

Truth or Tradition – Week 4 – Not a Fable – Bible Study Helps

Title: Not a Fable: The Eyewitness Truth of Christ's Resurrection

Sermon Summary:

This powerful Easter message confronts the difference between cunningly devised fables and the eyewitness testimony of Jesus Christ's resurrection. It challenges believers to reject the traditions and entertainment of the world—from Santa Claus to the Easter Bunny to evolution—and embrace the historical reality that Jesus Christ died, was buried, and rose again on the third day. Drawing heavily from 2 Peter 1:16 and Matthew 28, the sermon emphasizes that the disciples were not following myths but were eyewitnesses of Christ's majesty. The message calls people to face the truth about their sin, reject the fables that distract from eternal realities, and trust Christ for salvation before it's too late. With urgency befitting the last days, the pastor pleads with both the unsaved to be saved and believers to live with passion for the gospel, knowing Christ could return at any moment.

Key Points:

- The disciples who wrote the New Testament were eyewitnesses, not followers of fables or myths
- In the last days, people will turn their ears from truth and embrace fables instead
- Our culture is filled with cunningly devised fables: Santa Claus, Easter Bunny, Tooth Fairy, evolution, and the lie that all religions lead to heaven
- Parents often have double standards, sinning while forbidding their children to do the same
- Common fables include: sin is not that bad, hell is not real, and there are no consequences for disobedience
- The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the greatest event in human history and is supported by eyewitness testimony
- Over 500 people saw the resurrected Christ, most of whom were still alive when Paul wrote 1 Corinthians 15
- Religious leaders bribed Roman soldiers to spread the lie that disciples stole Jesus' body
- Believers must face the truth, set no wicked thing before their eyes, and live with urgency
- Today is the day of salvation—tomorrow may be too late as Christ could return at any moment

Scripture Reference:

- Matthew 28:1-20 (the resurrection account and Great Commission)
- 2 Peter 1:12-16 (not following cunningly devised fables but eyewitnesses of His majesty)
- 1 John 1:1-4 (that which we have seen, heard, and handled)

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- 1 Timothy 1:3-4 (charge some to teach no other doctrine and give no heed to fables)
- 1 Timothy 4:6-7 (refuse profane and old wives' fables)
- 2 Timothy 4:1-4 (preach the word; they will turn from truth to fables)
- Titus 1:10-14 (not giving heed to Jewish fables)
- 1 Corinthians 15:1-8, 51-58 (the gospel, resurrection appearances, and future resurrection)
- Psalm 26:3 (walking in God's truth)
- Psalm 101:3 (setting no wicked thing before our eyes)
- John 14:6 (Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life)

Stories:

- The pastor's personal testimony of leaving a secure job with good retirement to become a full-time pastor, which people thought was crazy
- The account of Brother Loren preaching the gospel publicly near Buehler's grocery store with signs, being a modern-day prophet
- An atheist's testimony acknowledging that Christians who believe in hell and don't share the gospel must hate people
- The pastor's recurring childhood dream of Santa Claus coming through the front door
- A recent video from Switzerland showing people in a festival asking for Lucifer to come
- The progression photos of a woman on meth, showing physical deterioration
- The Roman soldiers at Jesus' tomb being bribed by religious leaders to lie about the resurrection
- Mary Magdalene and the other Mary discovering the empty tomb and encountering the angel
- The pastor's personal salvation experience when God was "passing by" his life during a church service

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Discipleship Questions

How do the traditions we practice in our lives—whether religious or cultural—either draw us closer to biblical truth or pull us away from it?

The apostles were eyewitnesses, not followers of fables. How does the historical reliability of eyewitness testimony strengthen or challenge your faith in the resurrection?

The sermon suggests that many people prefer entertaining fables over uncomfortable truths. In what areas of your life might you be avoiding the truth that God wants you to face?

How does the comparison between Santa Claus and Jesus Christ reveal the ways our culture has distorted the character and holiness of God?

Parents often hold double standards, allowing themselves behaviors they forbid their children. How does hypocrisy in Christian living undermine the gospel witness in families?

What does it mean practically to set no wicked thing before your eyes in an age of constant digital entertainment and media consumption?

The religious leaders knew the truth about the resurrection but chose to circulate lies and pay bribes. What does this reveal about the human heart's resistance to surrendering to Christ?

How should the reality that Jesus could return at any moment—possibly today—change the way you prioritize your time, relationships, and witness?

The atheist quoted in the sermon said it would be hateful to believe people are going to hell and not tell them. Does this challenge or convict you about your evangelism efforts?

When Jesus passes by your life offering salvation and transformation, what fears or attachments most often cause you to hesitate rather than fully surrender to Him?

Small Group Guide: "Not a Fable"

Based on Matthew 28 & 2 Peter 1:16

Opening Prayer & Icebreaker

Icebreaker Question: What is one tradition from your childhood that you now realize was based on fiction or fables? How did you feel when you discovered the truth?

Key Scripture Passages

- Matthew 28:1-20
- 2 Peter 1:12-16
- 1 John 1:1-4
- 1 Corinthians 15:1-8, 51-58

Main Points Summary

1. **Defining a Fable:** Understanding what the Bible means by "cunningly devised fables" versus truth
2. **Finding the Fables:** Recognizing the lies our culture teaches and accepts
3. **Obeying the Truth:** Responding to Jesus Christ, who is the way, the truth, and the life

Discussion Questions

Understanding the Message

1. **Read 2 Peter 1:16.** What does Peter mean when he says "we have not followed cunningly devised fables"? Why was this distinction so important to him?
2. The sermon listed several modern "fables" (Santa, Easter Bunny, evolution, "all roads lead to heaven"). Which of these surprised you or challenged your thinking? Why?
3. **Read 1 John 1:1-3.** What does John emphasize about his relationship with Jesus? Why is eyewitness testimony so important to the Christian faith?

Personal Reflection

4. "People would rather have fables than the truth." Why do you think people prefer comfortable lies over difficult truths? Can you think of an area in your own life where you've avoided facing truth?
5. **Read Psalm 101:3.** David said, "I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes." How does this contrast with how most people (including Christians) consume media and entertainment today? What would change if you applied this verse literally?
6. Parents often have different standards for themselves than for their children. How does this hypocrisy affect:
 - Our witness to our children?
 - Our personal walk with God?
 - The next generation's view of Christianity?

Applying the Truth

7. **Read Matthew 28:18-20.** Jesus commanded His disciples to "go and teach all nations." Why do you think Christians are often more comfortable talking about sports, movies, and other "fables" than sharing the gospel?
8. The atheist quoted in the sermon asked, "How much do you have to hate somebody to believe hell is real and not tell them the truth?" How does this challenge your approach to evangelism?
9. **Read 1 Corinthians 15:51-58.** Paul says Jesus could return at any moment. If you truly believed Jesus might return today, what would you do differently:
 - In the next hour?
 - This week?
 - With your relationships?

Going Deeper

10. The resurrection is "not a fable" but historical fact witnessed by over 500 people. Why is the physical, bodily resurrection of Jesus so essential to Christianity? What falls apart if it's just a nice story?
11. **Read John 14:6.** Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man comes to the Father but by me." How do you respond when someone says this is too narrow or exclusive?
12. The closing hymn asked, "Pass me not, O gentle Savior." Have you ever felt Jesus "passing by" your life, giving you an opportunity to respond? What did you do?

Key Takeaways

- The Bible is not a collection of fables but true accounts written by eyewitnesses of Jesus Christ

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- Our culture is saturated with "cunningly devised fables" that distract from eternal truth
- Jesus Christ is the only way to salvation—all other paths are lies
- The resurrection happened in real history and changes everything
- We must face the truth about our lives and get right with God
- Believers should live with urgency, knowing Jesus could return at any moment

Practical Applications

This Week's Challenge

Choose ONE of the following to put into practice:

1. **Media Fast:** For one week, eliminate one form of entertainment (TV, social media, video games) and replace that time with Bible reading and prayer. Journal what God shows you.
2. **Truth Inventory:** List the "fables" you've been accepting in your life (comfortable lies, excuses, entertainment that conflicts with biblical values). Confess them to God and commit to change.
3. **Gospel Boldness:** Share the gospel with at least one person this week. Carry gospel tracts with you. Pray for opportunities and courage.
4. **Family Honesty:** If you're a parent, have an honest conversation with your children about any inconsistencies between what you teach them and how you live. Model repentance.
5. **Resurrection Study:** Read all four Gospel accounts of the resurrection (Matthew 28, Mark 16, Luke 24, John 20-21). Write down what stands out to you about the eyewitness testimonies.

Accountability Questions

- What specific lie or "fable" has God convicted you about?
- What truth from God's Word do you need to obey this week?
- Who is one person you will share the gospel with this week?
- What will you change about your media consumption or entertainment choices?

Prayer Focus

- **Confession:** Ask God to reveal any areas where you've preferred fables over truth
- **Salvation:** Pray for unsaved friends and family members by name
- **Boldness:** Ask for courage to share the gospel without fear

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- **Purity:** Pray for wisdom to guard your eyes and mind from ungodly influences
- **Urgency:** Pray for the church to live with the reality that Jesus is coming soon

Closing Scripture

1 Corinthians 15:57-58

"But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

Additional Resources

- Read the entire book of 1 John this week (5 short chapters)
- Study the historical evidence for the resurrection
- Memorize John 14:6 as a group
- Share testimonies next week of how God worked through your obedience

Leader Tip: This sermon challenges cultural norms and personal comfort zones. Create a safe space for honest conversation, but don't let the group avoid difficult truths. The goal is transformation, not just information.

5-Day Devotional: Truth Over Fables

Day 1: Eyewitnesses of His Majesty

Reading: 2 Peter 1:12-21

Devotional: Peter's passionate declaration—"we have not followed cunningly devised fables"—reminds us that Christianity stands on historical truth, not mythology. The disciples didn't follow clever stories; they witnessed Jesus Christ with their own eyes, touched Him with their hands, and watched Him conquer death. In a world saturated with entertainment and distraction, we must anchor our faith in the reality of the resurrection. Today, consider what "fables" compete for your attention—endless scrolling, entertainment, or cultural myths that promise fulfillment. The eyewitnesses risked everything, even death, because they knew the truth. Their testimony, preserved in Scripture, invites you to encounter the same living Christ. Will you set aside the fables and pursue the Truth who sets you free?

Day 2: The Stone Was Rolled Away

Reading: Matthew 28:1-15

Devotional: An earthquake shook the earth. An angel descended and rolled away the stone. Roman soldiers became as dead men. Yet religious leaders chose to circulate lies rather than face the truth. This passage reveals humanity's desperate resistance to God's reality. The tomb was empty—undeniable evidence that Jesus conquered death—yet some chose bribery and deception over surrender. How often do we react similarly? When confronted with God's truth about our sin, our need for salvation, or His call on our lives, do we make excuses or create our own narratives? The rolled-away stone wasn't to let Jesus out; it was to let witnesses in. The resurrection demands a response. You cannot remain neutral. Today, face the empty tomb honestly. What truth about Jesus are you avoiding? The stone is rolled away—look inside?

Day 3: No Other Way

Reading: John 14:1-14

Devotional: "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me." Jesus' exclusive claim offends our pluralistic culture, which prefers the fable that all roads lead to heaven. But truth, by definition, is exclusive. If you want to reach Philadelphia, you cannot take just any road—you must take the one that goes there. Jesus isn't one option among many; He is THE way. This isn't narrow-mindedness; it's reality. God Himself became man because humanity had no other path to salvation. In the garden, Jesus prayed for another way—if one existed, the Father would have provided it. But there was no other way. Today, examine whether you've diluted the gospel to make it more palatable. Are you presenting Jesus as a helpful addition or as the only Savior? Eternal destinies hang in the balance. Speak the truth in love: Jesus alone saves.

Day 4: Set No Wicked Thing Before Your Eyes

Reading: Psalm 101:1-8

Devotional: David's resolve—"I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes"—stands in stark contrast to modern Christian living. We lock our doors against strangers but invite the world's corruption into our homes through screens. We protect our children from certain influences while consuming entertainment that glorifies sin. This isn't legalism; it's wisdom. What you behold shapes who you become. If parents watch content they'd forbid their children to see, they've embraced a fable: that adults can indulge in sin without consequence. But Scripture knows no double standard. Sin defiles regardless of age. Today, honestly evaluate what you allow before your eyes. Does your media consumption align with Philippians 4:8—whatever is true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report? The world offers endless fables for entertainment. Choose instead to set God's lovingkindness before your eyes and walk in His truth.

Day 5: Pass Me Not, O Gentle Savior

Reading: 1 Corinthians 15:1-8, 51-58

Devotional: Jesus is passing by your life today. The gospel Paul preached—Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again—isn't religious tradition but historical fact witnessed by over five hundred people. This truth changes everything. Because He lives, death has lost its sting. Because He conquered the grave, we have victory. But this requires a response. The hymn's plea—"pass me not by"—expresses the urgency of salvation. Tomorrow isn't promised. The trumpet could sound today. If you've heard the gospel and delayed, you're gambling with eternity. If you're saved, are you living like it? Are you passionately sharing this life-saving truth or hiding your light? The resurrection demands we abandon fables—comfortable lies about sin, salvation, and eternity—and embrace the truth. Today, surrender completely. Forsake all and follow Him. Tell someone about Jesus. Live like He's coming back today—because He might.

"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." - 1 Corinthians 15:58