

MISSION: IMPERATIVE!

...presenting the nature of creation

The more we water down the Bible's message, the more elusive the real answer to "What is truth?" becomes. In an attempt to be tolerant, inclusive, or at least not appear to be foolish or old-fashioned, we often sacrifice truth.

"What is Truth"?

That's one of the most famous and important questions recorded in the Bible. Incredibly so, especially when we realize who the question was directed to. It was asked of Jesus by Pilate.

Consider the obvious, for just a moment – Pilate could not possibly be asking this of a person more able to give a perfectly accurate answer. Jesus IS truth itself; He is truth personified! (John 14:6 – "I am the way, the *truth*, and the life..."). Had Pilate *really* wanted to know truth, if he had *really* believed Jesus could provide it, and if he was *really* ready to apply it, then he was in the most perfect spot of anyone on Earth who could ask any question on any topic (scientifically, religiously, politically, morally, etc.) and then know for *certain* that he was on solid ground with the answer. If only he had known how close he was to actually having his question answered!

But, it's a faith issue. He didn't know or care who Jesus was, and he didn't believe that he could actually obtain truth from Him, nor that his eternal destiny could have been positively sealed. Pilate was probably not actually asking a question so much as making his own, bitter statement about the elusive nature of truth, especially in a world clouded by sin and the deceptions of Satan.

But, Pilate believed *something*. In his world, his beliefs probably revolved around politics, power, and money. There were certain standards he accepted as truth, or at least, factual to an extent. When Jesus stood before him, truth, in his eyes, was probably further clouded somewhat by the strange pleadings of his wife (Matt. 27:19). On what grounds was she now referring to Jesus as a "just" man? Why should he (Pilate) have "nothing" to do with Jesus? And what was this strange dream she had? Why did it make her "suffer"? What was *truth* to her?

Whatever truth was to Pilate at that moment, he chose to run away, to ignore it, to escape and "wash his hands" of the whole deal. The Scriptures don't tell us much else about Pilate. What was his response to the incredible events that happened immediately after this? How did Pilate interpret the earthquake? And the darkness? What about the reports that he undoubtedly heard about dead people becoming alive again at that moment? What about the reports that he undoubtedly received about Jesus Himself rising from the dead three days later?

Like Pilate, everyone alive believes *something*. We all are staking our claims about life and the hereafter based on *something* being true.

Of course, mankind has conjured up all sorts of "truths". Baal was a "true" god. So was Artemis of the Ephesians. It was an "undeniable fact" and "all the world" knew it (Acts 19:35). (*By the way, does anyone believe this any more?!*) Today, the Muslim will have his version of truth, as will the Hindu, and the Mormon, the atheist and the evolutionist, etc. The problem, though, is that they cannot possibly all be true. Truth cannot contradict itself. The atheist says that there is no god; the theist says there is. They can't *both* be true! As Christians, our handbook for life is the Bible. We believe it's the inspired, inerrant Word of God.

If we believe that, then why do we often water it down, or muddy the waters? Back in Old Testament times, an army received its battle orders by listening to the sound of a trumpet. Certain trumpet blasts meant certain things to the soldiers. But if the signal was bad, for whatever reason, the soldiers wouldn't know what to do, and the battle could be ineffective or lost! The Bible even mentions this possibility in I Cor. 14:8 -- "For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?"

A version of "What is truth?" could be asked like this: *What is a Christian?* This question should have but *one* answer, biblically! But, you're no-doubt aware that the term "Christian" has been so watered down that if you're asked it, you need to be very precise about your answer, because it might be completely different than what the person was expecting.

The same can be true of other Christian labels. For example, what does the term "*evangelical*" mean to you? A man asked me once if I was an evangelical. I was cautious, so I asked him what he meant by that. He replied by describing a TV show he had watched. This program featured a pastor in California who had become rich by writing a book that became *very* popular. On this program, the pastor stated his beliefs --- he wants to "save the planet", stop global warming, help the uneducated, etc. He said that this pastor called himself an evangelical, and he wanted to know if that's what *I* was(!). His list (that, to him, defined what an evangelical is) didn't even mention the Bible, Christianity, sin, Christ's death and resurrection, "good news", etc. --- What is truth?

The more we water down the Bible's message, the more elusive the real answer to "What is truth?" becomes. In an attempt to be tolerant, inclusive, or at least not appear to be foolish or old-fashioned, we often sacrifice truth. If God's Word is the clear signal we need for our battle directions, we need to live out that truth! Our lives might be the only Bible unsaved folks, looking for truth, ever read! □