

# What Do We Mean by Truth

Biblical Interpretation

# Truth Definition

- The quality or state of being true.
  - That which is true or in accordance with **fact or reality**.
  - A fact or belief that is accepted as true.
- From: English Oxford Living Dictionaries

# Truth (ἀλήθεια - 225)

- objectively
  - what is true in any matter under consideration
    - truly, in truth, according to truth, of a truth, in reality, in fact, certainly
  - what is true in things appertaining to God and the duties of man, moral and religious truth
  - the truth as taught in the Christian religion, respecting God and the execution of his purposes through Christ, and respecting the duties of man, opposing alike to the superstitions of the Gentiles and the inventions of the Jews, and the corrupt opinions and precepts of false teachers even among Christians
- subjectively
  - truth as a personal excellence
  - that candour of mind which is free from affection, pretence, simulation, falsehood, deceit

# Modern Society view of Truth

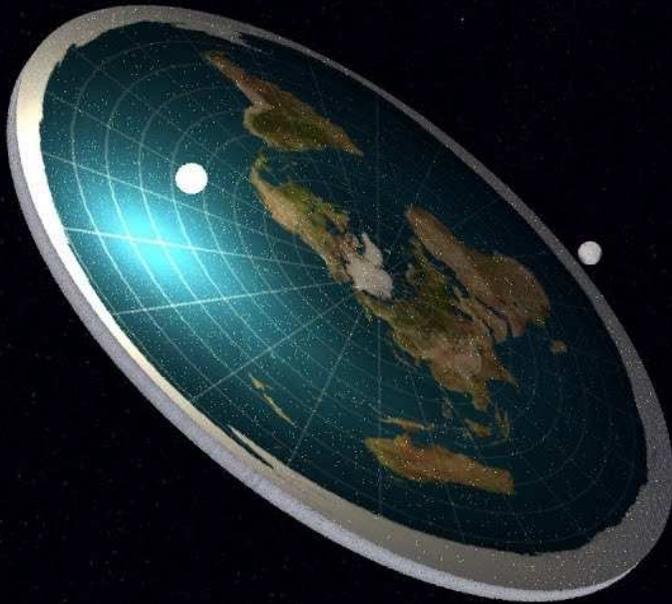
- The first qualification associated with what is proven by science
  - Or related to courts
- Second
  - Idea that truth can be relative
    - It is true for you – Bananas are wonderful, or gender related
- Postmodernity
  - The concepts of truth and meaning are merely human constructs
    - Hence changeable by Humans
  - Those who claim to possess absolute truth only do so to assert power over others.

# Gravity

- Douglas Adams
  - “The Guide says there is an art to flying”, said Ford, “or rather a knack. The knack lies in learning how to throw yourself at the ground and miss.”
  - — Douglas Adams, *Life, the Universe and Everything*
- Gravity says I can't
  - It Always wins
  - So far in 4000+ years no one has achieved it except in comics, books or movies
- Point – Reality is not shaped by what “I believe”

# Believe $\neq$ Reality

Flat Earth



Reality



# So What?

- Our belief does not define reality!
- Rather it affects how we behave.
  
- Flat earth
  - Don't sail to far
  
- But
  - Earth is still round

# Who is best to define reality?

- Watch
- Watch maker understands intricate details
  - How it works
  - Best way to use it
- Reverse engineer
  - Try to figure it out

# Academic World

- Write an essay
  - As an undergraduate you do not have the authority to state this is it
  - Rather
    - Argue based upon what others have done before
- Reference
  - Appeal to someone who has done the research to show this is true
  - Or at least they have more credibility than you to say so

# Who is best to define reality or Truth?

- God
  - Gen 1:1
  - <sup>1</sup>In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.
  - So he is the maker
- Science
  - Reverse engineer
  - Heisenberg uncertainty principle or indeterminacy principle, statement, articulated (1927) by the German physicist Werner Heisenberg, that the position and the velocity of an object cannot both be measured exactly, at the same time, even in theory.

# Who is best to define reality?

- Lead to statements like
  - Can't know anything absolutely
- True if trying to discover from within
  
- However,
  - One who created it does know
  - He designed it
  - Understands how it works
  - Hence – can speak absolutely about it

# Jesus

- John 1:1-5

- *<sup>1</sup>In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*

- *<sup>2</sup>He was in the beginning with God.*

- *<sup>3</sup>All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.*

- *<sup>4</sup>In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.*

- *<sup>5</sup>And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.*

# Reality

- Gen 1:1 ff
  - God created the world
- John 1:1-4
  - Jesus with God
  - World made with Jesus
- God is Real
  - Rom 1:18-25
    - People suppress the truth
    - What truth
      - God is evident in the creation

# Jeremiah 18:1-10

- <sup>1</sup>The word which came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying:  
<sup>2</sup>“Arise and go down to the potter’s house, and there I will cause you to hear My words.” <sup>3</sup>Then I went down to the potter’s house, and there he was, making something at the wheel. <sup>4</sup>And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter; so he made it again into another vessel, as it seemed good to the potter to make. <sup>5</sup>Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying: <sup>6</sup>“O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter?” says the Lord. “Look, as the clay *is* in the potter’s hand, so *are* you in My hand, O house of Israel! <sup>7</sup>The instant I speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, to pull down, and to destroy *it*, <sup>8</sup>if that nation against whom I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent of the disaster that I thought to bring upon it.  
<sup>9</sup>And the instant I speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant *it*, <sup>10</sup>if it does evil in My sight so that it does not obey My voice, then I will relent concerning the good with which I said I would benefit it.

# Earthy example

- Earthly Example
  - Make a pot
  - You get to shape it how you want
  - If you are not happy then destroy it and start again
  - You have power over that clay
- Jeremiah 18:1-10
  - God is the potter over the world
    - To bless
    - To punish
    - Based upon his rules

# Kingdom

- King
  - King had power over the people
    - Rules you lived under
      - Say if you live or die
    - Kings judgement was absolute – no debates
- Rome
  - Caesar = King
    - Romans ruled the area
      - Their rules had to be obeyed
- God was the king of Israel
  - Absolute power
    - We are in the Kingdom of God

# Marriage – Based upon God’s Design

- <sup>3</sup>The Pharisees also came to Him, testing Him, and saying to Him, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for *just* any reason?”  
<sup>4</sup>And He answered and said to them, “Have you not read that He who made *them* at the beginning ‘*made them male and female,*’  
<sup>5</sup>and said, ‘*For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh*’?  
<sup>6</sup>So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.”
- Matt 19:3-6

# Jesus view of Scripture

- When dealing with discussions Jesus would respond with
  - “have you not read ...”
    - Matt 12:3,5-15 - Sabbath
    - Matt 19:3-6 - Marriage
- Definitive Answer
  - Based upon scripture
  - Note in marriage passage there is 2000+ years between Jesus quote and God’s action.
    - Doesn’t say that was cultural
    - Doesn’t say that it was a myth or story to cover origin
    - Doesn’t say that you are allowed your interpretation

# Jesus view of Scripture

- God said it
  - It is true
  - It stands as much now as it did then
  - Hence this is reality

# Gal 3:21-25

- <sup>21</sup>Is the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not! For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law.  
<sup>22</sup>But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.  
<sup>23</sup>But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed.  
<sup>24</sup>Therefore the law was our tutor *to bring us* to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.  
<sup>25</sup>But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.

# Is Scripture changeable?

- What about stuff that changed?
  - i.e. no animal sacrifices
- It is not accidental or God got it wrong
  - Rather it served a purpose
    - Intention, not mistake
  - O.T. Law
    - Designed to bring us to Christ
    - Read Hebrews and Galatians

# Mark 7:9-13

- <sup>9</sup>He said to them, “*All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition.*  
<sup>10</sup>For Moses said, ‘*Honor your father and your mother*’; and, ‘*He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.*’<sup>11</sup>But you say, ‘If a man says to his father or mother, “Whatever profit you might have received from me *is Corban*” —’ (that is, a gift *to God*),  
<sup>12</sup>then you no longer let him do anything for his father or his mother,  
<sup>13</sup>making the word of God of no effect through your tradition which you have handed down. And many such things you do.”

# What do we conclude?

- God's commands are absolute
  - Human's do not have the right to modify them
  - Hence
    - Truth = What God states reality is
      - Not modifiable because we think differently
- God controls the world
  - Hence can dictate what is right and wrong

# Summary

- There is a reality or truth that is absolute
  - God made everything
  - He sets the rules about
    - Right
    - Wrong (sin)
- Scripture
  - Tells us about it
- Such a contrast
  - To our society

# By what Right?

- <sup>23</sup>Now when He came into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people confronted Him as He was teaching, and said, “By what authority are You doing these things? And who gave You this authority?”  
<sup>24</sup>But Jesus answered and said to them, “I also will ask you one thing, which if you tell Me, I likewise will tell you by what authority I do these things:  
<sup>25</sup>The baptism of John—where was it from? From heaven or from men?”  
And they reasoned among themselves, saying, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ He will say to us, ‘Why then did you not believe him?’  
<sup>26</sup>But if we say, ‘From men,’ we fear the multitude, for all count John as a prophet.” <sup>27</sup>So they answered Jesus and said, “We do not know.” And He said to them, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.

# By what Right?

- Today is not the first generation to question
  - By what right?
  - Who are you to say what I can and can't do?
- Our society
  - Right or morally correct
    - Determined by the popular vote
- God
  - He is creator
  - He gets to set the rules

# John 12:44-50

- <sup>44</sup>Then Jesus cried out and said, “He who believes in Me, believes not in Me but in Him who sent Me. <sup>45</sup>And he who sees Me sees Him who sent Me. <sup>46</sup>I have come *as* a light into the world, that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness. <sup>47</sup>And if anyone hears My words and does not believe, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. <sup>48</sup>He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day. <sup>49</sup>For I have not spoken on My own *authority*; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak. <sup>50</sup>And I know that His command is everlasting life. Therefore, whatever I speak, just as the Father has told Me, so I speak.”

# Not only authority but Consequences

- Jesus - Judgement
  - Not Jesus Job at that time
  - But will come
    - Word is the standard
  - Why
    - God sent word
    - He has the authority
  - Outcome
    - My belief doesn't change this reality
    - It affects my response

# Dealing with Israel's rejection and our faith

## Rom 11:19-24

- <sup>19</sup>You will say then, “Branches were broken off that I might be grafted in.”  
<sup>20</sup>*Well said.* Because of unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by faith. Do not be haughty, but fear.  
<sup>21</sup>For if God did not spare the natural branches, He may not spare you either.  
<sup>22</sup>Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in *His* goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off.  
<sup>23</sup>And they also, if they do not continue in unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again.  
<sup>24</sup>For if you were cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, who *are* natural *branches*, be grafted into their own olive tree?

# Summary

- There is a reality or truth that is absolute
  - God made everything
  - He sets the rules about
    - Right
    - Wrong (sin)
- Scripture
  - Tells us about it
- Not “just a nice story”
  - Consequences for acceptance or rejection

# Verily, verily, I say to you

- Stated 25 times
  - Also translated "most assuredly" or "truly truly"
  - → This is truth
- Verily (ἀμήν - 281)
  - firm
    - metaphorically faithful
  - verily, amen
    - at the beginning of a discourse—surely, truly, of a truth
    - at the end—so it is, so be it, may it be fulfilled. It was a custom, which passed over from the synagogues to the Christian assemblies, that when he who had read or discoursed, had offered up solemn prayer to God, the others responded Amen, and thus made the substance of what was uttered their own.

# So what is Truth?

- Truth
- What God says it is
  - He is king, his will reigns
  - Defines our reality
- Absolute
  - Not modifiable by humans
- Found in scripture
  - Jesus referred people back to scripture
  - Authority from God

# 2 Cor 5:6-11

- <sup>6</sup>So *we are* always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. <sup>7</sup>For we walk by faith, not by sight.

<sup>8</sup>We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord. <sup>9</sup>Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him.

<sup>10</sup>For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things *done* in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

<sup>11</sup>Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are well known to God, and I also trust are well known in your consciences.

# Questions

- How does the reality that God is the creator and hence can dictate right and wrong (what is truth) fit with our idea of democracy?
- How does Jesus view of scripture impact on your view of scripture and the importance of studying scripture and understanding it?
- Discuss the teaching of scripture, particularly when it contradicts what our society thinks should be right?
- What impact does Paul's statement in 2 Cor 5:6-11 have on the way we live?