

GOD!
Message 22
Scripture: John 18:28-40

INTRO: We have come to the last attribute of God that we will cover in this series and it is of major importance in our day. It is the attribute of truth. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life." As I began to study this great subject of truth, I realized I was in a bit of trouble when I had 11 pages of notes and nothing coherent yet. My introduction alone was already 2 pages too long. I realized then that if I could put my notes together in an understandable fashion, I would have to give a minimum of 2 messages.

Just before Jesus was crucified He was brought before Pilate, to be tried by him. And Pilate said, "Your own people, the Jews have delivered You to me. What have you done?" And Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here. That caught Pilate's interest, being a politician, and he said, "Are You a king then?" And Jesus said, "You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the TRUTH. Everyone who is of the TRUTH hears My voice."

And Pilate's response was, "What is truth?" I have wondered in what tone of voice he said that. Did he say it sarcastically? But I think rather that he asked this question seriously because he went out to these savage Jews and said, "I find no fault in Him at all."

This morning, we want to seek to answer Pilate's question, "What is truth?" Now you cannot go to the schools of our wonderful country of Canada to get an answer to that question. You cannot go to the schools, or colleges or even universities to answer that question. The world has been asking that question and debating it from long before Pilate, and they are farther off from answering it today than ever before. Not only is the world incapable of answering such questions, today, a large section of the professing church has fallen into error on this topic.

When dealing with such matters as *truth* or *wisdom* or *love* etc..., we must begin at the beginning and that is God! In

such studies as we are looking at, we are dealing with what we call theological matters. And God is the center of all true theology. So any definition of truth that does not hold God as the primary source of information on this subject cannot be correct.

10. Truth

a. What is truth?

THE BIBLE AND TRUTH

Our first task, as always, is to define what truth is. It is years ago that I came across a definition for truth that I have used ever since. But as I prepared to speak on the truth as an attribute of God I re-pondered this subject. After many hours of pondering and contemplation, I came back to the same definition, but now with a deeper understanding than before. Here is the simple seven word definition: **Truth is that which corresponds to reality.** MaClintock and Strong say that truth is simply "conformity to fact." So truth is that which corresponds to reality or conforms to fact.

As I restudied this matter I was stuck for some time on whether that which is real was truth, or that which portrays, or communicates or puts forward a representation of that which is real is the truth. After considerable vacillation, I have concluded it is the presentation of that which had or has reality that is truth. Let me explain.

For example, our eyes, if they are good, let us see what is real. My eyes present to me a picture of what is around me and if they are good, they will give an accurate presentation to my mind of that which is around me. If the picture my eyes portray to my mind corresponds to reality, that presentation is the truth. If my eyes are good, the presentation to my mind corresponds to reality. But even good eyes

do not always see everything that is really there. For example, let us say I am driving down the road. The road looks nice and bare and all of a sudden my vehicle starts to slide a little and I realize that not everything is as my eyes had told me. They did not pick up that there was black ice on the road. That failure to communicate reality to my mind could cost me my life.

This holds true for taste and hearing and touch and smell. For example, when Jacob came before his father Isaac, his mother had put some goat skin on the back of his hands so that he felt hairy like his brother Esau, and the smell of the goat skins smelled like Esau would smell. So the elderly Isaac's sense of touch and smell told him the young man before him was Esau, but the representation of those to his mind deceived him and did not communicate that which conformed to reality to him, and he was deceived.

Now truth, the portrayal of reality, comes to us either through the senses, or through propositions. We have talked about truth being presented to us through the senses. But there is truth in the spiritual, non-physical realm. This is truth not verifiable through the senses. This is logical truth, presented to us in propositions. We may communicate physical truth through propositions as well. For example, I might tell you that the province of Chihuahua in Mexico produces very good apples. Or I may tell you any number of factual things about the Mennonites in Mexico. You have not seen or heard them but you know those truths because you have been told. Much of our learning takes place by truth being presented to us propositionally in words.

When it comes to spiritual truth, it can only be learned propositionally. You cannot verify such propositions by the senses and therefore people are easily deceived in the

spiritual realm by that which is not true. For example, in the teaching of reincarnation we are taught that the soul is reincarnated again and again. Some such teachers say a person might become an animal or a vegetable after this life, depending on how they lived. How can one with any definiteness disprove such teaching? Mormonism teaches that Jesus and Satan are brothers. Or they teach that people can become god and someday men can have their own planet to rule. Many Moslems teach their people that if they kill Jews by a suicide bomb they will go to this wonderful place and have many wonderful women. Many have believed this and are now dead. Now how do you know what is true? How can one find out that which conforms to reality?

I cannot take time in this message to give evidence that the Bible is the Word of God and it alone is the truth, as far as spiritual truth is concerned. I do a message called, "Ten Proofs That the Bible is the Word of God."

Let me give you one such evidence. It is biblical prophecy. I have mentioned to you that not too long ago I sat beside a professing atheist. He was a university professor and when I wanted to give him evidence that the Bible is the Word of God I asked him who our next prime minister would be in Canada. He had no idea. Now if he had said it would be, say, Joe Blo, what are the chances of his being right? Well science claims it can figure out the odds of that being correct by using the laws of probability.

My wife recently read the story, "Betrayed!" by Stan Telchin. He is a Jew, and one day he was told by his 21 year old daughter she believed in Jesus. This was a major denial of truth in his view and he set about to prove her wrong and he got saved. He says in

this book, that there are 456 prophecies to the Messiah in the OT.

So he took eight of those; the place of the Messiah's birth, His being preceded by a messenger, how He would enter Jerusalem, his betrayal by a friend, His betrayal for 30 pieces of silver, the betrayal money would be thrown in God's house, He would be silent before His accusers and He would be crucified. Then he applied the laws of probability to these 8 of 456 prophecies. He found that the likelihood of these 8 prophecies being fulfilled by chance was 1 in 10 to the 17th power.

What does that mean? Well, the chance of these 8 prophecies happening by chance would be 1 to a 1 with 17 zeroes after it. And what does that mean? Well, let me read what he writes, "In order to help us comprehend this we take 10 to the 17th power in silver dollars and lay them down on the face of Texas. They will cover the state two feet deep. Now mark one of these silver dollars and stir the whole mess thoroughly, all over the state. Blindfold a man and tell him that he can travel as far as he wishes, but he must pick up one silver dollar and say that this is the right one. What chance would he have of getting the right one? Just the same chance that the prophets would have had of writing these eight prophecies and having them all come true in any one man, from their day to the present time, providing they wrote them in their own wisdom."

Now that is taking 8 prophecies of 456, but there are many, many more prophecies than just relating to the Messiah! That is a brief look at one bit of evidence of the 10 that I give in that message. Do we have anything like this for the teaching of reincarnation? Mormonism, or any other 'ism'? We have propositional truth so strong, that there is simply no reason at all to doubt the Bible.

So, we conclude that truth is that which conforms to reality or fact, and we conclude further that the Word of God is the truth with regard to the spiritual life.

If our conclusions are correct so far, then we can safely go to the Bible and trust its propositions, and the Bible says that God is a God of truth! As He is a God of justice and love and so on, so He is a God of truth. Truth is an attribute of God. That means He cannot lie, and the Bible clearly tells us the God of the Bible cannot lie (Titus 1:2). Let me read a few verses that speak to the matter that God is a God of truth:

Deuteronomy 32:4: *He is the Rock, His work is perfect; For all His ways are justice, A God of truth and without injustice; Righteous and upright is He.*

Psalm 31:5: *Into Your hand I commit my spirit; You have redeemed me, O LORD God of truth.*

Isaiah 65:16: *So that he who blesses himself in the earth Shall bless himself in the God of truth; And he who swears in the earth Shall swear by the God of truth; Because the former troubles are forgotten, And because they are hidden from My eyes.*

So God is a God of truth. Truth is an attribute of God. With regard to God the Son, Jesus said in John 14:6 "...I am the way, the truth, and the life." Jesus claimed to be the truth.

With regard to God the Holy Spirit John 14:17 that the Holy Spirit is, "...the Spirit of truth." John 15:26 and 16:13 also call Him the Spirit of truth. But listen to John 16:13, "However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own

authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come."

So we are dealing with truth as an attribute of God. He is the God of truth. I suggest that this means first that He is the true God. There is no other true God. Listen to these Scriptures: 2 Chronicles 15:3 "For a long time Israel *has been without **the true God,*** without a teaching priest, and without law;". Jeremiah 10:10 "But the LORD *is **the true God;*** He *is* the living God and the everlasting King. At His wrath the earth will tremble, And the nations will not be able to endure His indignation." John 17:3 "And this is eternal life, that they may know You, **the only true God,** and Jesus Christ whom You have sent." 1 Thessalonians 1:9, "For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve **the living and true God.**" 1 John 5:20, " And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is **the true God** and eternal life."

These passages speak of 'the true God'. John 17:3 says He is the ONLY true God. So what is the difference between a true God and one that is not? Well, simply, the one that is not, is not. Any god that is not a true god is not a god at all! The true God, according to our definition, must conform to reality, that is must exist in the way that is communicated about Him.

In Galatians 4 Paul speaks to the Galatians about what they were like before they became Christians. And he says "But then, indeed, when you did not know God, you served those which by nature are not gods." God Almighty is the only God who is a God by nature. That is what He is. All other gods are a figment of the imagination. They do not truly have existence.

You see, truth is an attribute of God. He is the true God, and He is the God of truth. McClintock and Strong say, "In Scripture language, eminently, God is truth; that is, in him is no fallacy, deception, perverseness, etc. Jesus Christ, being God, is also the truth, and is the true way to God, the true representative, image, character, of the Father. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth, who communicates truth, who maintains the truth in believers, guides them in the truth, and who hates and punishes falsehood or lies, even to the death of the transgressor (Psalm 31:5; John 14:6, 17; Acts 5:3, etc...).

THE SECULAR WORLD AND TRUTH

So, having defined truth and concluded that the Bible is the Word of God and the God revealed therein is a God of truth, let me ask, "What does the world think truth is?" It is important for us to know for we live with that view in every strata of society. When I want to know what the world thinks, I go to Encyclopedia Britannica. Now my set is from 1980. But I suppose if I had a newer set it would be, if anything, a little farther from a good definition than it was in 1980. Listen to their article in the Micropedia; "Truth, a philosophical concept, aspects of which are treated under epistemology; logic, formal; and syllogistic."

Well, no doubt you were not very enlightened by that. And if you want deeper mud, just study 'epistemology', and you will enter that never ending path that the universities tread. In other words, "Do not go to the world for a definition of truth." Let me say as well, that as soon as you read about 'the philosophy' of thus or such, you know the world is in trouble with that particular subject. When they say, "The philosophy..." of thus or such or, "The philosophical

concept..." of thus or such, it is a highly sophisticated way of saying, "We don't actually know." When you don't know and you still want to put forward what sounds like a very learned answer you call it a 'philosophy'. L.E. Maxwell of Prairie Bible Institute called it 'foolosophy', and he was dead on.

Let me give you an over simplified version of the process of thought on 'truth' in the world of intellegencia, the big boys the world has flocked after to deny God. I reduce even further that which John MacArthur has so ably reduced this topic to in his book, 'The Truth War'. He says that ancient Greek philosophers 'simply assumed the validity of truth and human knowledge.' Then Socrates, Plato and Aristotle began to consider the problem of what knowledge is and how to determine if something is true. MacArthur says that then for about 2000 years it was viewed that knowledge was somehow given to man through nature.

But in the middle of the 17th century the time now known as 'the Enlightenment' philosophers began to dig deeply into this subject and we entered a branch of study we now know as 'epistemology', a topic many Christians have become enamored with and misled by. The basic question is, "How do we know things?" That developed into the rationalist camp, that says we know things through reason. But that was soon questioned and brought into being another view that says we know things by experience. That is called 'empiricism'. Then along came Immanuel Kant and said that it was not either empiricism or rationalism, it was a combination of the two.

Now I want to read what MacArthur says about all this: "Elaborate epistemologies have thus been proposed and methodically debunked one after another - like a long chain in which every previous link has broken. After

thousands of years, the very best of human philosophers have all utterly failed to account for truth, and the origin of human knowledge apart from God. In fact, the one most valuable lesson humanity ought to have learned from philosophy is that it is impossible to make sense of truth without acknowledging God as the necessary starting point" (pg. 7).

Philosophy failed to grasp truth in a way that satisfied coming generations and finally utterly frustrated the philosopher; and so now, rather than try to figure out what truth is they are trying to get rid of the thought of truth altogether. So MacArthur says we have now entered a great 'paradigm shift'. He explains it like this: "The goal of human philosophy used to be truth without God." That, he says, gave us what we came to call 'modernism.' But he goes on like this: "Today's philosophers are open to the notion of God without truth - or to be more accurate, personal 'spirituality' in which everyone is free to create his or her own god. Personal gods pose no threat to sinful self-will, because they suit each sinners personal preferences anyway, and they make no demands on anyone else" (8).

Well, this new way of thinking has brought us into an era we call 'postmodernism', and postmodernism's greatest tendency is to reject truth all together. Along with that goes any sense of wrong or evil, so everything is tolerated except that which says there is objective truth and this truth is that God exists and so does evil, and we are evil and need God for our salvation.

So John MacArthur says, "Therefore postmodernism's one goal and singular activity is the systematic deconstruction of every other truth claim. The chief tools being employed to accomplish this are relativism, subjectivism, the denial of every dogma, the dissection and annihilation

of every clear definition, the relentless questioning of every axiom, the undue exaltation of mystery and paradox, the deliberate exaggeration of every ambiguity, and above all the cultivation of uncertainty about everything" (11-12). Then he says, "If you were to challenge me to boil down postmodern thought into its pure essence and identify the gist of it in one single, simple, central characteristic, I would say it is the rejection of every expression of certainty" (12). If that is correct, postmodernism may well become the devil's greatest tool against God and Jesus Christ.

So in the end of it all, when you reduce everything to one common denominator, one must agree with L.E. Maxwell, the world's effort to come to a conclusion on such things as truth is simply 'foolosophy'.

CONCL: So let us conclude by reviewing that truth is that which conforms to reality. There is such a thing as absolute truth. We further conclude that the God of the Bible is the one and only true God, and that the Bible is the truth for it says, "Your Word is truth" (John 17:17). It is a tremendously comforting thought that we know what the truth is and that we have it. It is comforting to know that everything that exalts itself against the knowledge of God is not the truth.

Furthermore, we conclude that all unsaved mankind cannot give us the truth. Oh, they can give us scientific data that is verifiable, but they cannot give us spiritual truth. We can say that over the past several thousand years the studies of our world's universities have not progressed on this topic, but rather regressed to such a point that nobody can be certain of anything any more. That is a shaky world indeed!

Thank You Lord for truth! Thank You that You are a God of truth! Thank You for the Word of truth! Thank You that as pastors and teachers of Your Word, we can confidently teach and preach that which conforms to reality in the spiritual realm!