

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*

THE *CHURCH* AND *OBJECTIVE* TRUTH

“YOUR WORD IS TRUTH” (JOHN 17:17).

- Those words from *JESUS*, fly in the face of ***POSTMODERNISM***—the belief that truth is not perfectly objective. Last time, we saw how this worldview has permeated much of our culture and even the church itself.
- But ***AUTHENTIC CHRISTIANITY*** starts with the premise that there is a source of truth outside of us. Specifically, God’s Word is truth (**PSA. 119:151**).
- It is ***OBJECTIVELY*** TRUE—meaning **IT IS TRUE WHETHER IT SPEAKS SUBJECTIVELY TO ANY GIVEN INDIVIDUAL OR NOT; IT IS TRUE REGARDLESS OF HOW ANYONE FEELS ABOUT IT; IT IS TRUE FOR EVERYONE UNIVERSALLY AND WITHOUT EXCEPTION; IT IS ABSOLUTELY TRUE!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!**

- That, of course, contradicts the basic presupposition that governs most people's thinking today. **POSTMODERN PHILOSOPHY** says there is no such thing as **ABSOLUTE TRUTH**—or if there is, it is unknowable. According to **POSTMODERNISM**, truth is nothing more than a fabrication of the human mind—**PEOPLE DETERMINE THEIR OWN REALITY; THEREFORE, NO ONE HAS THE TRUTH.**
- Above all, the **POSTMODERNIST** is convinced that **NO RELIGION** is superior to any other. We are not supposed to think our beliefs are necessarily valid for anyone else. Nor should **ANY** theological position ever be thought of as right or wrong. What I believe is valid for me; and whatever you believe is equally valid for you. **THUS, WE CAN AFFIRM EACH OTHER'S RELIGIONS, EVEN IF OUR BELIEFS FLATLY CONTRADICT ONE ANOTHER. THAT IS THE POSTMODERNIST CREDO.**

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- You may not realize how deeply this sort of thinking has penetrated the modern consciousness, but it has fully taken over the **ACADEMIC** and **SECULAR** world. Two months after the **SEPTEMBER 11, 2001**, terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, former US President **BILL CLINTON** gave a speech at Georgetown University in which he suggested that America's own **"ARROGANT SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS"** was partly to blame for making the nation a target of terrorism. Apparently, **CLINTON** believed the whole mess could have been avoided if everyone on both sides had simply realized there is **NO SUCH THING AS ABSOLUTE OR UNIVERSAL TRUTH, AND THEREFORE NO IDEOLOGY IS WORTH FIGHTING OVER.**

- **“NOBODY’S GOT THE TRUTH,”** he told students. “You’re at a university which basically believes that no one ever has the whole truth, ever. . . . We are incapable of ever having the whole truth.”
- The terrorists, Clinton suggested, are being brutal and intolerant only because they believe they have the truth, whereas our society’s more tolerant attitudes are rooted in an understanding that absolute truth is unknowable: **“THEY BELIEVE THEY GOT IT. BECAUSE WE DON’T BELIEVE YOU CAN HAVE THE WHOLE TRUTH, WE THINK EVERYBODY COUNTS.”**
- Those remarks sum up secular society’s current attitude. **SKEPTICISM** has been enthroned and consecrated, while **CONFIDENT FAITH** has been banished and demonized. The only thing we can be certain about is that we can’t be certain of anything. To hold strong convictions about anything (other than our own inability to discover truth) is deemed inherently **INTOLERANT**, even **EVIL**.

- Furthermore, according to the **POSTMODERNIST** way of thinking, there is little point in trying to combat false ideas with true ones. **AFTER ALL, THEY SAY, IF WE CLAIM WE HAVE THE TRUTH, WE BECOME JUST AS EVIL AS THE TERRORISTS.** So instead, the **POSTMODERN** intelligentsia are doing their best to disabuse everyone of the archaic notion **THAT ABSOLUTE, OBJECTIVE TRUTH IS KNOWABLE AT ALL.**
- That view is shaping the world we live in. People have abandoned the quest for **OBJECTIVE TRUTH.** Multitudes literally and wholeheartedly believe they can make their own reality and define their own truth. The popularity of such a philosophy accounts for the rise of **NEW AGE RELIGION** and **IDEOLOGY.**
- **IT ALSO EXPLAINS WHY PEOPLE TODAY ARE MORE SELF-ABSORBED AND NARCISSISTIC THAN PRACTICALLY ANY GENERATION IN HISTORY.**



- **FORMER PRESIDENT CLINTON** was suggesting it is arrogant to think anyone can know **ABSOLUTE TRUTH**. But the real arrogance is that of the person who thinks he can invent his own truth on the fly. When everything **“DEPENDS ON WHAT YOUR DEFINITION OF IS IS”**—when individuals can reimagine and reinterpret **EVERYTHING SUBJECTIVELY** so that each person determines what is right in his own eyes—**CIVILIZATION ITSELF IS IN SERIOUS TROUBLE**.



- **THAT IS THE PATH OUR SOCIETY IS RAPIDLY TRAVERSING NOW. HAVING ACCEPTED THE NOTION THAT ABSOLUTE TRUTH IS UNKNOWABLE, PEOPLE ARE WILLING TO ACCEPT ALMOST ANYTHING IN PLACE OF THE TRUTH.**

LOSING *OBJECTIVE TRUTH* IN THE CHURCH

- Even in the church, there has been a serious erosion of confidence in the objective truth of Scripture. Dogmatism on any point of doctrine is generally out of vogue; uncertainty and openness to multiple points of view is the preferred style among preachers and teachers these days.
- The most popular mass movements in evangelicalism today are ecumenical in their thrust, ***URGING US TO SET ASIDE DOCTRINE FOR THE SAKE OF HARMONY***. Such trends reflect a capitulation to the postmodern idea that absolute truth is unknowable and therefore doesn't really matter much, anyway.

POSTMODERNISM'S contempt for *objective truth* is slipping into the church in more subtle ways, too. Attend the typical evangelical home Bible study meeting, and you will probably be invited to share your opinion about “**WHAT THIS VERSE MEANS TO ME,**” as if the message of Scripture were unique to every individual. **RARE IS THE TEACHER WHO IS CONCERNED WITH WHAT SCRIPTURE MEANS TO GOD.**

But if we really believe Scripture is the Word of God, why should we balk at saying it has an objective meaning, **IT IS ABSOLUTELY TRUE, AND ALL OTHER INTERPRETATIONS ARE FALSE?** Evangelicals have always believed that Scripture is **PERSPICUOUS**—its meaning is evident and attainable. It is not a secret or a mystery to be solved. The Bible is God’s revelation to us. It is a disclosure of the truth; it is not a puzzle. **AND IN ALL ESSENTIAL MATTERS, IT SPEAKS WITH PERFECT CLARITY.**

- 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. [Psalm 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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