

“A Time for Our Truth”, or “Truth for Our Time”? (Part 2)

Last month’s article explored the relationship between ever-growing mountains of information and “truth” values. In review, the article noted these main points:

- Ascertaining what knowledge and information resides in the sphere of truth can be difficult.
- There exists knowledge and understanding that always resides in the sphere of truth. This is easily proved and, in fact, we rely on the unchanging nature of such truth in various areas of our lives.
- Believers insisting on relativism (i.e. those who won’t tolerate the thought of absolutes) hold a view that can be contradictory—even harmful—to themselves or others.
- It is reasonable to believe that better understanding of absolute truth and absolute morality can unlock answers to life’s most important questions.

But how do we discover important, unconditional truth that seems to elude so many people? We sift through mounds of informational artifacts every day. Like archaeologists, we try to piece together a sound knowledge picture of the world around us. Here and there we find books written whose contents still hold true today... perhaps recent publications that describe a new perspective, or ancient manuscripts whose writers discovered timeless mathematical or scientific truths, for example.

But suppose that you discovered a book that stands out above the rest: a book whose contents were composed by 40 different human authors writing 66 different “articles” or letters spanning more than 1,600 years—and yet the writers’ messages all harmonize with each other. Suppose these writers’ intellects ranged from the wisest of all time to that of “unlearned and ignorant men”. What if their lifestyles were just as varied? What if some were kings and statesmen and others were prophets or priests? Perhaps some were, say, fishermen or shepherds. Maybe one was a doctor, another a tax-collector. Oh yes, and some spoke and wrote in different languages. Yet, despite the book’s patchwork composition in terms of the authors’ varied culture, time period, occupation and intellect, every message points to a central, consistent message.

Such an intriguing book wouldn’t need to beg very hard to capture the world’s attention. Of course, the existence of such a book is not hypothetical: we know it as God’s Logos or Word, the Holy Bible. But as amazing as the origin of the Bible might be to some, many won’t believe that a book written millennia ago can be anything but obsolete in today’s time. Skeptics either dismiss the Bible as irrelevant for today, or they will want to test the book’s contents to “prove” (or “disprove”) its claims of truthful, timeless guidance. Just how *does* one verify the evidence of the book’s “truthfulness” and relevancy?

Researchers prove or disprove claims in various ways. The Bible contains descriptions of historical events. Are these descriptions accurate? Do they match accounts from other sources? The Bible contains claims of a prophetic nature throughout its writings. Did prophecies come to pass? The scope of this article prevents us from pursuing these avenues further, but many published works readily document the Bible’s historical accuracy and prophetic inerrancy.

Instead, let’s focus on a very important point: The Bible contains promises and insight of a very PERSONAL nature. It claims to have the power to make an impact on every human. It claims that its truth will make us “free”. It claims that its truth possesses the power not only to restore our battered lives, but to re-engineer our hearts’ motivational guidance system to point to all that is true and right, to help avoid further shipwreck, and bring us to safe harbor. As born-again Christian believers we are walking witnesses, willing and able to testify of the life-changing impact that Biblical truth makes in our lives.

Those to whom we witness may argue that there have been many motivational experts, past and present, whose methods have changed lives. This is without dispute. However, how many of those methods launched into vogue, and exited via the world’s revolving door of fleeting interest? Which methods and authors have documented evidence of changing so many lives, en masse, the world over, and continue to be as potent today as they have been throughout recorded history? Which methods can give eternal life? Only God’s Word can claim these honors.

Its nearly improbable composition, its historical accuracy, its string of prophecies-come-true, the evidence of transformed lives throughout the ages: these facts should be enough to make people pay attention to the Bible as an effective, reliable source of truth. Even if not totally convinced, however, sincere readers must admit to being curious about what else this unique book has to say, especially surrounding some of life’s most hotly-debated questions.

How did we get here, for example? The Bible states that we were not only created, but we were crafted in a wonderful, wise way by our Creator—after His likeness and image! (Genesis 1:27) This claim is in harmony with the fact that no scientific experiment to date has ever produced intelligent, highly complex, living systems from randomness or chaotic conditions.

What is the meaning of life? Why are we here? God's Word notes that each person is so precious that He is not willing that any should be separated from Him (John 3:16, 1 Timothy 2:4, 2 Peter 3:9). The Bible indicates we are created for a divine purpose: to have a relationship with our Creator (John 17:3, Philippians 3:10), to do good works as evidence of His ownership (Ephesians 2:10), and to make our Creator known to others (Matthew 28:19-20).

What does the Holy Book have to say about our destiny? It was always God's plan to bring a holy people to Himself, because He is Holy (Lev 11:44), but pride makes our hearts deceitful and desperately wicked (Jeremiah 17:9), so everyone rejects His love (Jeremiah 18:12, Romans 3:23). We have condemned ourselves to the consequences of our own desire (e.g. to be separated from our Creator, wanting our own way). If we insist on following this path, God will eventually grant us that separation, in a place that continually tortures us with reminders that WE desired this outcome and that God is not to blame (Matthew 22:13).

But God commends his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8). Herein is an opportunity to avoid a fateful doom common to all men: God offers a choice! The death of self-will after the sacrificial pattern of Christ, and a humble faith in Christ gives believers newness of purpose (Galatians 2:20, Romans 6:3-8, 2 Corinthians 5:17). That same faith then gives us a reconciling peace with the Father (Romans 5:1) and a promise of His Holy Spirit's guidance into ALL truth (John 16:13).

Our best logic to defend the applicability of God's Word only takes us so far. The Holy Spirit ultimately convinces the skeptic of Biblical truth and infallibility. We need to be sensitive to the fact that exposure to God's Word will evoke feelings of guilt or other emotions: a person's fallen condition has been "uncloaked." (John 15:22) Sin is exposed. Many will feel vulnerable. They may wish to be left alone to avoid confronting their guilt. They may react much like the fisherman-turned-disciple Peter, who, when confronting face-to-face the authority of Christ that gave the fish of the sea into his hand, said "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." (Luke 5:8)

Herein lies a spiritual paradox that believers must be emboldened by His Spirit to present: the Christ who reveals the stain of guilt and makes sin's burden feel heavy is the same Christ whose own blood cleanses the stain and relieves the burden. As humans we tend to think that justice, judgment and sentencing naturally follow the application of truth. But Jesus said "I came not to judge the world, but to save the world." (John 12:47) . It is no accident that scripture states that "GRACE and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John 1:17). Jesus Christ the Truth certainly reveals our guilt, but faith in Christ the GRACIOUS saves us from death and prepares us for eternal life.

Scripture's absolute truth is not mere "passive" truth, but rather ACTIVE truth that evokes a response in readers' hearts. It is a truth that is both examining and prescriptive: we feel pain when the reality of our condition is diagnosed, but relieved and restored when we sincerely follow the prescription. Relativistic, conditional truth seems right to man, because it justifies our wayward lifestyle and natural desires, but the end thereof leads to death (Proverbs 14:12). But we can have life more abundantly (John 10:10). What will be our choice? Is it a time for *our* truth, or do we choose the Truth for our time? May God be glorified for the freedom to choose Jesus Christ: the right Way, the good Life, and the Truth for our time, ANY time! (John 14:6)

This article appeared in the "Truth for our Time" column in the "Christian Friendship Messenger", and is prepared by the Apostolic Christian Church (Nazarean) Communications Committee. Comments or Questions can be directed to: ACCNcommunications@gmail.com