

NOW WHAT? Back to the Basics

DOCTRINE – Part 1

INTRODUCTION

We have learned that as soon as we trust Christ we are thrust into a hostile environment. It is true that we live in a culture that is opposed to Christ, and it is true that Satan and his demons would love to destroy us; but the greatest battle is the battle within. We are in a war. We have a mission: to search and destroy sin – within. How are we going to survive the combat? How will stand and stay strong?

The first part of the answer to that question is found in the word Truth (or Doctrine). Jesus and the New Testament especially emphasise the importance of Truth. As Jesus so forthrightly proclaimed, “I am the way, the truth and the life; no man comes to the father but by me” (John 14:6). Indeed, in the same encounter with Pilate Jesus said this: “The reason I was born and came into the world is to testify to the Truth. Everyone on the side of Truth listens to me” (John 18:37).

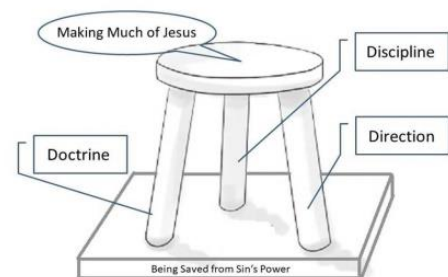
God is a God of truth, so truth is vitally important. To know God is to know the truth. To reject God is to believe a lie. Paul wrote to the Ephesian Christians, these words: “*Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth. . .*” (Ephesians 6:14, ESV). Truth acts like the Roman Soldier’s belt in many ways. Truth gives stability: Just as the soldier’s belt was used to stabilize their clothing, so Truth stabilizes us in our daily living. Truth gives strength. Truth gives support. What is truth?

WHAT TRUTH IS NOT!

Let me suggest to you some things that Truth is not. Truth is not:

- a. Truth is not what works. Some people might argue that 2 men can raise a child better than a conflict-ridden heterosexual couple. That might work, but that is not True. Two people may live together without being married and seem quite happy. Co-habitation might work but it’s not Truth.

Now What?



- b. Truth is not what feels right. Personal feelings are misleading. It may feel right, but it may also not be True.
- c. Truth is not whatever you want it to be. There is no such thing as “truth for you; and truth for me.” It might work to keep the peace and keep everyone tolerant and happy, but it’s not true Truth.
- d. Truth is not the majority opinion. Most Germans believed Hitler was right in the 30s and 40s. But they were clearly wrong. Truth is not based on majority vote.

Jesus gives us clear teaching on what is Truth. Turn with me to the Gospel of John, chapter 7.

EXPOSITION OF JOHN 7-8:

CONTEXT

Jesus attended one of the great Jewish celebrations called the Feast of Booths. It was also called Tabernacles. It was celebrated in September or October. It is called the “Feast of Booths” because people lived in leafy shelters to remember God’s faithfulness to Israel during her journey in the wilderness. It was also a time of celebration and thanksgiving for the harvest (Exodus 23:16; 34:22; Leviticus 23:33–43; Numbers 29:12–39; Deuteronomy 16:13–17; Nehemiah 8:13–18; and John 7:2).

THE THREE POINTS OF JESUS

As Jesus attended this event He took the opportunity to teach three main points:

1. You can know truth from error only by obeying God. (*“If anyone’s will is to do God’s will, he will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority.”* (John 7:17, ESV)). Notice this unique way of knowing Truth. It must start with wanting to do God’s will. This tells me that the acquisition of true Truth is not so much a matter of the intellect but a matter of the will.
2. Only Believers are indwelt with Truth. (*“On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’ ”* (John 7:37–38, ESV)). John followed through to teach us that these “rivers of living water” referred to the Holy Spirit – the Holy Spirit of Truth. (*“And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither*

sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.” (John 14:16–17, ESV).

3. Discernment of right and wrong comes from following Jesus. (*“Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”*” (John 8:12, ESV)). *“Jesus professed to be . . . the genuine light by which truth and falsehood could be distinguished and by which direction could be established.”*¹

THE RESULTS OF THE SERMON

What was the outcome? John records: *“As he was saying these things, many believed in him”* (John 8:30, ESV).

THE DISCIPLESHIP FOLLOW-UP

What Jesus says next is profound. Note:

“So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”” (John 8:31–32, ESV)

Jesus did something that many of us fail to do. Surely, He would provide warm words of encouragement and welcome into the Kingdom of God? Surely, He would give the outmost of assurance and confidence in their “belief”. Instead he responds by suggesting to them using a conditional clause that the test of their true faith is “if you abide in my word.” Abiding in His Word causes two things to occur:

1. It marks them as true disciples of Christ; and
2. It is the result of “abiding in His Word” that enables them to *know the Truth*.

WHAT DOES ABIDING MEAN?

After one believes in Christ, Jesus expects us to “abide” in His Word. What does “abide” mean? It’s a little Greek word **μένω** [pronounced **men-o**]. Your NIV probably translates it: *hold to*. The KJV translators used the words *continue in*, as does the NASB. The verb is in the active aorist tense meaning that it is an ongoing action. Therefore, we could say that Jesus said, “If you keep on, habitually abiding/continuing, etc. in my Word. It really means, “stay there”, “don’t move”, live in the teaching of

¹ *Expositor's Bible Commentary, The*, Pradis CD-ROM:John/Exposition of John/II. The Public Ministry of the Word (1:19-12:50)/D. The Intensification of Controversy (8:12-59)/1. Teaching in the temple area (8:12-30), Book Version: 4.0.2

Jesus. "A genuine believer holds fast, obeys, and practices Jesus' teaching."² When we do that, we will know the Truth.

TRUTH MATTERS

Christianity is about the Truth. When we minimise or downplay Truth, we no longer have biblical Christianity. Getting the issue of Truth right is the key to getting everything else right. John the Apostle wrote, "For I rejoiced greatly when the brothers came and testified to your truth, as indeed you are walking in the truth." (3 John 3, ESV). It is the mark of the unbeliever that they neither love the Truth, nor believe the Truth³. Truth matters to the Christian.

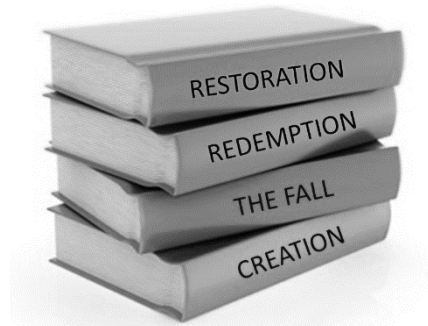
There are some non-negotiables; not-for-sale-at-any-price Truths in the Scriptures that are basic and irrevocable for the Believer. Over the next few weeks I want to present them to you.

What is True about our origins: Creation

What is True about our current situation: The Fall

What is True about what we need: Redemption

What is True about our future: Restoration



I began by noting the question Pontius Pilate asked centuries ago, "What is truth?" The sad thing was that Pilate was looking directly at the One who is the source of Truth, who is the provider of Truth and who is Truth incarnate. Truth matters because Jesus matters. What you do with Truth is equally as profound as what you do with Jesus.

² MacArthur, J., Jr. (Ed.). (1997). *The MacArthur Study Bible* (electronic ed., p. 1599). Nashville, TN: Word Pub.

³ "The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders, and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. Therefore God sends them a strong delusion, so that they may believe what is false, in order that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness." (2 Thessalonians 2:9-12, ESV)