

## The Age of Relativism

### 1. Truth vs. Relativism

A. Truth on trial – Jn 18:37-38.

1. Identity: Who was Jesus really? Was He, in truth, a King? How so? Activity: What had Jesus really done? Was He, in truth, a perverter of the nation? Did He forbid payment of taxes? (Lk 23:2)
2. Pilate reflects the skepticism, agnosticism of his culture: “*What is truth?*”
  - a. Pilate says there is no firm, stable, binding standard by which men can know.
  - b. This being true, Pilate sacrifices Jesus on the altar of political pressure, superstition. Truth to Pilate was what was expedient, in His best interest. Relativism is hostile to God and those who would desire fellowship with Him.

B. Relativism is thriving today:

1. Business/politics: Lying commonplace; “right” is what you can get away with. “Spin” refers to framing an event or statement into a more palatable form.
2. Historical revisionism is rampant. WW2 now being retold; denial of role of religion in establishment of this country.
3. Morality: Right is to be determined by each individual. This has led to a terribly confused society in which it is obvious that some behaviors lead to disaster but they cannot be labeled “wrong.” *Nonjudgmentalism*.
4. Even religion has sunk into ecumenical relativism: all are equally valid.

B. Such a fuzzy vision of absolute truth breeds: anxiety (nothing certain), anarchy (do what I think right), apathy (nothing really matters). Relativism does not produce *freedom* but *futility*.

C. “*Woe to those who call evil good and good evil; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!*” (Is 5:20).

### 2. The Age of Truth

A. The need for standards: **Illus:** Shuttle – Parts from various subcontractors must fit precisely; French machine gun in WW1 what was so poorly made the spare parts from one gun wouldn’t fit into another.

- B. Who has the right to say what “truth” is? Where will we find it in a world of competing ideas/philosophies flying through cyberspace?
1. Truth is rooted in the very essence of God. *“Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ”* (Jn 1:17). “I am the way, the **truth**, and the life” – Jn 14:6.
  2. Jesus told the Jews, “If you abide in My word ... know the truth” (Jn 8:31-32).
  3. To Pilate – “Everyone who is **of the truth** hears **My** voice” (Jn 18:37).
- C. The Scriptures contain objective truth; we cannot tailor them to fit our subjective experience. Illus: “How do you **know** you are a Christian?”
1. I feel it; it is an inner sense of assurance. **Or**, I obeyed the truth – Rom 6:17-18.
  2. Same with sexual practices, marital roles, work/organization of church, etc.
  3. God desires all men to be saved *“and to come to the knowledge of the truth”* (1 Tim 2:4).

### 3. Our Obligation to the Truth

- A. We must **love** truth – 2 Th 2:10-12. I can only love a truth that reveals and condemns my behavior/lifestyle because I love the **author**. And I love Him and His truth because I am totally convinced of His benevolent nature.
- B. We must **know** the truth – 2 Tim 2:15 (“rightly dividing”); 3:7 (“always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth”).
- C. We must **teach** the truth – 1 Tim 3:15 (“*pillar and ground*”).
- D. We must **worship** in truth – Jn 4:23-24. Most people today think worship is entirely relative, offering God what *they* like.
- E. We must **speak** truth – Eph 4:15, 25. We must not be deceived into thinking that lying will better solve a problem than telling the truth.

**Conclusion:** Where will you “hang your hat”? What constitutes your deepest core beliefs? Eph 5:15-17: walk circumspectly, redeem time (days evil), do not be unwise but *“understand what the will of the Lord is.”*