

A PRELUDE TO *BIBLICAL* EVANGELISM



A large, ancient tree with thick, gnarled roots growing over stone ruins. The tree's trunk is massive and textured, with roots spreading out across the ground and over the stone structures. The background shows more stone ruins and lush green foliage. The scene is set in a natural, outdoor environment.

THE FRUIT OF
THE RIGHTEOUS IS A
TREE OF LIFE,
AND HE WHO IS WISE
WINS SOULS.

PROVERBS 11:30 NASB

**PRINCIPLES
FOR
BIBLICAL
EVANGELISM
FOUND IN
JOHN 4, “THE
WOMAN AT
THE WELL.”**

TAKE

- TAKE THE INITIATIVE! JN. 4:6-9

OFFER

- OFFER GOD’S MERCY! JN. 4:10-14

IDENTIFY

- IDENTIFY SPIRITUAL NEEDS! JN. 4:9-10

CONFRONT

- CONFRONT SIN JN! 4:16-18

REJECT

- REJECT FALSE WORSHIP! JN. 4:19-24

REVEAL

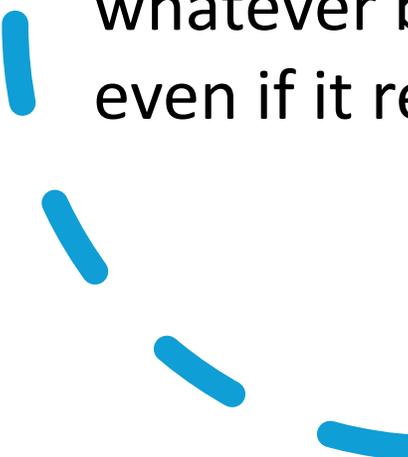
- REVEAL CHRIST! JN. 4:25-26

1. THE *CHURCH* AND THE *WORLD*.
2. WHY THE *WORLD HATES*
3. A *RECENT* BATTLE
4. THE *CHURCH* AND *PSEUDO TOLERANCE*
5. *POSTMODERNISM* AND THE *CHURCH*
6. *INTOLERANT* TOLERANCE
7. THE *CHURCH* AND *OBJECTIVE* TRUTH
8. LOSING *OBJECTIVE TRUTH* IN THE CHURCH

- Certainly, there are in Scripture ***“SOME THINGS HARD TO UNDERSTAND, WHICH THE UNTAUGHT AND UNSTABLE DISTORT”*** (2 PET. 3:16). There are also many matters of secondary importance over which we do not need to contend fiercely. On such indifferent matters, the rule is clear: ***“EACH PERSON MUST BE FULLY CONVINCED IN HIS OWN MIND”*** (ROM. 14:5).
- But the main gist of Scripture, and the gospel message in particular, is clear and unambiguous. It was not given by ***“private interpretation,”*** and its meaning is not subject to ***individual preferences***. ***“FOR NO PROPHECY WAS EVER MADE BY AN ACT OF HUMAN WILL, BUT MEN MOVED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT SPOKE FROM GOD”*** (2 PET. 1:21).
- Again and again, Scripture makes these claims for itself: ***“ALL SCRIPTURE IS INSPIRED BY GOD AND PROFITABLE FOR TEACHING, FOR REPROOF, FOR CORRECTION, FOR TRAINING IN RIGHTEOUSNESS; SO THAT THE MAN OF GOD MAY BE ADEQUATE, EQUIPPED FOR EVERY GOOD WORK”*** (2 TIM. 3:16–17).

- In other words, **SCRIPTURE** is not only inspired by God, but it is also sufficient to equip us thoroughly with all the spiritual truth we need. It is **“MORE SURE”** than our own senses (**2 PET. 1:19**). It endures forever (**1 PET. 1:25**). It is trustworthy in every jot and tittle (**MATT. 5:18**). It is unchanging and eternal (**ISA. 40:8**). **JESUS** Himself said, **“HEAVEN AND EARTH WILL PASS AWAY, BUT MY WORDS WILL NOT PASS AWAY”** (**MATT. 24:35**).
- **AUTHENTIC CHRISTIANITY HAS ALWAYS HELD THAT **SCRIPTURE** IS **ABSOLUTE, OBJECTIVE TRUTH**.** It is as true for one person as it is for another, regardless of anyone’s **OPINION** about it. **IT HAS ONE **TRUE MEANING THAT APPLIES TO EVERYONE**.**
- **IT IS **GOD’S WORD** TO HUMANITY, AND ITS TRUE MEANING IS DETERMINED BY GOD; IT IS NOT SOMETHING THAT CAN BE SHAPED TO FIT THE PREFERENCES OF **INDIVIDUAL HEARERS**.**

- ***SCRIPTURE IS ABSOLUTELY TRUE WHETHER IT AFFECTS YOU AND ME OR NOT.*** Scripture would be true whether we ever lived or not. In no way is the truth of Scripture decided by *anyone's experience*. Whether it affects us or doesn't affect us subjectively has nothing to do with its actual meaning or its truthfulness. The message of Scripture is not malleable. It is not unique to each person. Again, ***IT IS NOT DETERMINED BY PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OR PERSONAL OPINION.***
- That deals a heavy blow to a very large segment of professing Christianity today. Multitudes are listening for the voice of God in their heads or seeking some kind of intuitive epiphany in which truth is revealed to them subjectively. But the only ultimate and absolute truth for the Christian—the truth that supersedes all private opinions, personal feelings, and subjective experiences—***IS THE OBJECTIVE TRUTH OF GOD AS REVEALED IN THE SCRIPTURES WHEN RIGHTLY INTERPRETED.***

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- **BIBLICAL TRUTH IS OBJECTIVE.** It is true by itself. It is true irrespective of anyone or anything but God. It is true because **HE SAYS IT IS TRUE.** It is wholly true, and that down to the smallest iota. **(PSA. 119:160)** says, **“THE ENTIRETY OF YOUR WORD IS TRUTH, AND EVERY ONE OF YOUR RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENTS ENDURES FOREVER”** (NKJV).
 - That is the very starting point and the necessary foundation for a **TRULY CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW.** Give up the ground of biblical truth, and whatever belief system you have left is not worthy to be labeled Christian, even if it retains vestiges of Christian symbolism and terminology.
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- Many who would call themselves **CHRISTIANS** today are in precisely that situation. They use the **language** and **symbolism** of Christianity, but their real source of **authority** is something **besides Scripture**. Some simply live by their **FEELINGS** and shape their beliefs in accord with their **OWN PREFERENCES**.
- Others actually claim **GOD SPEAKS DIRECTLY TO THEM** through voices, strong impressions, or vague feelings which they interpret as **direct revelations** from the Holy Spirit.
- Still others think of the **SCRIPTURES** as an improvisational script, which they can **MODIFY** or **INTERPRET** any way they please. In any case, their lives and beliefs are ordered in accord with their **PERSONAL PREFERENCES**. Their beliefs are really no different from those of the **NEW AGERS** who believe truth is found within themselves.

- IF WE WANT TO *HONOR THE LORD* BY *HONORING HIS WORD*, WE MUST **REJECT** THESE POSTMODERN APPROACHES TO SCRIPTURE AND *ACCEPT IT AS THE OBJECTIVE, AUTHORITATIVE TRUTH* THAT IT IS!!!!!!!!!!!!

THE CHURCH AND *RATIONAL* TRUTH

- ***GOD'S WORD IS OBJECTIVE TRUTH (JOHN 17:17)***. Last week, we saw that this reality places the *biblical worldview* in utter opposition to the *postmodern paradigm*.
- A second key concept that helps distinguish the Christian worldview is ***RATIONALITY***. We believe that Scripture's objective revelation is also rational. ***THE BIBLE MAKES GOOD SENSE. IT CONTAINS NO CONTRADICTIONS, NO ERRORS, AND NO UNSOUND PRINCIPLES. SO, ANYTHING THAT DOES CONTRADICT SCRIPTURE IS UNTRUE.***

- That sort of rationality is antithetical to the whole gist of postmodern thought. People today are taught to glorify **contradiction**, to embrace that which **is absurd**, to prefer that which **is subjective**, and to let **feelings** (rather than intellect) determine what they believe. They are taught not to reject ideas just because they contradict what they believe to be true. And they are even encouraged to embrace contradictory concepts and afford them all the same respect *as if* they were true. **SUCH IRRATIONALITY IS NOTHING LESS THAN AN OVERT REJECTION OF THE VERY CONCEPT OF TRUTH.**
- As Christians we know that **GOD CANNOT LIE (TITUS 1:2). HE CANNOT DENY HIMSELF (2 TIM. 2:13)**; therefore, **HE DOES NOT CONTRADICT HIMSELF. HE IS NOT THE AUTHOR OF CONFUSION (1 COR. 14:33).**

“ALL THAT COMES FROM HIM IS PERFECTLY SELF-CONSISTENT.”

- That means, first of all, that ***THE WORD OF GOD IS A **PRECISE AND UNASSAILABLE RECORD OF TRUTH*****. The Bible is not filled with absurdities, contradictions, or fantasies. It is perfectly consistent with itself and perfectly consistent with all that is true. The facts set forth in Scripture are reliable. The historical events described in the Bible are true history, not mythical or fanciful allegory.
- The ***DOCTRINE*** taught there is ***without error***. The details of Scripture are accurate details, from day one of creation to the ultimate consummation of Christ's return. Scripture itself is completely free of all errors and deficiencies. ***"IT IS EASIER FOR HEAVEN AND EARTH TO PASS AWAY THAN FOR ONE STROKE OF A LETTER OF THE LAW TO FAIL"*** (LUKE 16:17).
- ***THAT IS HOW **CHRIST VIEWED SCRIPTURE**, AND ANYONE WHO TAKES A DIFFERENT APPROACH **IS NOT**, IN THAT RESPECT, A **GENUINE FOLLOWER OF CHRIST**.***

THE *FINAL* STANDARD *OF TRUTH*

But there's a second, equally important, implication of our confidence in God's absolute truthfulness: Since His Word *is objectively true* and *perfectly reliable* in everything it teaches, **SCRIPTURE SHOULD BE BOTH THE *STARTING POINT* AND THE *FINAL TEST OF TRUTH* IN ALL OUR THINKING.**

If Scripture is wholly true, then **ANYTHING THAT CONTRADICTS SCRIPTURE** is simply **FALSE**, even if it is a fundamental belief upon which the world's most popular ideologies are based.

THAT SORT OF BLACK-AND-WHITE *RATIONALITY* IS ONE OF THE MAIN REASONS BIBLICAL CHRISTIANITY IS *INTOLERABLE* IN A GENERATION THAT DESPISES THE VERY IDEA OF *ABSOLUTE TRUTH*.

- Lest anyone misunderstand, we are not advocating **RATIONALISM**—the notion that human reason alone, apart from any supernatural revelation, can discover truth.
- A **RATIONALIST** imagines that **HUMAN REASON** is both the *source* and the *final test* of all truth. **IN EFFECT, RATIONALISTS EXALT HUMAN REASON ABOVE SCRIPTURE.**
- **AS CHRISTIANS WE OPPOSE RATIONALISM,** but Christianity is by no means hostile to **RATIONALITY**. We believe the truth is **LOGICAL**—it is **COHERENT**; it is **INTELLIGIBLE**.

“NOT ONLY CAN TRUTH BE KNOWN RATIONALLY; IT CANNOT BE KNOWN AT ALL IF WE ABANDON RATIONALITY.”

IRRATIONALITY IS AN ASSAULT ON THE SCRIPTURE AND THE INTENT OF GOD.

When God gave the Bible, He meant for it to be ***UNDERSTOOD***. But it can be understood only by those who apply their minds to it ***RATIONALLY***.

Contrary to what many assume, the meaning of Scripture is not something that comes to us through ***mystical means***. It is not a ***spiritual secret*** that must be uncovered by some arcane or arbitrary method. ***ITS TRUE MEANING MAY BE UNDERSTOOD ONLY BY THOSE WHO APPROACH IT RATIONALLY AND SENSIBLY.***

NEHEMIAH 8:1-3 describes the revival that took place in that man's lifetime. It was sparked by the public reading of the Scriptures: ***“AND ALL THE PEOPLE GATHERED AS ONE MAN AT THE SQUARE WHICH WAS IN FRONT OF THE WATER GATE, AND THEY ASKED EZRA THE SCRIBE TO BRING THE BOOK OF THE LAW OF MOSES WHICH THE LORD HAD GIVEN TO ISRAEL.***

2, THEN EZRA THE PRIEST BROUGHT THE LAW BEFORE THE ASSEMBLY OF MEN, WOMEN AND ALL WHO COULD LISTEN WITH UNDERSTANDING, ON THE FIRST DAY OF THE SEVENTH MONTH. 3, HE READ FROM IT BEFORE THE SQUARE WHICH WAS IN FRONT OF THE WATER GATE FROM EARLY MORNING UNTIL MIDDAY, IN THE PRESENCE OF MEN AND WOMEN, THOSE WHO COULD UNDERSTAND; AND ALL THE PEOPLE WERE ATTENTIVE TO THE BOOK OF THE LAW.”

- Notice the stress on the **PEOPLE’S ATTENTIVENESS**. The reading was for the benefit of **“ALL WHO COULD LISTEN WITH UNDERSTANDING THOSE WHO COULD UNDERSTAND.”** Verse 8 describes how Ezra and the scribes did the reading: **“TRANSLATING TO GIVE THE SENSE SO THAT THEY UNDERSTOOD THE READING.”** The reading wasn’t a ritual exercise, like a chant or the ceremonial intoning of some liturgy. **IT WAS AIMED AT THE PEOPLE’S COGNITIVE FACULTIES—THEIR RATIONAL MINDS.**

- The power of the Word of God lies in its *meaning*, not merely in the sound of the words. It is not a magical incantation, where its power might be unleashed through merely reciting syllables. The power inherent in Scripture is the power of truth. I like to say that the *meaning* of the Scripture *is* the Scripture. If you don't have the interpretation of the passage right, then you don't have the Word of God, because only the true meaning *is* the Word of God.