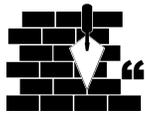


PONTIUS PILATE - “What Is Truth...Does It Matter?”



“Building Blocks”

1. **(Q1)** Pilate gives no evidence of honestly seeking an answer to his question. Culturally, he was a Roman, not a Greek. He was interested in practical matters, not philosophical ones. He is concerned about the *accuracy* of the details surrounding this disturbance. Wanting to “get to the truth” *about* something is not the same as wanting to discover truth itself. The former provides a basis for making decisions, but the later provides a standard for all of life. And, it creates a sense of accountability. True truth makes demands on those who know it.
2. **(Q2)** The “truth” about Truth is this: we *all* have a source of Truth. It is either ourselves or someone else. The first issue is to determine which of the two options above is operating in my life, and if it is “someone else,” to then determine just *who* that “someone else” is. For genuine believers, it *must* be God.
3. **(Q3-2 Thess)** It is obvious from the context here that “truth” is rejected *not* because it is intellectually insufficient, but because it is morally restricting (cf. verse 12). G.K. Chesterton said, “*Christianity has not been tried and found wanting. It has been found difficult and not tried.*”
4. **(Q4)** Jesus probably would have told Pilate, “*Truth is God’s description of reality*” (i.e. life as it truly is). John 14:6 tells us that Jesus *is* this self-disclosure. (This is further substantiated by Hebrews 1:1-3) Jesus spoke *for* God to be sure, but Jesus was also God “speaking” in his very life. He was “God in a body.”
5. **(Q6)** Jesus says they don’t “*understand*” (NAS) or “*know*” (ESV, NIV) the scriptures. The word here is very interesting. Its root is actually in “*seeing*” or “*perceiving*.” It is also in the perfect tense, which refers to a permanent *state* of perceiving—hence, to truly “*know/understand*” something.
Jesus accuses the Sadducees of being ignorant of the Truth (i.e. what God really thinks) of scripture, even though they had mastered the form of it. (They had memorized the Torah!)
6. **(Q8-Jn 8)** Getting God’s description of reality (i.e. Truth) liberates because it helps me make sense out of my life and life itself. Not perfect sense, not complete sense, but “better” sense than anything else.
7. **(Q8-Jn 15)** It is insightful to read Jesus’ statements to the Sadducees in Matt. 22:29 again in light of this verse in John. They lacked the Spirit of Truth and so the word of Truth eluded them also.
8. **(Q9a)** This description is a sobering portrayal of a whole generation that had developed a “recreational” approach to Truth:
 - They thought of “going to hear what the word of the LORD is” as a social event; a time to get together with friends under the facade of looking for Truth (v. 30).
 - There was a total disconnect between what happened there and what happened in their daily work week (v. 31)
 - They were impressed by, and attracted to “good” preaching. And “good” preaching was enjoyable and laudable, but *not* transforming or penetrating.

All this is amplified when one considers that these people were living in captivity in Babylon, and had been there for nearly a dozen years! Jerusalem was still standing when they were carried off (2 Kg 24:10-17), but had since been destroyed (cf. 2 Kg 25 and Ezek 24). The similarities between their day and our own are disturbing.
9. **(Q10)** It is very important to notice that Paul preached “from the scriptures” in both places (cf. 17:2,3 and 11,13). The Bereans used the scriptures as their standard of truth to judge Paul’s message. The Thessalonians used their standard of living (status, popularity, peace, comfort, etc.) to judge the truth of Paul’s message.

10. **(Q12)** It's been said that you can "be so open-minded that your brain falls out!" Open-mindedness is very, very important for God's people. We *must* learn from the Sadducees in Jerusalem and the Jews in Berea. But, I need to also have a finite circumference to my limits of Truth.

Even the modern notion of tolerance/intolerance is misunderstood and misleading. To "tolerate" something *assumes* disagreement with it. Accepting or *promoting* something or some idea is very different from tolerating it. The Bereans would have "tolerated" Paul if he had contradicted scripture, but they would have rejected his message as false. They were open-minded *and* close-minded at the same time, and without contradiction or "intolerance."

11. **(Q13)** The Bereans came to the scriptures looking for answers. The Sadducees came to the scriptures looking for "proof." The Bereans submitted themselves to Truth and wanted to know it. The Sadducees submitted Truth to themselves and wanted to use it over others. This actually made *them* their own standard of Truth.



"Stumbling Stones"

1. **(Q1)** Too many believers are like Pilate, wanting "truth" for making decisions, but *not* Truth as a standard to which I must submit my will. One provides "wisdom" for my personal choices, the other actually dictates the choices themselves. There is the *appearance* of less freedom under Truth than under "wisdom," but this is only an illusion because "*Truth is God's description of reality.*"
2. **(Q3-Jeremiah)** We must be careful not to miss the point of this passage: namely that God's judgment is going to fall on His people. Not because of the abandonment or devaluation of Truth, but because of the disappearance of (social) justice which results in a culture that devalues Truth. Accountability to Truth always produces an accountability to and for others. This was at the heart of God's covenant. If they would be faithful to Him and what He required, there would always be social justice.
3. **(Q5)** We need to be careful not to ascribe magical power to scripture. Jesus didn't use scripture against Satan like he was chanting runes or formulas. Jesus means, "this is how it really is..." when he said, "It is written..." The power of scripture is *not* the words themselves. It is the Truth *behind* those words. It is vital that believers make this distinction in their perspective and use of God's Word.
4. **(Q7)** We must not lose sight of the fact that Jesus *prayed* that God's Word (i.e. Truth) would sanctify them. It wouldn't be automatic. We too need to pray, asking God to use His Word to sanctify us. Reading it, studying it, memorizing it, *does not* sanctify. The Sadducees are an everlasting reminder of this truth about Truth.
5. **(Q8-Jn 4)** There is a right way to worship. Worshipping "in truth" is not a style or pattern as much as a perspective. And, it's not a perspective on worship, but a perspective on God Himself. I've got to get *God* "right" (i.e. True) to worship right.



"Going Deeper"

1. **(Q10)** The Thessalonian Jews' commitment to their own personal peace and comfort controlled their view of Truth. Does yours?
2. **(Q11)** Do you see yourself as someone who is willing to let the scriptures (Truth) take you wherever they lead, or someone who seeks to "take" the scriptures *with* you? Explain