

Session 3

December 15, 2019

DOES ABSOLUTE TRUTH EXIST?

John 1:14-18; 8:30-32; 18:36-38a

From courtrooms to Sunday school classrooms, the concept of “truth” has ironically been a slippery one. Some would make the truth relative to the situation at hand. In that case, truth is not an *objective* standard, but a *subjective* one, open to change based on the context in which it is applied. Those of us who hold to the inspiration, inerrancy, and infallibility of Scripture, however, argue that by its very nature, truth *cannot* change; it is an absolute standard, established by God, by which all else is measured.

While Pontius Pilot was no friend of Christ, he did ask some pointed questions just prior to the crucifixion. Two questions he asked were not only pertinent, but closely related. “What is truth?” (John 18:38) and “What should I do then with Jesus, who is called Christ?” (Matt. 27:22). How the first question is answered has a direct impact on the second. So, the concept of truth really does matter!

God’s Son embodies truth (1:14-18). During the Christmas season, we celebrate the Word becoming flesh and dwelling among us (v. 14). John the apostle not only knew the Lord Jesus, but he lived with Him. In the little epistle of 1 John, the apostle testified that he *heard* what Jesus taught; he *saw* Him with his own eyes; he *observed* what Christ did; he physically *touched* Him with his own hands (1 John 1:1). But even more than the humanity of Jesus, John emphasized the deity of Jesus. Not only was the Word *with* God, but the Word *was* God (John 1:1). In vv. 14-18, John applies key characteristics of God—normally reserved for God—to the Lord Jesus, God’s Son. Four attributes of deity are revealed. First, is the attribute of His glory. While some commentators want to link this specifically to the transfiguration of Christ (to which John was an eyewitness), there is no need to do so. As one writer put it, throughout His ministry, the glory of God quite simply “shone through the thin veil of Christ’s humanity.” The second attribute is His fullness of grace. The unmerited favor of God was manifested in Christ the Son. The third attribute is truth. The Lord Jesus demonstrated the true essence of true religion (see John 8:6). What the law could not do, Christ, in truth, accomplished (see Matt. 5:17 and John 14:6). The fourth attribute is eternity. John the Baptist recognized that the Son of God was really God the Son, when he declared, “The One coming after me...existed before me” (v. 15). The great blessing of Christ incarnate is that the one true God who was never seen was manifested in the Son of God who could be seen! (v. 18).

God’s word is truth (8:30-32). If Jesus is the *manifest* Word of God (see John 1:1), then the Bible is the *written* Word of God. Both are equally trustworthy, because both are equally true (see John 17:17). In the context of John 18, many of those who heard Christ’s teaching (such things as His coming crucifixion, the weight of His doctrine, His mission from the Father, the Father’s presence with Him, and His always doing the things that pleased the Father), believed in Him (v. 30). The two-fold promise that Jesus made to them is significant. First, their

continuation in His word would be evidence of their commitment to Him (see John 14:15).
Second, their continuation in His word would actually set them free. How paradoxical that is: to bind oneself to the Word of God, whether the manifest Word (see John 8:36) or the written Word (John 8:32) is the way to be set free! Nineteenth-century American theologian Albert Barnes put it this way: “The effect of the gospel is to break the hard bondage to sin and to set the sinner free. We learn from this that (true) religion is not slavery or oppression. Rather, it is true freedom!”