

Maranatha Bible Church
Truth for Troubling Times:
Preparing the Church for Living in a Hostile World
April 7th, 2021: What is truth

Introduction:

Truth is something that has both comforted and plagued mankind since the beginning of time. We see the God telling Adam in **Genesis 2:17** “...but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.” This was the first time we read in history that God spoke with man, telling him truth. If he were to eat a specific fruit from a specific tree, he was going to die. God communicated truth to Adam to keep him and his posterity safe and to show him the best path of life.

As we continue reading in **Genesis 3:4-5** “The serpent said to the woman, “You surely will not die! For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” Here we see Satan coming and attacking the one truth that God had given Adam, he would die if he ate the fruit. Notice that Satan did not go after the actual truth but the One who gave it. His aim was at the foundation of the giver of truth, not so much the truth. Satan knew the truth, he knew that death would come from their disobedience of God. He had to discredit God in order for Adam and Eve to go against God.

We need to understand how truth is viewed through the lens of our culture in order to understand how to communicate with them. Also, we need to be able to sift through the inundation of information which is coming at us at the speed of light. One thing that we must never give in on is the truth of the gospel has not changed, nor has the means by which people are saved.

With that being said, as we see the world around us in a downward spiral, I think that it is helpful to understand how we got to where we are now. We, as a culture, did not wake up one day and decide to not only tell lies as truth, but believe them as well. It was been a very slow process from the opening pages of Genesis to where we are today. What we see in our world, our country, is the product of slowly eroding from the righteous standard of truth found only in God’s revealed word.

How did we get to where we are today?

A brief overview of thought throughout history:

1) **The Time Between the Testaments**

- a) In Plato's *Cratylus*, on the philosophy of language, Socrates says that aletheia (Greek, 'truth') is a compression of the phrase 'a wandering that is divine.' Since Plato, many thinkers have spoken of truth and God in the same breath, and truth has also been linked with concepts such as justice, power, and freedom. According to John the Apostle, Jesus said to the Jews: 'And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.'¹
- b) Following his defeat at the Battle of Actium in 31 BC, Mark Antony heard a rumor that Cleopatra had committed suicide and, in consequence, stabbed himself in the abdomen—only to discover that Cleopatra herself had been responsible for spreading the rumor. He later died in her arms. 'Fake news' is nothing new, but in our internet age it has spread like a disease, swinging elections, fomenting social unrest, undermining institutions, and diverting political capital away from health, education, and good government.²

2) **The New Testament**

- a) **John 18:37-38** "Therefore Pilate said to Him, "So You are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say correctly that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice." Pilate said to Him, "What is truth?" And when he had said this, he went out again to the Jews and said to them, "I find no guilt in Him."
- b) **John 14:6** "Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me."
 - i) Realize the magnitude of what Jesus is saying here. Not only is He saying that He Himself is the truth, but it is exclusive to Him. This is a complete slap in the face to not only the Jewish leaders of the day, but also to the entire Roman culture who worshipped the Emperor as a god.

3) **The Renaissance and Humanism (14th – 17th Centuries)**

- a) The Christian worldview went generally unchallenged from the early fourth century through the Middle Ages. However, beginning in the Renaissance (the fourteenth to seventeenth centuries), a growing interest in Greek philosophy and science began to draw people's attention away from religious matters toward people and human interests³.
- b) One important thing to keep in mind, even though there was now a rise in humanistic belief and practice, they were not separating themselves from the church.

¹ <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/hide-and-peek/201808/what-is-truth> 02/10/2021

² Ibid

³ Dan Story, *Christianity on the Offense*. p. 140

- i) With few exceptions the Humanists remain within the Christian fold; the affection for pagan works did not make them pagans.... The central intellectual problem of the Renaissance was to find ... a compromise formula ... that would enable man to live comfortably with classical forms and Christian convictions, trust in man and trust in God, vigorous secular energies and a tenacious ascetic ideal.⁴
- ii) This is the time where we really start to see those who desire reason over faith to come into the church and start to have an impact.
- c) Humanism is the belief that, by virtue of adhering to the evolutionary philosophy of naturalism⁵, see human beings as the ultimate value in the universe. There is no sovereign, creator God who upholds and governs all things according to His will. Human beings are the pinnacle of evolution. We alone are self-aware and capable of ethical behavior. The human mind is master of the universe, or at least potentially so, and all knowledge is within our grasp. With this power, we control our destiny; we create our ethics; we write our laws; we determine all social and cultural behavior; we are autonomous and self-sufficient. In short: “Man is the measure of all things.”
- d) ***How has humanism influenced our world and country today?***
 - i) Federal funds are given to secular humanist activities that are diametrically opposed to Christian values: grants to universities that promote naturalistic concepts of education, science, psychology, and sociology; Planned Parenthood, which promotes abortion; the National Endowment to the Arts, which awards grants worth thousands of dollars to what many Christians consider pornographic and blasphemous art projects; and public school systems, where humanistic values are taught through sex education, value clarification, and naturalistic evolution.⁶
 - ii) The Christian finds no value in most of what the government gives their money to. The concept of abortion is that man decides the value of another person, not God. Therefore, to murder a baby is simply a natural step in the evolutionary process.
 - iii) It is of the utmost importance to understand that we are not under a Biblical framework in our country, the truth that guides our leaders is based upon a humanistic framework. In other words, what is best for mankind to continue is what we need to do.
 - iv) Even our system of laws is set towards the humanist.
 - (1) This same kind of governmental endorsement is being sought by the gay community. Homosexuals not only want the right to practice their sexual behavior in private and to be free from persecution for their lifestyles, but they want legislative endorsements that “fully legitimize

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ The philosophical belief that everything arises from natural properties and causes, and supernatural or spiritual explanations are excluded or discounted.

⁶ Dan Story, *Christianity on the Offense*. p. 137

homosexuality as an acceptable and sanctioned alternative lifestyle.” They want the world to believe that “gay is as acceptable as straight.” The gay agenda seeks “to codify their behavior as acceptable and good, to force their lifestyle on the rest of society, and to influence those too young to understand the moral implications of this issue.⁷

4) **The Enlightenment or Age of Reason (17th – 18th Centuries)**

- a) The Renaissance and the Reformation planted the seeds that later sprouted and matured into well-developed secular humanism during the eighteenth-century Enlightenment.⁸
- b) The 17th - 18th century philosophers, while differing amongst themselves, they did have one thing in common: *all of them rejected religion in general and Christianity in particular.*
 - i) Their attacks against Christianity were relentless and unmerciful.
- c) Rather than love, than money, than fame, give me truth. –Thoreau⁹
- d) I think, therefore I am. – Rene Descartes
 - i) In France, the central doctrines of the Enlightenment philosophers were individual liberty and religious tolerance, in opposition to an absolute monarchy and the fixed dogmas of the Church. The Enlightenment was marked by an emphasis on the scientific method and reductionism, along with increased questioning of religious orthodoxy—an attitude captured by Immanuel Kant's essay *Answering the Question: What is Enlightenment*, where the phrase Sapere aude (Dare to know) can be found.¹⁰
- e) ***How has this affected us today?***
 - i) Many of the main political and intellectual figures behind the American Revolution associated themselves closely with the Enlightenment:
 - (1) Benjamin Franklin visited Europe repeatedly and contributed actively to the scientific and political debates there and brought the newest ideas back to Philadelphia.
 - (2) Thomas Jefferson closely followed European ideas and later incorporated some of the ideals of the Enlightenment into the Declaration of Independence.
 - (3) James Madison incorporated these ideals into the US Constitution during its framing in 1787.
 - (4) The ideas of the Enlightenment also played a major role in inspiring the French Revolution, which began in 1789.

As we can see, over the course of literally all of time, man has been searching for truth outside the confines of the only place it is found, in God.

⁷ Ibid. p. 138

⁸ Ibid. p. 141

⁹ Henry David Thoreau lived July 12, 1817 – May 6, 1862 and was an American naturalist, essayist, poet, and philosopher

¹⁰ Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation*

5) Post Truth Word (2016 – Present)

- a) “What exactly is meant by the term post-truth? Paradoxically, post-truth is among the most-talked-about yet least-well-defined meme words of our time. Most observers in the English-speaking world cite the 2016 Word of the Year Oxford English Dictionaries entry: post-truth is the public burial of “objective facts” by an avalanche of media “appeals to emotion and personal belief’.”¹¹
- i) Post-truth relates circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion...in other words, feelings and preferences matter more than facts and truth.
- ii) This is different and more problematic than postmodernism. Where a postmodern person might say, ***“There is no objective truth,” a post-truth person might think “there is objective truth, but I don’t care because my personal feelings and preferences matter more.”*** Anyone who brings facts that challenge those feelings or preferences is labeled as a “hater” or something similarly derogatory.¹²
- b) While the nature of truth is hotly debated, truth is a statement that accurately reflects reality, logic, and/or morality. While there are many theories of truth, there are two main veins which all the theories seem to work out of: Objective and Subjective claims¹³.
- i) Objective Claim:
- (1) An objective claim may be true or false; just because something is objective does not mean it is true. The following are objective claims because they concern factual matters, that is, matters that can be verified as true or false:
- (a) Taipei 101 is the world's tallest building.
- (b) Five plus four equals ten.
- (c) There are nine planets in our solar system.
- ii) Subjective Claim:
- (1) In contrast to objective claims, subjective claims cannot be proved true or false by any generally accepted criteria. Subjective claims often express opinions, preferences, values, feelings, and judgments. Even though they may involve facts, they do not make factual (provable) claims, and therefore they are, in a sense, neither true nor false in the same way an objective claim is true or false. They are outside the realm of what is verifiable. For example, consider the following subjective claims:
- (a) Trout tastes better than catfish.
- (b) Touching a spider is scary.
- (c) Venus Williams is the greatest athlete of this decade.

¹¹ <https://theconversation.com/post-truth-politics-and-why-the-antidote-isnt-simply-fact-checking-and-truth-87364> 02/10/2021

¹² <https://www.biblegateway.com/blog/2018/05/what-does-it-mean-to-live-in-a-post-truth-world-an-interview-with-abdu-murray/>

¹³

<http://www.butte.edu/departments/cas/tipsheets/thinking/claims.html#:~:text=An%20objective%20claim%20is%20a,be%20proved%20true%20or%20false.&text=A%20subjective%20claim%2C%20on%20the,%2C%20opinion%2C%20or%20personal%20preference.>

- c) This is why our current society/culture is not only *for* lawlessness but now are *actively against* those who support an objective moral truth.
- d) Going back to Genesis, people have not wanted to bow their knee and submit to their Creator God.
- e) In our day, confusion and morally muddy waters have become noticeable badges of honor for people. People no longer desire to know and hold to the truth, they simply want what they want and then desire others to come alongside them in support.
 - i) We are labeling men, who think they are women, as heroic and honorable. Those who desire to free and winsome in their sex life are labeled as progressive.
 - ii) Today, a pregnant woman is shunned if she is seen smoking and drinking alcohol. But as soon as she puts out that cigarette and sets down the bottle and walks into an abortion clinic, she is called brave.
 - iii) It is clear that within the call for tolerance is a hypocritical undertone. The culture says that they will be tolerant of anything you *believe*, as long as you believe what they say. If you are not saying what they desire (even in silence), you are no longer holding to truth.
- f) As we are told in the Bible regarding the last days...
 - i) **2 Timothy 3:1-8** “But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; Avoid such men as these. For among them are those who enter into households and captivate weak women weighed down with sins, led on by various impulses, *always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth*. Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so *these men also oppose the truth, men of depraved mind, rejected in regard to the faith.*”
 - ii) **2 Peter 3:3-4** “Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, *following after their own lusts*, and saying, “Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation.”
 - iii) **1 Thessalonians 5:2-3** “For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. *While they are saying, "Peace and safety!"* then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape.”
 - iv) **1 Timothy 4:1-3** “But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, *paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons*, by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron, men who forbid marriage and advocate abstaining from foods which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth.”

6) What do we need to know as believers?

- a) For the true Christian, this should not be a complex issue. God's Word is what all pastors and church leaders are commanded to proclaim, in season and out of season—when it is well received and even when it is not (**2 Timothy 4:2**). It is what every Christian is commanded to read, study, meditate on, and divide rightly. It is what we are called and commissioned by Christ to teach and proclaim to the uttermost parts of the earth.¹⁴
- b) How can we define truth? **Simply put, truth is that which is consistent with the mind, will, character, glory and being of God... Truth is the self-expression of God. It is because truth itself comes from God, that truth is theological.**¹⁵
- c) Where we live and what we see (our reality) is truth because God made it and declared it.

¹⁴ John MacArthur, *The Truth War (Study Guide)*. p. 83

¹⁵ <https://www.gty.org/library/articles/A379/what-is-truth> 03/19/2021