

JOHN 18:38

GREAT QUESTIONS OF LIFE: “WHAT IS TRUTH?”

“Pilate said to Jesus, ‘What is truth?’”¹

Cynicism best describes the governor’s demeanor when the True Light stood before him. Arraigned before Pilate’s judgement seat was Jesus of Nazareth who testified of Himself, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life” [JOHN 14:6]. Someone has appropriately commented that irreverence grins in the face of Holy God; never was this more apparent than when the Son of God stood before Pilate. He who hung the stars in space was on trial before a petty tyrant who disdained the very peoples over whom he ruled. The One who graciously gave sight to blind eyes, who enabled the deaf to hear and the mute to speak and who restored dead sons to their mother’s arms, was hailed before Pilate’s judgement seat where He was to be examined because of trumped up charges pressed by religious leaders driven by jealousy.

It will be helpful to our understanding to refresh our memories, getting the context in which the query was muttered. “Pilate entered his headquarters again and called Jesus and said to him, ‘Are you the King of the Jews?’ Jesus answered, ‘Do you say this of your own accord, or did others say it to you about me?’ Pilate answered, ‘Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered you over to me. What have you done?’ Jesus answered, ‘My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world.’ Then Pilate said to him, ‘So you are a king?’ Jesus answered, ‘You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.’ Pilate said to him, ‘What is truth?’

“After he had said this, he went back outside to the Jews and told them, ‘I find no guilt in him. But you have a custom that I should release one man for you at the Passover. So do you want me to release to you the King of the Jews?’ They cried out again, ‘Not this man, but Barabbas!’ Now Barabbas was a robber” [JOHN 18:33-40].

It is obvious from the dialogue presented that Pilate did not want to make a decision. Pilate was well aware that Jesus was not guilty of lèse majesté; however, he was prepared to sacrifice this bothersome man if it would halt the bickering of the Jews. Pilate asked Jesus whether He claimed to be King of the Jews. Jesus responded by challenging Pilate to consider the evidence presented. Pilate’s rejoinder was caustic, pointing out that the leadership of the nation had delivered Jesus to be executed.

It was at this point that Jesus made a startling pronouncement. He laid claim to an unseen kingdom—a kingdom that did not originate from within the political world to which Pilate was wed. Moreover, He claimed that He had subjects who were prepared to fight within their own realm. When Pilate responded, we can almost hear the surprise in his voice. “So you are a king?” Jesus’ response makes it clear that He had a purpose in being born into this world. In fact, He claimed that His coming was for the express purpose of bearing witness to the truth. Listen to this powerful, comforting statement from the lips of the Master. “Everyone who is of the truth listens to My voice.” Catch the import of that statement. Those who are identified with the truth hear the Master’s voice and heed what He says.

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It was at this point that Pilate muttered the words that will serve as the focus of our study today, “What is truth?” Having callously dismissed Jesus’ assertion, he now sought a way out of his dilemma. He did not want to execute an innocent man; but neither did he want to be compelled to put down a rebellion by the Jewish leaders. He thought he had come up with the ideal way to avoid all unpleasantness when he offered to release Barabbas.

Let me take an excursus to help prepare your view of this event by exploring who Barabbas might be. A number of ancient manuscripts and no less than Origen assert that the name of this man was Jesus Bar-Abba, or “Jesus Son of the father.” He is identified as a “notorious prisoner” [MATTHEW 27:16], a “robber” [JOHN 18:40], a “rebel” and a “murderer” guilty of “insurrection” [MARK 15:7; see also LUKE 23:19]. It would appear that he was a brigand, motivated by political considerations to lead a futile attempt to throw off Roman rule.

Thus, Pilate was offering the mob a choice between Jesus the Messiah and Jesus the Son of the Father. Pilate imagined that the sight of a helpless, non-threatening individual would elicit a measure of pity from the crowd. However, the appearance of Jesus before the mob had the opposite effect. Seeing the helpless, unresisting prisoner caused the crowd to become outraged that such an individual would dare attempt to displace their messianic expectations. Therefore, enraged at His helpless condition—a condition that did not fit with their concept of a messianic power, the mob voted for Barabbas. Thus, their demand that Barabbas be released was less a statement of their esteem for him than it was a statement of their antipathy to Jesus. Jesus had dashed their hopes—He would not display His power in their behalf; therefore, He must go.

Regardless of what Pilate intended, the question, recorded for our benefit, hangs over the life of each individual. Whether we actually ask the question, or whether we seek to avoid asking the question, we are still in need of answering for ourselves, “What is the truth?”

WHATEVER — “Whatever” is not what Pilate said; but it is a good summation of what he meant. In the text, Pilate is not asking Jesus to give an answer; he would have been shocked had Jesus answered. Rather, Pilate is trying to dismiss Jesus without making a decision. His response is what has become verbal shorthand in this day whenever someone wants to indicate resignation. The response is a denial of meaning, a denial of purpose. Whenever a person says “Whatever,” you understand that he or she is indicating that any response, and possibly you yourself, are unimportant in their estimate. It is a dismissive verbal shrug showing disrespect.

The concept captures the idea that has become regnant in this age when truth is considered relative. All cultures are equal. Muslim culture in which women are decidedly inferior to men is the moral equivalent to western culture in which women are viewed as equal to men. That culture which glorifies conversion by the sword is the moral equivalent to a culture which employs persuasion and reason to present truth. The attitude of the “Whatever generation” is, “You worship Jesus, I worship my own intellect.” One man worships Allah, another worships a cow. In the “Whatever” world, all religions are the same, even the religion of no religion. What’s true for you may not be true for me. It doesn’t matter what you believe so long as you are sincere. And with a shrug of the shoulders, the individual mutters, “Eh, whatever.” This is the modern view of truth.

Today, almost any moral aberration is justified with the argument that it hurts no one; therefore, there can be no objection to acting on our impulses and doing whatever one wishes to do. We set up house, testing the waters, as it were, inadvertently setting the stage for serial partners while destroying marriage. All society becomes less stable, less trusting; nevertheless, we assure ourselves that no one is hurt because we acted on our impulse.

The tragedy is that the attitude of shrugging the shoulder is imported into the church. Consequently, when the preacher points out the gravity of the sin or notes the censure of the Word, there are always those in attendance who are either offended or who are prepared to dismiss the concern with the statement, “Whatever.” This attitude is exposed through examining the life of the average professing Christian.

According to surveys conducted by Barna Research, three quarters of all adults believe there is no such thing as absolute truth. Therefore, in the estimate of the majority of adults, two people are able to define truth in conflicting ways, and both would be correct. This appears to be the basis underlying the emergent church. Nobody is offended; everybody interprets events according to their own world view. It is the same attitude that prevailed when the Book of Judges closes: “Everyone did what was right in his own eyes” [JUDGES 21:25].

No doubt you would agree that such statistics paint a distressingly dark picture. However, consider the situation that the Barna Group discovered among Evangelical churches. Less than one-half (44%) of those professing to be Born Again, and less than ten percent (9%) of teenagers professing to be Born Again, believe in the existence of absolute moral truth. You understand that this means there is no such thing as a “know so” salvation. The overwhelming majority of evangelical Christians would deny that those who have faith in the Living Son of God are born from above, and they would reject the concept that those without Christ will spend eternity separated from Him. These professing evangelicals would hold to the concept that there are many paths to God despite the words of the Master, “I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself” [JOHN 12:32]. They would also tacitly deny Jesus’ statement, “No one comes to the Father except through Me” [JOHN 14:6].

I doubt that you would be surprised that through their research, this group discovered that nearly one-half (47%) of all American adults believe that “to get by in life, sometimes you have to bend rules for your benefit.” Because this is the attitude of so many parents, perhaps it accounts for the fact that seventy percent of American teenagers admit to cheating on exams. Moreover, these youth see nothing wrong with such cheating.²

Our world assumes the position that the desire of the individual trumps all other values. Therefore, we willingly sacrifice the permanent on the altar of the temporary. What is more, we feel good that we have done what we wanted even though we destroyed our future! Nevertheless, there are always consequences to our choices, just as there were consequences to Pilate’s refusal to stand firm for what was right. To the modern mind, there is no authority greater than one’s own immediate desire. To the modern mind, this has become a world with no meaning beyond personal fulfillment. This should not be surprising, however, for in our contemporary view there are no values higher than the individual’s own choice.

Kerby Anderson, citing a book written by Richard Middleton and Brian Walsh, tells a story that illustrates this new view of truth. Three baseball umpires are talking. One says, “There’s balls and there’s strikes, and I call ‘em the way they are.” A second umpire says, “There’s balls and there’s strikes, and I call ‘em the way I see ‘em.” The third umpire says, “There’s balls and there’s strikes, and they ain’t nothing until I call ‘em.”³

² These examples were drawn from the body of a sermon, Michael Duduit, “Living in a Whatever World,” March 2008, <http://www.sermoncentral.com/sermons/living-in-a-whatever-world-michael-duduit-sermon-on-jesus-life-119439.asp?page=0>, accessed 17 November 2012

³ Kerby Anderson, “Three Views of Truth,” The story quotes Richard Middleton and Brian Walsh, *Truth is Stranger Than It Used to Be: Biblical Faith in a Postmodern Age*, (InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, IL 1995) 35, http://www.probe.org/site/c.fdKEIMNsEoG/b.4224857/k.A1F5/Truth_Decay.htm#text1, accessed 17 November 2012

The three umpires express three views of truth. Some years ago, western culture held to the view arising from a God-centred universe. We held that truth was absolute, unchanging. This is represented by the umpire that says he calls 'em as they are. During the enlightenment, modernism began its ascendancy, and mankind moved toward a relativistic view of truth which came into full bloom during the early to mid-years of the previous century. Thinking himself superior to God, man began to substitute scientific reason for divine revelation. This is represented by the umpire that contended that he calls 'em as he sees 'em. Today, we are fully engaged in a post-modern world. Our contemporaries reject truth as fixed. Today, whether we are able to articulate the concept of not, we say that truth cannot be discovered—it is created. This is represented by the umpire that says “They ain’t nothing until I call ‘em.”

Because ours is this post-modern world, we watch in dismay as perversion is celebrated as not merely normal, but desirable; our children are taught not only to approve of such moral depravity, but instructed in how to engage in such depravity themselves. We celebrate faux freedom that is claimed to have been experienced when we slaughter the unborn in the womb, defending such actions by claiming that women have a right over their own bodies—even if it means killing their children. We live in a world in which marriage is demeaned and denigrated as a quaint ritual that means whatever we want it to mean. Rather than marriage being the commitment of one man and one woman to form an exclusive union in which they strengthen and comfort one another, today we are prepared to transform that divine institution into one in which anyone and as many as wish to do so, may enter into a union and we will call it marriage.

To meet this modern demand for a religious organisation that affirms everyone and does not condemn anyone, we have developed a religion that is foreign to the New Testament. In this new religion, we have heaven without hell, salvation without transformation, forgiveness without repentance, adoption without the new birth, and everyone does what is right in his own eyes. The church has become a place where we go to be affirmed, regardless of how unrighteous our lives may be. In the modern church, we can hear what we want to hear and we will never be made to feel uncomfortable. “The time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths” [2 TIMOTHY 4:3, 4].

Increasingly, modern church leaders, evangelicals as well as those affiliated with mainline denominations, urge pastors to tell the story of Jesus and love the people. Don’t expose sin, they urge us, as that will drive people away. Don’t be critical of alternate lifestyles, they insist, as it will generate ill will. Don’t be dogmatic; people need flexibility. Of course, the tragedy is that we aren’t quite sure when we can introduce the truth—the inflexible reality that we are sinners in need of mercy and grace.

I sat in a service on one occasion when a guest speaker was teaching the people how to bring their neighbours and friends to the Faith. Invite them to a barbeque, he advised the audience. Enjoy a cold drink and have some fun. Take them out to a ball game. After building a relationship, maybe one day casually mention that you are a Christian and see how they respond. After a while longer, perhaps you can let your lost friend know that you are praying for her. Whatever you do, don’t rush things and don’t let your friends know that they are lost.

I was terribly disturbed, even though I was a relatively new believer. When I could stand it no longer, I stood and said, “Sir, your statements fly in the face of the Bible. We are not taught to turn people to righteousness by stealth. We are commanded to make disciples, and this is to be done through the foolishness of preaching. You are asking us to adopt deceit as an evangelistic tool! You are asking us to deny the power of God’s Spirit.”

Of course, my interruption disrupted his presentation. He was terribly insulted, publicly informing me that I was young and didn't have his experience. Though I was young, I knew enough to know that his approach was folly-wide-the-mark. Teaching that was then occasional among the churches has come to full fruition in this day late in the Age of Grace. Too many of the churches in this day are drinking from the polluted cisterns of post-modernism with the result that the Faith is enervated and the faithful are rendered fruitless and impotent.

Recently, the world has watched with dismay as powerful officers of the United States Armed Forces have been publicly humiliated. David Petraeus, at one time a top military strategic planner for the US military and later the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency in the United States, was forced to resign. His humiliation resulted from a sexual liaison with a woman who had served as his biographer. This infidelity came to light when another woman claimed to have received harassing Emails from Petraeus' lover.

Even while these revelations were still reverberating, the world was informed that the Commander of allied forces in Afghanistan, General David Allen, has been exchanging inappropriate communications with a Tampa socialite. Some reports indicate that as many as 30,000 Emails were exchanged by this couple; some have referred to the Emails as the computer equivalent of phone sex. It is as though a culture of corruption has become the new normal for the armed forces of that nation. We were becoming inured to the culture of corruption that seems to identify political masters, but most people believed that the armed forces still held to ancient values such as honour and integrity.

It is doubtful that either of these men thought they would ever be exposed, and the momentary pleasure they obtained was worth jeopardising their careers, their reputations and their families, they thought. There is a forgotten lesson contained in these ongoing news reports. Our choices have consequences. More importantly, truth matters. What I believe is revealed in the choices I make. If I hold to a false view, it will have a negative impact, not only in my life, but in the lives of all who look to me for direction and leadership.

Here is the point of this knowledge: we are responsible to hold true ideals and to implement those ideals in our lives—especially as Christians! If an individual is untrue to his or her spouse, the spouse is certainly injured. Additionally, the family of that untruthful individual is injured, and the injury is sooner rather than later. We focus on the exposure of the individual as unreliable, but the lack of integrity has an immediate effect on all relationships.

Now take that analogy a step further. If the unfaithful individual has authority over the lives of others, or if others look to that individual for guidance, the lack of integrity means that they injure others. Let me say pointedly that if an individual fails to maintain integrity with her husband, she will resort to infidelity to obtain whatever she assesses as important for her comfort or personal advancement. An individual who is unreliable to the one person who is the most intimate individual in life, that unfaithful individual will cheat or lie or steal when she assumes that such is beneficial to obtain her ends. Thus, all who rely on her for decisions or who look to her for guidance will be harmed and potentially trained in deceit.

Follow the upward responsibility. When a politician is unfaithful to his wife, that man is unreliable to make decisions that affect the lives of the citizens of the nation. If the CIA director is prepared to cheat on his wife, he will cheat the nation if he assumes that through his dishonesty he is sufficiently benefitted. Likewise, if the President or the Prime Minister of a nation is unfaithful to his wife, it is highly likely that the national leader will dishonour the office through cheating in the affairs of the nation, jeopardising the national welfare for personal advantage.

Let me push this analogy to what is undoubtedly the most dangerous realm, though few appear to believe that a danger exists. If a minister of Christ, charged with the oversight of souls, is unfaithful to his wife, that man is a danger to the congregation. If he will cheat on his beloved wife, living a lie while living with her, he will lie to the congregation. Thus, the souls of the people will be threatened eternally. This is the reason that integrity, speaking the truth and living truthfully is vital in the minister of Christ. For this reason, when a minister proves unreliable, the only appropriate action for the congregation is to remove immediately that individual from all authority. I do not say that we should castigate the man or punish him; rather, because he is a part of the Body, we must lovingly hold him to account and seek to restore him to fellowship. However, he must not be permitted to preach or provide oversight ever again.

This is not the way it is done among so many of the churches of this day. When Jimmy Swaggart was exposed as hiring prostitutes to perform lascivious acts for his entertainment, he continued in public ministry, stating that his position was too important for him to quit. To this day, he continues preaching and has a surprising following. The names of such individuals that were too important to quit their ministry comprise a list that is long and growing longer: Jim Bakker, Ted Haggard, Hal Lindsey, David Hocking, Gordon MacDonald and Dinesh D'Souza, among a growing multitude.

Increasingly, churches and denominations are prepared to minimise infidelity, treating the sin as though it were an illness. Counselling by others will restore the unfaithful preacher to the pulpit, as though truth is of no great importance. It is the full flower of the "Whatever culture." It is as though the words of Isaiah were being played out before our eyes.

"Justice is turned back,
and righteousness stands far away;
for truth has stumbled in the public squares,
and uprightness cannot enter.
Truth is lacking,
and he who departs from evil makes himself a prey.

[ISAIAH 59:14, 15]

WHAT IS TRUTH? — Rather than a cynical dismissal of Jesus' testimony, one could wish that Pilate had the perspicuity to have actually inquired of the One arraigned before him that day. Preparing His disciples for His Passion and Exodus, you will recall the breath-taking affirmation Jesus made. "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" [JOHN 14:6].

In the prologue to this Gospel, John was guided by the Holy Spirit to write of Jesus, "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John bore witness about him, and cried out, 'This was he of whom I said, "He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me."') For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" [JOHN 1:14-17].

The Word of God is unapologetic in its insistence that truth is fixed; it is not fluid. There is no moral equivalency between truth and error; either an act is righteous or it is unrighteous. Either a statement is true or a statement is false. There are not fifty shades of grey when speaking of the truth; there is only the distinct knowledge of accuracy or inaccuracy. Truth is independent of our perception.

An ancient fable from India was popularised by the American poet John Godfrey Saxe (1816-1887). The original fable is told from the point of view of a king who leads several blind men to an elephant and asks them to tell him what it is that they are feeling. The first blind man walked into the formidable side of the huge mammal and declared with certainty that what he found was a wall. The second took hold of the elephant's tusk and asserted that it was a spear. The third blind man felt the squirming trunk of the elephant and jumped back saying that it was, without a doubt, a great snake. A fourth bumped into one of the beast's large legs and declared it was a tree. Another was led by the king to the elephant's flapping ear and proclaimed that he had definitely found a fan. The last blind man groped for what was before him, and grabbing the elephant's tail was convinced that the thing before him was a rope.

The story is usually told to make the point that none of us have a grasp on truth in its entirety. The argument is that given our individual experiences, we are all feeling the same elephant, but describing him according to our limited perceptions. Those who tell this story usually are endeavouring to make a point that religions are merely human attempts to grope about to discover some facet of the truth.

There are several points that should be made. In the first place, the king is not blind, or he could not have led the blind men to the elephant. Were the king blind, there would be no story. Moreover, we should ask why the king led each man to only one part of the elephant; why didn't he lead them around the elephant so they could experience as much as possible of the beast, gaining a measure of understanding of what an elephant is like.

Rodney Buchanan makes the point that "The most obvious gloss in the fable is that even though there are some people who are born blind, most are born with the ability to see. Sight is a gift of God who wants us to see and perceive."⁴

There is also the point that none of them had part of the truth; each of these men was completely wrong. They did not experience a rope, or a snake or a wall; they were each feeling an elephant. Regardless of their perceptions, it was an elephant nevertheless. The elephant they were feeling was unchanged by the imperfection of their understanding or by their experience. The source of their misunderstanding was that they were blind.

So it is with us; we are blind, groping about in darkness and unacquainted with the truth. This is the reason Jesus came; to bring us into the light of the Gospel leading to freedom and life. In the opening words of the Gospel bearing his name, John writes of the Son of God, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

"There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light.

"The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world" [JOHN 1:1-9].

John also writes, "This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" [1 JOHN 1:5-8].

⁴ Rodney Buchanan, "What is Truth?", January 2006, <http://www.sermoncentral.com/sermons/what-is-truth-rodney-buchanan-sermon-on-truth-absolute-87560.asp?page=0>, accessed 17 November 2012

God has given evidence of His Person, so that all people can know of Him. Paul has written: “The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse” [ROMANS 1:18-20].

The Psalmist makes a similar point about the universality of knowledge that God is, and that His power is revealed to all mankind, when he writes:

“The heavens declare the glory of God,
and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.
Day to day pours out speech,
and night to night reveals knowledge.
There is no speech, nor are there words,
whose voice is not heard.
Their voice goes out through all the earth,
and their words to the end of the world.
In them he has set a tent for the sun,
which comes out like a bridegroom leaving his chamber,
and, like a strong man, runs its course with joy.
Its rising is from the end of the heavens,
and its circuit to the end of them,
and there is nothing hidden from its heat.”

[PSALM 19:1-6]

On one occasion Jesus was challenged by religious leaders. At that time He declared of Himself, “My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me. 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. The one who speaks on his own authority seeks his own glory.” Then, referring to Himself, Jesus added, “The one who seeks the glory of him who sent him is true, and in him there is no falsehood” [JOHN 7:16-18]. God is described as “the Father of Lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change” [JAMES 1:17]. Therefore, God is unchanging truth.

Truth, the knowledge of God and of His will, is revealed through the written Word. Among the requests Jesus offered up in His High Priestly prayer, was this petition of the Father. “I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. Now they know that everything that you have given me is from you. For I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me... I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one... I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world” [JOHN 17:6-8, 11, 14-18]. The written Word of God is truth. Sanctification of the believer is related to knowledge of the Word.

JESUS IS TRUTH — The Bible is the written Word of God; and that Word that we have received is not only truthful—it is truth. It is truth, because the Author of the Word is true. The Spirit of Christ superintended those who wrote this Word, insuring that what is delivered is true and accurate. In this Word, we meet Him who is the Living Word; and the Living Word is truth. The Master promised His followers, “You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” [JOHN 8:32].

He also promised those who would follow Him, “When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come” [JOHN 16:13]. The Spirit now lives within each believer, creating a desire to know the truth and to seek the truth.

When I was conducting post-doctoral studies, I had frequent conversations with a fine gentleman who worked on similar projects a couple of floors below my laboratory. Richard would come into my office at times to discuss philosophical issues. He accepted an invitation to attend a Bible study my wife and I were starting, and at the first study, both he and his wife came to faith in the Son of God.

It was about a week after he had submitted his life to the Master that he came into my lab. He said, “You know, Mike, I haven’t resolved all my issues; but I find myself wanting to believe the Bible.” It was an affirmation of the promise the Master gave that His Spirit would guide those who follow Him into all truth.

This affirmation is made stronger still when John testifies, “We know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true; and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life” [1 JOHN 5:20].

It is the ascended Christ who “gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.” Now, because of His ascension gifts, the command to us as believers is, “Speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ” [EPHESIANS 4:11-15].

Does truth matter? Is truth in our world, in the congregation of the Lord or in our private life important? Michael Duduit gives an illustration to make us think. “Suppose after working hours you find yourself on an elevator in a large but fairly deserted office building. You are on the elevator all alone, but just before the doors close three tough-looking young men jump on the elevator with you. You’re now alone with these guys for the next minute or two. Now be honest: would you rather know that they were on their way to a burglary or a Bible study? Why does it make a difference? Because the way we think determines the way we live. We feel safer around people who have a Christian worldview than those for whom the only authority is their own ego or desires.”⁵

Though many today want to reinterpret the Word of God, or even to ignore the truth presented by that Word, it remains that this Word is truth. We want to twist Scripture to fit modern cultural trends, affirming us in our fallen condition. Unfortunately for such ideas, those who wrote under the Spirit’s inspiration were unconcerned about either our feelings or the latest cultural trends. We do not judge the Word; rather, it stands in judgement of us.

⁵ Michael Duduit, *ibid.*

QREAT QUESTIONS OF LIFE: WHAT IS TRUTH?

The message may be summarised as follows. The Word of God is truth because it was given by God who is true. The Risen Son of God is truth, for He is very God, who cannot lie. The Spirit of Christ guides the child of God into all truth as the believer consumes the Word and follows what is written therein. Therefore, the only question that remaining for you is, do you know Him. Have you met God who is truth? Are you on speaking terms with the Living Son of God? Have you received His life that leads all who know Him into truth?

The call of Christ is given to all who will receive it, for He calls each person to life, saying, “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” [MATTHEW 11:28-30].