luke 7:12).

3) Lazarus, the brother of Martha and Mary (John 11).

a) There were many of the Jews who had come to be with Mary and witnessed what Jesus did (John 11:45).

d. Stilled the storm on Galilee (Matthew 8:23-27; Mark 4:36-41; Luke 8:22-25) and walked on the water (Matthew 14:22-33; Mark 6:45-51; John 6:15-21).

1) Following the stilling of the storm, they even asked, “What kind of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?” (Matthew 8:27).

2) When He got in the boat after having walked on the sea, Matthew tells us that “those who were in the boat worshiped Him, saying, “Your are certainly God’s Son!” (Matthew 14:33).

2. These men had seen displays of Jesus’ power on numerous occasions.

3. They were witnesses of the empty tomb and they saw the resurrected Christ — they even touched Him and ate with Him (Luke 24:39; John

20:20,27; Luke 24:41; John 21:13)

4. Thus, when Jesus spoke to them about His coming again, they had no reason to doubt Him.
5. They believed Him when He said that He would come “in His glory, and all the angels with Him” (Matthew 25:31).
6. The one incident to which Peter points took place on what he called “the holy mountain” in which he, James and John were privileged to see His glory (Matthew 17:1-5; Mark 9:2-8; Luke 9:28-36).

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“And He was transfigured before them; and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light.” (Matthew 17:2, NASB95)

7. Peter says “we were eyewitnesses of His majesty” (2 Peter 1:16).
8. It is because Peter, James and John had been “eyewitnesses” of Christ’s “majesty” that they can speak with certainty of His “coming.”
9. You and I can believe the words of the apostle Paul in his letter to the Christians in Thessalonica:

“For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.” (1 Thessalonians 4:16–17, NASB95)

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B. THEY HEARD IT WITH THEIR OWN EARS

“For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory, “This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased”— and we ourselves heard this utterance

made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.” (2 Peter 1:17–18, NASB95)

1. Not only did Peter, James and John see Jesus’ glory on the mountain, they heard the honor which God, “the Majestic Glory” pronounced on Him.
2. On that occasion, they also saw Moses and Elijah appear and begin talking with Jesus.
3. Peter suddenly spoke up and said, “Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, I will make three tabernacles here, one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah.”” (Matthew 17:4, NASB95)
4. While Peter was still speaking, “a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud” spoke (Matthew 17:5, ESV).
5. Peter distinctly remembered what God said, “This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased” (2 Peter 1:17b).
6. As he recounts here in his letter, “we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain” (2 Peter 1:18).
7. In other words, everything which Peter and the rest of the apostles had been teaching and preaching since the Lord commissioned them, they had both seen and heard.
8. What does that mean for us?
9. It means that we can trust their words which we have before us, because each of these men walked away from their livelihoods and spent the rest of their lives proclaiming these things.
10. They even died proclaiming them. Men do not suffer and die for things they have fabricated, especially where there is no material gain in this life.

[There is something else which this does . . .]

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II. It Makes The Words Of The Prophets Even More Certain

A. THEY DIDN'T MAKE THESE THINGS UP

“But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.” (2 Peter 1:20–21, NASB95)

1. Just as Peter and the rest of the apostles “not follow cleverly devised tales,” neither did the prophets of old make these things up.
2. Prophecy is not the product of the prophet, but the product of God through the Holy Spirit.
3. This is why the apostle Paul said “all Scripture is given by inspiration of God” (lit. “breathed out by God,” ESV).
4. What Peter is saying is that the prophecies which we have in the Old Testament did not originate in the human will of the prophet.
5. No, each prophet “spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit” (v. 21, ESV).
6. What does this mean for us?
7. It means that the Scriptures we have are trustworthy.
8. Even if we ask is the New Testament which we have today reliable? The answer is yes.
 - a. We have 5,686 ancient Greek N.T. manuscripts in existence today.
 - 1) There is less than 100 years between the originals and the earliest copies.
 - 2) When all of these copies are compared to one another, there is an internal consistency of 99.5%.
 - b. The nearest ancient text which compares to this is Homer’s Illiad, written in 900 B.C.
 - 1) There are only 643 copies.
 - 2) Five hundred years exists between the original and the earliest

copies.

3) Within these copies there is a 95% internal consistency.

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B. WE DO WELL TO PAY ATTENTION TO THEM

“So we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts.” (2 Peter 1:19, NASB95)

1. With this in mind, Peter tells us that we “do well to pay attention” to Scripture, even as we depend upon a lamp shining in a dark place.
2. The psalmist of old said of God’s Word, “your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” (Psalm 119:105, NASB95).
3. A little further down, in verse 130, he wrote, “The unfolding of Your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple” (Psalm 119:130, NASB95).
4. How long should you and I continue to read, study and meditate upon God’s Word?
5. Peter says we must do so “until the day dawns and the morning star arises in [our] hearts.”
 - a. It seems best to understand this day which will dawn as “the day of the Lord” (2 Peter 3:10), that final day when our Lord returns in His glory and all His angels with Him (Matthew 25:31).
 - b. “The morning star” who is to arise in our hearts is Christ, who in Revelation 22:16, declared Himself to be “the bright morning star.”
6. Right now, we have God’s Word to illumine our path, but when our Lord returns to claim His own, we will no longer need this Word.
7. Then we will have Him, in person, to fully shine into our hearts.

Conclusion

1. As we conclude our study this morning, I would like to ask you a question: "Do you believe, truly believe the words of this book which we call the Bible?"
2. Forty-six years ago Alton Howard penned the words to a hymn about such belief.

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3. He titled that hymn, "I Believe In Jesus." Listen to the words.

I believe in the One they called Jesus,
I believe He stilled storm Galilee;
I believe that He walked on the water,
And I believe that He's the answer for me.

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I believe in the words of the Bible,
How He made the poor blind man to see;
I believe that the deaf ears were opened,
And I believe He's made a difference in me.

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I believe that He spoke to dead Lazarus,
And He said, "Unbind and set free;"
I believe that He reigns up in heaven,
And I believe that He is coming again."

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Chorus

Yes, I believe in the One they called Jesus,
I believe He died on Mount Calvary;
And I believe that the tomb was found empty,
And I believe that He's the answer for me.

4. Do you believe? Have you responded to that belief?
5. Have you turned from your sin and confessed Him as your Lord and Savior?
6. Have you let Him wash your sins away? If not, why not today?