

## **“What Is Truth?”**

### **Intro:**

1. Modern art sculpture at UAB. Some say beauty of such art is that it speaks differently to all who view it. So do passing clouds. But legitimate practical guide?
2. Truth is important to everyone: 1) Wrong price at register; 2) Challenger explosion; 3) Cancer? 2nd opinion?; 4) “Johnny hit me.”; 5) “What did he know and when did he know it?”; 6) Who killed Nicole & Ronald?; 7) Whose lipstick in husband’s coat?
3. But pluralism/diversity have gone to seed. All ideas equally valid, legitimate. Truth is what you *think* it is, and if you don’t think it’s true, it *isn’t*. We are suffering consequences of this subjectivism.

### **1. “What Is Truth?”: An Ancient Question**

A. When Jesus stood before Pilate, **truth itself** was on trial - Jn 18:37-38.

1. Identity: Who was Jesus really? A King? A subversive, a rival of Tiberias?
2. Activity: What crime had Jesus committed? Was He, as charged, a perverter of the Jewish nation? Did He forbid payment of taxes to Rome? (Lk 23:2)
3. Pilate reflects the skepticism and agnosticism of his culture: “*What is truth?*” Pilate sacrificed truth to political pressure. Pilate did what was *expedient*, not what was *right*.

B. The danger of subjectivism:

1. *Relativism* denies absolute standard; says truth is fluid, mere reflection of prevailing ideas, cultural norms. *Individualism* goes further: **my truth** is based upon my opinions, desires, ambitions, feelings, convenience, circumstances.
2. Subjectivism frees one from outside constraints, avoids scrutiny, censure. But it imprisons in the darkness of uncertainty, the instability of emotionalism, the ignorance of revisionism and the tyranny of injustice.
3. **Illus:** See Marilyn vos Savant article. If we do not believe there is truth, we will not look very hard for it.

C. “O Lord, I know the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps” (Jer 10:23). Man does not *create* truth, he must *discover* it.

## 2. Discovering the Truth

- A. Christianity rests upon the proposition that absolute truth has been revealed and can be commonly understood by men.
  - 1. It recognizes opinion/differing judgment on non-essentials. But it also proposes absolutes regarding the essence of man, his behavior, and his future destiny.
  - 2. These issues are inseparably bound up in the **person** of Jesus: “*I am the way, **the truth**, and the life ...*” (Jn 14:6) and by extension His **teaching**: “*If you abide in My word ... you shall **know the truth***” (Jn 8:31-32).
  - 3. Includes ethical/doctrinal/religious truth which demands respect.
- B. Jesus was not emotionally coercive; He did not appeal to base impulses; He did not confuse people by convoluted double-talk. He spoke truth based on reason and good sense. So did His ambassadors.
  - 1. Paul appealed to the mind: Ac 17:2-3, 17 - Reasoned, explaining, demonstrating. Reasoned (*dielexato*): “to think different things with one’s self, mingle thought with thought; to ponder, revolve in mind ... to argue, discuss” (Thayer, p 139); “always with the idea of intellectual stimulus” (Robertson, p 267).
  - 2. Note the critical, discerning minds of the Bereans - Ac 17:10-12.
  - 3. But note that reason was rejected by many who heard: Ac 17:4-5; Ac 19:8-9.
    - a. **God leaves free will intact**; God will not force anyone to accept truth. *But there are consequences* both in this life and the next in rejecting truth.
    - b. Reason is often short-circuited by emotion, prejudice, self-will. **Illus**: Statistics will not remove fear of flying.
    - c. God has so framed spiritual truth that it must be sought for with an open mind and desire for it: “*Everyone who is **of the truth** hears My voice*” (Jn 18:37).

## 3. An Invitation

- A. These lectures are designed to hold forth the Bible and Jesus Christ for public scrutiny and investigation. We invite you to consider the evidence presented.
- B. **Warning**: Sometimes the discovery of truth confronts us with the inadequacy of our own life. We can reject the truth but this will not change it.
- C. **Conclusion**: God desires all men to be saved “*and to come to the knowledge of the truth*” (1 Tim 2:4).