

2 Peter 1:16

Authorized King James Version (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.

Analysis

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. Peter now defends apostolic testimony's reliability against false teachers who dismissed it as myth. "We have not followed" (ou exakolouthēsantes, οὐ ἐξακολουθήσαντες) means "we did not pursue" or "invent." "Cunningly devised fables" (sesophismenois mythois, σεσοφισμένοις μύθοις) denotes cleverly crafted myths or legends—sophisticated fiction, not crude superstition.

Peter contrasts apostolic proclamation of "the power and coming" (tēn dynamin kai parousian, τὴν δύναμιν καὶ παρουσίαν) of Christ with mythology. Parousia (παρουσία) means "presence" or "coming," often referring to Christ's second advent but here encompassing both incarnation and return. "Power" (dynamis) indicates effective authority demonstrated in miracles, resurrection, and future judgment. Together these terms proclaim Christ's comprehensive lordship over history.

The authentication is eyewitness testimony: "but were eyewitnesses of his majesty" (eroptai genēthentes tēs ekeinou megaleiotētos, ἐρόπται γενηθέντες τῆς ἐκείνου μεγαλειότητος). Eroptai (ἐρόπται) denotes those initiated into highest mystery religion secrets or legal witnesses observing events directly. Peter claims direct observation of Christ's "majesty" (megaleiotēs, μεγαλειότης), grandeur or

magnificence. This points to the Transfiguration (vv. 17-18), where Peter, James, and John witnessed Christ's glory unveiled.

Historical Context

In the Greco-Roman world, mythoi (myths) were religious narratives about gods and heroes, valued for moral or entertainment purposes but generally not considered literal history. Philosophers like Plato used myths allegorically; skeptics dismissed them as fictions. Sophisticated critics might view Christian proclamation of a crucified-and-risen Jewish carpenter as God incarnate as merely another myth among many.

Mystery religions popular in the Roman Empire offered salvation through secret knowledge and ritual participation in deity myths (Isis and Osiris, Dionysus, Mithras). These involved symbolic deaths and rebirths, mystical experiences, and claims to divine encounter. Christianity faced accusations of being simply another mystery cult. Peter sharply distinguishes apostolic testimony from such myths: the apostles didn't invent stories but witnessed historical events—Jesus' life, death, resurrection, and glorification.

The emphasis on eyewitness testimony (cf. Luke 1:2; John 1:14; Acts 1:21-22; 1 John 1:1-3) grounds Christian faith in verifiable history, not timeless myths or subjective experiences. This became crucial for the church's self-understanding as rooted in historical revelation, not philosophical speculation or mystical enlightenment.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How does the historical grounding of Christian faith strengthen your confidence when feelings fluctuate or doubts arise?
2. What difference does it make whether the gospel is historical fact versus inspiring myth or moral teaching?
3. How can churches better communicate both the historical reliability and theological significance of biblical events?

Interlinear Text

Οὐ	γὰρ	σεσοφισμένοις	μύθοις	ἔξακολουθήσαντες			
not	For	cunningly devised	fables	followed			
G3756	G1063	G4679	G3454	G1811			
ἐγνωρίσαμεν		ὑμῖν	τὴν	τοῦ	κυρίου	ἡμῶν	Ἰησοῦ
when we made known		unto you	G3588	G3588	Lord	of our	Jesus
G1107		G5213			G2962	G2257	G2424
Χριστοῦ	δύναμιν	καὶ	παρουσίαν	ἀλλ'	ἐπόπται		
Christ	the power	and	coming	but	eyewitnesses		
G5547	G1411	G2532	G3952	G235	G2030		
γενηθέντες		τῆς	ἐκείνου	μεγαλειότητος			
were		G3588	of his	majesty			
G1096			G1565	G3168			

Additional Cross-References

1 John 4:14 (Witness): And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.

John 1:14 (Creation): And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

1 Timothy 1:4 (Parallel theme): Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do.

1 Corinthians 2:4 (Parallel theme): And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power:

1 Timothy 4:7 (Parallel theme): But refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself rather unto godliness.

Ephesians 4:14 (Parallel theme): That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

1 Corinthians 1:17 (Creation): For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.

Revelation 1:7 (Parallel theme): Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.

Titus 1:14 (Parallel theme): Not giving heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men, that turn from the truth.

Matthew 28:18 (References Jesus): And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.