

## 2 Peter 1:16-21

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[ 0 : 00 ] I'm taking two, I'm, two Peter, chapter one. And so you are all looking forward to hearing Chris Roberts.! Yeah, you're four, not so much.

So verse 16 is my text. Yesterday was a great day, wasn't it? Yesterday I went to the rugby, and I went to France, and it's a cake, and I don't know what I mean.

I went to watch the rugby game with the people there, and the crowd, it was a great moment, a bit of normality. But just imagine, instead of having a source of distance in, the crowd was packed, the city was full, and the two teams lined up on the pitch on their position, the referee blows the whistle, but there's no ball.

There's no ball on the pitch. They just unlook at each other. And then somebody shouts out from the stands, from the crowd, never mind the ball, let's just go on with the game.

Never mind the ball, let's just go on with the game. It's ridiculous, isn't it? And yet that is the aspect that many people have to criticize. Christmas is the most celebrated festival in the world.

[ 1 : 34 ] Most people in the UK, in Ealing, will celebrate it one day, one day. Go back to Spacer O'Neill on Christmas Day, there's a few JWs hanging around, but nearly everyone else celebrates Christmas.

Many people are more to be offended if you say to them this time, maybe you're not a Christian. Many people think, well, all this stuff about angels and shepherds and wise men and the virgin birth is just a bit hard to believe.

Do you have to believe that stuff? Can't you just get on with celebrating Christmas? Surely it's just a myth. It's a fable or a fairy story.

Something made up like someone else's family doing. Never mind the ball, let's just get on with the game. I know those are a tad more sophisticated, aren't they?

They don't want to say it's not true. But they do something like this. What matters is not whether or not it really happened, but what it means.

[ 2 : 39 ] That's liberal Christianity. What matters is not whether or not it really happened, but what it means. So the story is a myth in a technical term. It's a bit like Eusuf's Feebles.

And to ask, did it really happen, or you're just missing the point. So for example, if we say all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy.

That's true, isn't it? But nobody ever thinks, well, who was Jack? And what kind of work did Jack do? I mean, it's a myth, isn't it?

That statement, if you take it literally, it's to miss the point. It has a meaning, and the facts don't really matter. It's what it means, not the fact that it actually happened.

That's the whole thing. And there are lots of people who speak and think like that about Jesus. About Christmas. How do we know Jesus really existed?

[ 3 : 38 ] Some people are stupid enough to say that he didn't exist. Even though all the evidence clearly shows that he did. There are others that say, well, how do we be sure about the story of Jesus?

The man behind the myth. He's lost to us, isn't he? And what matters is what he stands for, the pre-day. And that wind of war just built the game.

But Peter wants to insist this Christmas time that you cannot do that with Christianity. You can do it with other religions if you want, but you can't do it with Christianity.

Because Christianity is not rooted in philosophy, it's not rooted in teaching, but in actual fact, something that took place in space and time and history. He says, look at verse 16 of 2 to 21.

For we did not follow clearly devised myths. We made known to you the power and the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. But we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.

[ 4 : 43 ] So you can have no more, you can have no, you can no more have Christianity without Christ than you can have Christianity without all. And the only Christ that we know is the Christ of the Bible.

The Christ of apostolic testimony. The Christ who was appointed to by the Old Testament prophets. The Christ who supernaturally came into this world.

But what you often find, well you will find as you read the Christmas narratives, the birth of Jesus narratives in the Gospels. You find this little phrase, that he came according to the Scriptures. According to the Scriptures. The Christ revealed in the New Testament came according to the Scriptures. The rest of this, did he really come to the world?

Did he really come miraculously conceived by the Virgin Mary? Or was his birth announced by angels, the shepherds and Bethlehem? Did the wise men really come to eat sparing gifts?

[ 5 : 43 ] Or is it an urban legend? Or perhaps you've got a sneaking suspicion that all this supernatural stuff is an embarrassment made up by the church on the late date?

We're watching The Crown. I don't know whether you are. It's about the Queen. It's not great, to be honest. But there's been controversy, isn't there, this week? I don't know whether you've seen it in the news.

That people are believing that what they're seeing in the drama of The Crown is reality. So they want to punch from the front of every episode that this is based on facts, but there's obviously a kind of dramatic interpretation.

And in other Gospels like that, it's the New Testament like that. Did the New Testament come into existence as a result of a long line of Chinese whispers, of someone filling in the gaps?

And the facts, well, they just got lost in the way. And maybe what we have, what you have in your lap, is it maybe, well, it's more fiction than fact.

[ 6 : 49 ] But Peter says, no, not all. Peter insists, this is fact, not fiction. That we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to the power and the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We were our witnesses of his majesty. And so when you're going to call the court of law, I think you still do this. You put your hand on a Bible, and you say, don't you?

You say after me, I swear by Almighty God to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Well, that's what Peter is doing in verse 16. He's putting his hand on the Bible, he's putting his hand on the Old Testament Scriptures, and he's saying this is the truth, I swear by Almighty God, that this is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the gospel truth.

So I'm going to be sure of those. Two reasons. Two reasons why you need to take it seriously this morning, why it's our fairy story, or a fable.

And reason is in verse 1. He says, we, that's the apostles, we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. I love the way he puts it here.

[ 8 : 01 ] Now, he's a majesty. That is from Jesus' age. He's from a town that wasn't even on a map. He's born from a house with parents, he's got a teenage mom.

He's this tiny little baby. And yet Peter describes him as majesty. That's what the word Christ means. So I'll show you the name of his title. He is the Christ.

He is God's anointed ruler. He's God's universal king. He's the one who's promised in Psalm 2, and throughout the Old Testament Scriptures. And what kind of king was he?

Well, Solomon describes kingship in his book, Ecclesiastes. And Solomon says this, he says, where the word of a king is, there is power. It's a brilliant definition.

Where the word of a king is, there is power. There's authority. And so in other words, in other words, that is how you know that you're in the presence of a king.

[ 9 : 02 ] There's power there. There's authority there. And Peter says, we saw that with our own eyes. It's our queen, majesty queen Elizabeth II, her powers are curtailed, not them.

She is a constitutional monarch. She has no real power, or authority. She deserves that respect. But unlike her princesses, Queen Elizabeth I, her name is, if you go on the wrong side of her, she only has to say, off with his head, and your head would leave your shoulders.

Elizabeth I was an absolute monarch. And that's what Solomon in Ecclesiastes is describing. He says, if you want to see kingship, if you want to see majesty, this is what it looks like.

He says, where the word of a king is, there is power, and there is authority. And Peter is saying, in 2 Peter 1.16, that is why we've never been to solve.

I still love the narrow knives. So do yourself a favour, this Christmas time. Take Mark's Gospel. I think we've got some copies on the way out.

[10:18] It's the shortest of the four Gospels. It's actually Peter's preaching. Mark wrote down Peter's preaching. And what you see, particularly in Mark's Gospel, is you see that Jesus had authority over all the ancient enemies of the human race.

All those things that threaten destroy us. All those things that make life a misery for you. Sin, and selfishness, and sickness, and death, and demons.

The threatening forces of the environment. And you read the Gospels, all four accounts, and what you find in the Iberness account of the Apostles, is that Jesus only had sin with you. And instantly the sick are healed.

And instantly the sins are forgiven. And instantly the demons are cast out. The dead are raised. And even the wind and the waves are begging. That's why I think it's really comforting, isn't it, in 2020, to know that with the threatening forces of our environment, with climate change, psychos, fires, with a global pandemic, there is one who has authority.

And there is one who has absolute authority over these things. And we saw it, Peter says. There's one occasion in Peter's life that he'll never forget as long as he lives.

[11:38] It was when they were on the sacred mountain, on the mountain of transfiguration. And he refers to that in ways of 1780. He says, just for a moment, it was as if God lifted the veil.

And we saw the glory of who Jesus Christ was. And we saw Jesus revealed in all his glory and majesty. And they hear the voice, and he said, this is my beloved son.

We were there, he just said. We heard that voice with our own eyes. So you better believe us. So I imagine, it's not objective.

You see, are these criminal witnesses? After all, they're Galileans, aren't they? Except for genius. They were all friends of Jesus.

They're all from the safe, neck of the woods. But, well, yeah. How better. How better does anyone say? If you want to know me, if you want to know the kind of person I am, who's the best person to ask?

[12:48] Should you ask someone, please ask a mile or two, because they haven't met me, is I the best person to ask what I'm like? No, you ask my wife, don't you? You ask my kids, they're not here.

It's like, they're up to this. It's like, they're early. But you ask my children, they grew up in my home. And then, Dad, you ask my wife, I've been married to them.

20 years. As if you want to know me, you ask the people who are closest to me, don't you? Who share my life with me. Well, these men, they lived with Jesus night and day for three years and more.

James, who was Jesus' brother, he shared the same womb as Jesus. The doctrine of the perpetual virginity of Mary, it's not in the Bible, is it?

Mary and Joseph had other children by natural means. James was one of the Lord's brothers, says in the Gospel. They probably shared the same bedroom growing up in a small peasant town in Lazareth.

[13:53] They shared the same tithes. And yet, one could say of the other, James chapter 2, verse 1, he is the Lord of glory. I'd never say that with my brother.

He's the Lord of glory, he said his brother. John was the disciple that Jesus loved, didn't he? That when he came into this world, Jesus turned upon himself an authentic human experience.

He chose the 12 to be with him. Why? Now, it wasn't because he went around in the medieval, so I didn't know, daft like that. One of the reasons is theologically, isn't it?

So, we know there were 12 tribes of Israel, and we know that the 12 apostles are the fulfillment of that. But it's interesting that Mark, that isn't the reason that Mark gave. Why did Jesus choose the 12 disciples?

It says that he chose the 12 to be with him. It's a really brilliant expression. That the Lord Jesus Christ, the incarnate son of God, needed friendship.

[15:06] He needed companionship. He needed people around him. And in the circle of the 12 apostles who lived with him day back, there were three. There were three who he was particularly close with, three special friends.

We took them everywhere, Peter, James, and John. And even in that inner circle of the three, there is one of his best friends. John. The disciple whom Jesus loved.

And so do you know what his best friend said? The man who knew him better than anyone else. He says this, we beheld his glory. The glory of the one and only.

The God and the Father. Full of grace and truth. But only you say, yeah, but of course they're out to convert us, aren't they?

They've got a vested interest in the story. They believe it themselves and they're trying to get us to believe it. And of course they are. Of course they are.

[16:06] Would you believe, would you listen to somebody who didn't believe their own message? Would you buy something from a salesman who didn't believe in his own product?

Of course he would. Of course they're trying to contribute to you. And Peter's testimony is all the more convincing. Because if you look at the context, he knows he's not to die. He's in his late 60s. Jesus has warned him, at the end of your life, in John's gospel, Peter, when you're old, somebody will grab you to your death. They will grab you to your death against your will.

And so now Peter talks. And he's saying, I'm going to remind you of these facts. Because as long as I'm in this tent, he knows that as he gets older he feels that life is so fragile.

His body is failing. He knows that the air is pouring near. And one day somebody will grab hold of him and take him to a vital death. Peter will not die a peaceful death in his bad old age.

[17:12] In fact, we know from history, don't we, that he was crucified upside down. And that is what happened. Would you die? Would you be prepared to die for a fairy story?

Or the apostles, Simon Peter, crucified upside down. Andrew crucified. Matthew died by the sword. Paul be had it. John died in exile.

James, the brother of Jesus, come to death. Philip crucified. Simon crucified. Thaddeus killed by arrows. James, the son of Alphaeus, crucified. Thomas speared.

Bartholomew crucified. James, the son of Zebra, be killed by the sword. Would you go to a martyr's grave for something that you knew wasn't true?

Something that was made up, a myth or a fable? A fairy story? That's reason number one, to believe the Christmas story.

[18:12] The apostles are all died for their hate. Here's reason number two, that'll end this like that. We have the prophetic word, warfully confirmed, confirmed.

To which you will do well to pay attention as the lamp shining in the dark place. Until the day dawns and the morning star rise in your hearts. You see, the coming of Jesus into the world is not only attested by the apostles' testimony, the eyewitness accounts, but it's confirmed by the Old Testament prophecies.

You might not be into reading very much, and people are always saying that I don't read, it's nonsense. But maybe you don't want to read the Bible for Christmas, you're not interested in reading a gospel, you're not much of a reader.

So let me suggest this to you, why don't you watch or listen to handle society? Why don't we do that? We should do that, shouldn't we? We should all watch it on YouTube, same time with Zoom. Watch each other watch, it'd be great, so it should be nice. We could do that, couldn't we? Because what happens in the story is so helpful and so important. It's that as you read it, as you hear it, you have prophecy after prophecy after prophecy on James, Jesus Christ.

[19:32] Prophecy, every promise all fulfilled in Jesus. So as you know, there are at least 322 essay of prophecies.

322, what do they tell you? They tell you what Messiah was coming into the world. They tell you how he was going to be born. They tell you how he would grow.

They tell you what he's going to say. They tell you how he's going to sit. They tell you what he's going to do. They tell you how he would die. You've even got the details for how many coins are going to be used to betray him.

Do you know the maths? The maths. The mathematical compound probability, which I think means likely.

the mathematical compound probability of those 322 prophecies being fulfilled in one man in one moment of time is astronomical.

[20:37] I did the maths, I read this, let me give it to you. The likelihood of all those prophecies being fulfilled in one man is 1 over 84 with 100 cegos after it.

I don't even know what that means. I couldn't tell you. I couldn't even write it. 1 over 84 with 100 cegos. In other words, it does happen every day.

Now, I'm not a gambling man. But I would say if you're not a believer and if you've never checked this out for yourself, then the odds are very much against it.

You are taking quite a gamble. I think that's quite important. I think people often say to us it's too much on words about my faith in Jesus Christ. It's too much on gamblers.

It's exactly the other way around. Do you really want to take that risk? So here are these two witnesses, the apostles and the prophets.

[ 21 : 40 ] And so here is where you meet Jesus today. You're not on a mountain. Where do you meet Jesus today? In the Bible. This book is all about it. The old test of points towards is coming and the new test of points back is coming.

Do you see what Peter says in verse 19? And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed to which you will through wild pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place until the day doors and the morning star rise in your hearts.

So I'm going to invite you to do that to pay attention to what the Bible says about Jesus. Don't you find it interesting that Peter is so excited about the Bible?

He's been up on a mountain. He has heard God speak. He's seen Jesus transfigured before his very eyes and you would think he constantly says oh there's nothing ever like that.

Nothing atop that. Surely if I didn't experience if I could get in the time capsule and go back to that moment I would see for myself what that made me I believe.

[ 22 : 56 ] If only God would speak to me with an audible voice I might believe. That's why some of you may be a lot Christian here. You're waiting for some experiencing.

You're waiting for God to open up for heavens and speak to you in an audible voice who's already dead. It's already happened. Do you see what Peter is saying?

He's saying you have something more sure than that in the Bible. Mountaintop experiences they can be explained away they can be interpreted differently but here in the Bible you have God's interpretation of who Jesus is.

and they don't clearly divide myths that are unfolding and it's the story of God and his redemption from Genesis to Revelation.

They don't gladly have made up fictitious anecdotes. This is the word of God of our Jesus. Here's the funny one. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man that men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Lord.

[ 24 : 09 ] And so listen to this. The Bible is not man's words about God. I hear that sometimes. It's not that. It's what a lot of people think.

It's what a lot of churches think. It's human beings speculating what God is like. And human beings wrote down there, thoughts. And so we have the Bible. But the Bible is not man's words about God. It is God's words to man about Jesus. And so you would better pay attention this morning. It's like a light shining in a dark sky until the day dawns.

Isn't that a brilliant description? And so the Bible does not pretend to all the answers to all your questions. You mustn't think that. light, but it's like a lamp that shines in a dark face.

You go camping and you've got everything you need, you think. And so you arrive, it's kind of late afternoon, you get a tent up, it takes you hours. And by the time you get a tent up, it's beginning to get dark.

[ 25 : 17 ] And you need a torch. torch. And then you realise that the one thing that someone hasn't packed is a torch and you haven't brought it. And you need a torch. Now, will the torch, if you brought it, illuminate the whole of the campsite?

Yeah, I wonder would it. Meat. However good the torch is, it wouldn't illuminate the whole of the campsite. But what will the torch do? Well, it will stop you trimming all the cords, won't it?

And it will get you to the toilet block and it will see you from the corner of the cliff or down the mine shaft. And God's word is like that. God's word is a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path.

And it won't answer all your questions. But it is a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path. And so until the day dawns you need a torch. When Jesus returns, we don't need a Bible anymore. We'll have him. But for now, the world is a dark place. I knew what I preachers say recently, it's been dusk, but the darkness is coming.

[ 26 : 29 ] It's been dusk up till now, but the darkness is coming. I think you can feel it counting on our country, it's going darker and darker in the UK. But however dark it gets, remember this, that Jesus is the morning star that shines in the night sky just before the dawn breaks.

He's the root of the offspring of David and the bright morning stars. And so however dark it gets, you keep your eyes on Jesus, and you put your trust in Jesus and he will keep you safe. When he comes again, the book of Revelation tells us what the city will not need the sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God will give it light. the lamp is his lamp. There'll be no more light, and there'll be no need of the light of the lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light, and they will reign forever and ever. So all of this begs the question, does it? How can you and I be sure that I will live and reign with them forever? why did he come? Why did Jesus lay aside his glory and come into this world? [ 27 : 44 ] I think there's a clue in verse 1 of chapter 2. Peter, they're wrongs about false teachers. How do you recognise a false teacher? I would say, you recognise a false teacher, it's not by what they say, it's by what they don't say.

Do you see how he describes them? He describes them, does me, that they deny the Lord who taught them.

They deny the Master who taught them. Not the Lord who taught them. They don't deny that. And they don't deny the Master who taught them that Jesus is a great teacher.

They don't deny that Jesus is a great teacher who has some good things to say to the human reason. No one denies that. The circle on the mountain. If we all lived by the circle on the mountain it would be different wouldn't it?

The problem is you and I can't. No, these people do not deny the Lord who taught them. People speak like that to me, about Jesus.

[ 28 : 53 ] They save him, the good Master, or the great teacher, for they never call him senior. They never call him redeemer.

These false teachers recognize them not by what they say, but by what they don't say. They don't talk about the cross, and they don't talk about the cost of salvation. They don't talk about Jesus laying down his life for us.

They don't talk about those things. children come to you with wide innocent eyes, and they deny all knowledge of the pen scribble on the wall of the bedroom.

And when they do that, you know two things. You know that there are scribbles on the wall of the bedroom, and you know it's them and did it. And the same with false teachers, they protest too much, they deny the Lord and war.

That's what makes Christianity unique, it makes it different from every other world religion. Because it doesn't really matter whether Buddha or Confucius or Mohammed lived, whether they ever existed, it matters what they taught.

[ 30 : 10 ] But Christianity is rooted in history. And it is about what Jesus' action did entirely time and space. There was a man, the God man, who gave his life as a ransom to pay for our sins, and he is the Lord who bought us.

Not the Lord who taught us, but the Lord who bought us. Do you understand that? No one could follow the teachings of Jesus. Christmas is not about God giving you some good advice, giving you some tips on how to improve the world.

Everybody did by the teachings of Jesus, but nobody lives by it. Everyone sees in Jesus the perfect life and the perfect example, but you try to follow that example. You can't do it.

He didn't come to give you a philosophy or a morality. He came to lay out his life. As a ransom for many, that's why he came supernaturally into this world.

One of the joys of living in London is the joy of hearing sirens. A little village where I grew up in, if there was a siren, everything would come out of their house, the world would stop if you hear a siren.

[ 31 : 29 ] But in London, it's one little thing. So you know what it's like, don't you, when the blue lights are flashing and the sirens are going, and the emergency vehicles come rushing past, the ambulance, the fire engine, the police car.

They come blaring along, flying along, and the lights turns around. They come screeching hot. They don't do it. Well, that's going to get out of the way, don't you, because there's an emergency.

And we know that the emergency vehicles, they don't keep to the laws of the world. They don't go down and say, what's a yellow line, sir? What did you park it there for?

We don't say that. We know that when there's somebody in trouble, they come and they go through the natural barriers. They break the laws in order to get to the spot where someone is in trouble.

And that's what the Bible tells you and I about Christmas. That the Lord Jesus came, and he came supernaturally into his world.

[ 32 : 41 ] He overrides the natural laws, so to speak. He came supernaturally. That's why when you read the Gospels there's this great outburst of the miraculous.

Of course there was. There's a great outburst of the demonic because he came to destroy the works of the devil. He came to rescue us.

And Christianity is unashamedly a rescue religion. He came down to earth from heaven who is God and Lord of all.

Let's pray. Amen. Amen.