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KNOWING GOD'S TRUTH

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GOD'S TRUTH
BY GORDON MURRAY

This world is full of lies. Wives wonder whether they can trust their husbands. Politicians 'spin' the truth any way which suits them. Little kids deny doing what they have blatantly done.

Some lies are more subtle. There could be grand claims made through advertising or white lies that 'won't hurt anybody.' We are all guilty. Jeremiah says of the world that *'everyone will deceive his neighbor, and will not speak the truth; they have taught their tongue to speak lies; they weary themselves to commit iniquity'* (Jeremiah 9:5).

Maybe that's why people aren't fond of the Adam and Eve story. It displays man's capacity for lies as clearly as anything. Satan approaches Eve and says 'Do you know what? God lied to you. That fruit is good and will do you good.' Eve thinks about this for a minute and decides that she wants what the devil is offering. She passes the fruit to the perfect Adam and he (with Eve and all his seed) becomes a sinner. Then he starts telling lies.

First he hides, which is the metaphoric antithesis of openness and honesty. Then God asks "Where are you Adam?" "We're naked!" comes the reply. It's true. But it's only a problem because they listened to the lie of the devil rather than the truth of God. Then when God asks "Why are you naked?" Adam invents political spin. "The woman gave me and I ate. And, incidentally, you gave me the woman!" Eve then has to put her spin on it so that the blame doesn't lie with her. It was the devil. It was all the devil. But God's curse on Eve shows us that it wasn't all the devil.

This is why Satan is called the father of lies (John 8:44). Lies all stem from him.

In contrast, God is true. The Old Testament abounds with references to God's honesty.

'And the Lord passed before him and proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth"' (Exodus 34:6).

BECAUSE GOD IS TRUE, HIS CHURCH OUGHT TO BE TRUE. WE ARE COMMANDED IN EXODUS 20: 'THOU SHALT NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS.' WE SHOULD NOT KEEP THIS COMMAND BY LIVING A PHARISAIC WAY.

He is the Rock, his work is perfect; for all his ways are justice, a God of truth and without injustice; righteous and upright is he' (Deuteronomy 32:4).

One of the evidences of this is the Bible itself. It simply declares truth. Even when we don't like it! Jesus tells us he is the truth and he tells us people will hate us because of him. Men don't love truth. We're sinners. As much as we pretend to love truth we would rather the Bible did not say what it says. We would, like our mother Eve, prefer the devil's version.

But God continues to be infinite, eternal and unchangeable in his truth. That's why Paul says that even when people don't believe we should 'let God be true but every man a liar' (Romans 3:3). If we have a choice to believe men or believe God, the right choice is obvious. God always tells the truth.

Because God is true, his Church ought to be true. We are commanded in Exodus 20: 'Thou shalt not bear false witness.' We should not keep this command by living a Pharisaic way. It's not commanding us to be hard truth-tellers who go around offending everyone. We are to live honestly. We are to declare the truth. If we read 1 John we see how God wants his people to live in regard to truth.

Finally, when it comes to the Gospel we need to be true. Paul's great issue with the troublers in Galatia was that he "saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel" (Galatians 2:14). Let's make sure that we are. Let the world know that when God says "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved" that the message comes not from the lips of sinful men or the lying devil but from God who is truth.

What is God?

*God is a spirit,
infinite, eternal,
and unchangeable,
in his being,
wisdom, power,
holiness, justice,
goodness and
truth.*

Westminster Shorter Catechism (Q. & A. 4)

KNOWING GOD'S INFINITE, ETERNAL AND UNCHANGEABLE TRUTH

BY REV. GEORGE MACASKILL

In 21st century postmodern culture, 'truth' is thought to be something variable and changeable.

It is claimed by some that 'truth' is different for everyone. It is thought to be similar to one's opinion or personal judgment, maintaining that 'truth' is nebulous and relative instead of definitive and certain. In one short statement, a postmodern age declares today: "There is no absolute truth". But there are at least two problems with such a statement. First, that statement itself is an absolute statement! Secondly, it does not work with my banker. He tells me quite categorically how much money I have irrespective of how much I believe I have. Similarly, my doctor tells me quite categorically I have cancer despite the fact that I am very comfortable and 'feel' perfectly well. It is foolish to deny there is such a thing as absolute, objective truth!

Aligned to the notion of truth in a postmodern age is the idea that 'truth' is not important - what is important is that one is sincere. Again, how foolish!

One can be sincerely wrong. Is it not important if I swallow arsenic as long as I was sincerely believing I was taking aspirin? Of course it matters!

The truth of God is absolute truth. It is truth which is the same always. It is truth that is the same for everyone. Everywhere. The truth of God never changes, it is consistently the truth. God's truth also reconciles with facts. God's truth cannot be separated from reality. Truth is factual, evidential and objective.

But God's truth is more than all that. In the bible, 'the truth' means much more than simple facts. In a very real way, truth is related to salvation (1Tim 2:4); to faith and Godliness (Titus 1:1); and to the Word (John 17:17). This is perhaps best seen in 2 Tim 3:7-8: "always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. Now as Jannes and Jambres resisted Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, disapproved concerning the faith."

Most importantly, God's truth cannot be separated from God Himself. God's truth is always in accord with His own nature.

WE MUST REMEMBER WE CAN ONLY KNOW TRUTH, INDEED ANYTHING DIVINE, THROUGH THE HOLY SPIRIT. AFTER ALL, THE HOLY SPIRIT IS OFTEN CALLED THE "SPIRIT OF TRUTH" IN THE BIBLE (JOHN 14:17; 15:26; 16:13). AT THE END OF THE DAY, IT IS ALL GOD'S WORK. TRUTH, SALVATION AND CHRIST MUST BE REVEALED TO US BY GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT.

God cannot contradict Himself. 2Tim 2:13 makes this point well: "If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself." That is why Jesus, who is God, could say that He was the truth (John 14:6).

Knowledge of the truth cannot be separated from a knowledge of sin. 1John 1:8 says: "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us". The story of truth begins with the story of sin. Someone has said the gospel is a love story starting with a divorce! If there was no sin there would be no such thing as "religion" and certainly no need of a gospel or a Saviour.

It follows, therefore, that very much aligned to this is the fact that a knowledge of truth necessarily also involves a knowledge of God's mercy. To have a knowledge of sin but no knowledge of God's mercy is only a half-truth, as is a knowledge of God's mercy without a knowledge of sin. Our Bible tells us that "truth meets with mercy"

(Ps 85:10). The truth that our sins are real can meet with God's mercy in Christ as "grace and truth came by Jesus Christ". The truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth is the fact that we are all sinners yet we can all be forgiven and saved through faith in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

God makes it clear in the Bible that he desires all to come to a knowledge of the truth (1Tim 2:4). But how do we come to know 'the truth'?

When Pontius Pilate asked the question: "What is truth?" he was not genuinely looking for an answer to the question - he was actually making a statement. That is why Jesus did not reply to Pilate. Pilate was asserting that it was impossible for anyone to find the answer to the question: "What is Truth?" He was declaring that it was impossible to know truth. However, that flatly contradicts the teaching of the Bible. Jesus stated categorically in John 8:31, 32: "If you abide in My Word, you shall be My

disciples indeed, and you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free”.

There are two ways in particular that we can know the truth. The first is to know Christ. Christ is the truth. Jesus said: “I am the way, the truth and the life.” The bible speaks of the truth “as it is in Jesus” (Eph 4:21). We will never find truth until we find Christ.

How do we find Christ? This leads us to the second way of knowing truth - it is to know the Word. In His great intercessory prayer, Jesus declared: “Thy Word is Truth” (John 17:17). John’s gospel begins by stating that Jesus is the Word, so, to know Christ and to know the Word are effectively the same thing. In John 8:31 and 32 Christ Himself states: “Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him: “If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” It is therefore clear that knowing the Bible is knowing ‘truth’.

The Bible is a revelation to us from God. It is the medium through which God reveals Himself, His Salvation and His Will for humans on earth. In the last analysis, God, salvation and ‘truth’ actually cannot be found - they must be revealed to us! God reveals ‘truth’ and salvation through the Bible.

Finally, we must remember we can only know truth, indeed anything divine,

through the Holy Spirit. After all, the Holy Spirit is often called the “Spirit of Truth” in the Bible (John 14:17; 15:26; 16:13). At the end of the day, it is all God’s work. Truth, salvation and Christ must be revealed to us by God’s Holy Spirit. Mercifully, God is pleased to do that and declares in the Bible that we will “find Him when we seek Him with all our hearts.” (Deut 4:29 and Jer 29:13). It is the Holy Spirit’s work to ‘reveal’ divine things to poor, blind, foolish sinners. That is why it is so important not to grieve, quench or resist the Holy Spirit. It is frightening to discover that it is possible to know the Bible and yet not know Christ. This is clear from the way the Saviour rebuked the Scribes who searched the Scriptures yet would not come to Him for life (John 5:39,40). We need the Holy Spirit to illumine the pages of Scripture to reveal Christ to us. At the end of the day, the one thing we all need is the Holy Spirit. What a wonderful promise Jesus gives us in Luke 11:13 “If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!”



JESUS CAME INTO THE WORLD TO BEAR WITNESS TO THE TRUTH

A SERMON BY JOHN PIPER

PREACHED ON DECEMBER 25, 1988

Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king. For this I was born and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears my voice.” Pilate said to him, “What is truth?”

Why Did Jesus Come?

Every year Christmas poses a question to the world—and to you this morning—namely, why did Jesus come? Or what is the meaning of Jesus Christ? Or, more personally, what difference should this man make in my life? In my marriage, in my work, in my leisure, in my thinking, in my emotions?

When he was on trial for his life Jesus spoke some words which give an answer to this question. He said in John 18:37, “For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears my voice.”

The words were spoken at the end of his life, but they are about Christmas. “For this reason I was born . . . “ For this reason there is Christmas. Christmas exists because Jesus came to bear witness to the truth.

So what I would like to do on this Christmas morning is to think for a few minutes with you about these words of Jesus. I suggest that we focus on two implications of this verse, or two implications of Christmas, and then close with an exhortation.

- Implication #1: Christmas means that there is truth—truth that everyone should believe.
- Implication #2: Christmas means that Jesus came to testify to that truth—he is the key witness.
- Exhortation: Don’t be like Pilate when you hear the truth.

IMPLICATION #1

There is truth—truth that everyone should believe.

“For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to bear witness

to the truth.” THE TRUTH! There is truth—truth that comes from outside the world and gives meaning to the world. The world doesn’t make this truth. It doesn’t shape or change this truth. It is THE TRUTH, not a truth for me and a different truth for you. But THE TRUTH for all of us. Unchanging, absolute.

There may have been a generation or a century when this simple implication of the text would not need to be stressed: that there is truth—truth outside of my own mind, truth that I don’t create but discover, that I don’t control but submit to. There may have been a time when we didn’t have to proclaim this as part of the Christian message. But not today.

The Contemporary Rejection of Absolute Truth

Today this simple affirmation is a stunning and controversial revelation. It meets with widespread disbelief. If you try to claim today that there is absolute truth—truth that everyone should believe and follow—you will very likely be considered misguided and immoral.

People will say you are misguided because there’s no God to give absoluteness to truth, or, if there is a God, there is no way of knowing him and what he thinks. One person’s idea of what he is like is as good as any other person’s.

But not only would you be considered misguided, you would also be considered by many to be immoral if you insist on absolute truth. Why? Because to claim that there is absolute truth leads to intolerance and prejudice against what others think.

Morality today has been virtually defined in terms of relativism. If you don’t believe that the truth you see is binding on me, then you are humble and good and moral. But if you do believe that the truth you see is binding on me, then you are arrogant and intolerant and immoral. Virtue or morality today demands relativism.

This is the 20th century world to which Jesus says, “For this purpose I was born and came into the world, to bear witness to THE TRUTH.”

It’s a world in which his message has been nullified even before it is spoken, because TRUTH is seen as the rotten root of bigotry and intolerance and prejudice. But relativism on the other hand is seen as the wholesome mother of cultural respect and tolerance and peace.

The Widespread Relativistic View of Truth

In other words the biblical message of Christmas in America today not only runs into the obstacle that Christ has been taken out of Christmas, but also the deeper problem that truth has

THERE MAY HAVE BEEN A GENERATION OR A CENTURY WHEN THIS SIMPLE IMPLICATION OF THE TEXT WOULD NOT NEED TO BE STRESSED: THAT THERE IS TRUTH—TRUTH OUTSIDE OF MY OWN MIND, TRUTH THAT I DON’T CREATE BUT DISCOVER, THAT I DON’T CONTROL BUT SUBMIT TO. THERE MAY HAVE BEEN A TIME WHEN WE DIDN’T HAVE TO PROCLAIM THIS AS PART OF THE CHRISTIAN MESSAGE. BUT NOT TODAY.

been taken out of reality. By and large people don’t think about absolute truth anymore. They are not looking for THE truth that can give meaning and purpose to all of life and history.

Instead people are trying to experience life to the full and call this experience TRUTH for them, not absolute truth, just truth for them. And the general guideline in this culture is simply: keep your monkey off my back. If it works for you, fine. But don’t lay it on me.

We need to be aware how deeply this view of truth is woven into the fabric of American life today. It infects all of us more or less. You can see it in the church where people resist even thinking about biblical absolutes. Listen to Alan Bloom in his best-selling book, *The Closing of the American Mind*, p. 25.

There is one thing a professor can be absolutely certain of: almost every student entering the university believes, or says he believes, that truth is relative. If this belief is put to the test, one can count on the students’ reaction: they will be uncomprehending. That any one should regard [relativism] as not self-evident astonishes them, as though he were calling into question $2 + 2 = 4$. These are things you don’t think about. The students’ backgrounds are as various as America can provide. Some are religious, some atheists; some are to the Left, some to the Right; some intend to be scientists, some humanists or professionals or businessmen; some are poor, some rich. They are unified only in their relativism and in their allegiance to equality. And the two are related in a moral intention. The relativity of truth is not a theoretical insight but a moral

postulate, the condition of a free society, or so they see it.

The Self-Contradictory Nature of Relativism

That's our society, and very largely that is us. And the problem with this relativism is that it is self-contradictory and unbiblical.

Relativism contradicts itself. If you say, "There is no absolute truth that everybody should believe," you contradict yourself, because you make a statement that you want people to believe, but the statement you make is that there are no statements everyone should believe. The hidden agenda of relativism is that it wants to relativize everybody else's claim to truth, but not its own.

Let me give you an illustration of this in actual practice. Two weeks ago in Atlanta about 500 clergy gathered to discuss the new rescue tactics in the pro-life movement where people try to shut down abortion clinics by blocking the doors and risking arrest. The pro-abortion forces in Atlanta called for a counter protest and distributed a leaflet that I have a copy of.

Near the top it says, "Defend Reproductive Rights." In other words, if the pro-life people want to view the fetus as a person with legal rights to life, they can have that view, but don't put that monkey on the back of the women of

this country. That's a personal, religious viewpoint. It's relative.

But then at the bottom of the leaflet in big letters it says: "WE WILL NOT TOLERATE INTOLERANCE!" Do you see what this means? "Tolerance" is the moral equivalent of relativism. If truth is relative and not absolute, there should be total tolerance. But to make this moral truth stick, you have to put an absolute punch behind it. "We will not tolerate intolerance" is the moral equivalent of "We absolutely reject absolutes!" It is self-contradictory. It's a testimony to the fact that we can't live without absolute truth.

And so it is not surprising, then, that relativism is also unbiblical. Jesus said, "For this I was born and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth."

The first implication of Christmas, then, is that there is truth—truth that comes from God outside the world and gives the world its meaning, truth that is absolute and unchanging, truth that everyone should seek for and submit to and believe.

IMPLICATION #2

The second implication of Christmas in this verse is that Jesus came to testify to that truth—he is the key witness. "For this I was born and for this I have come

into the world, to bear witness to the truth."

How Can We Hear the Testimony of Jesus?

Now the question for us is, What became of that witness? Jesus is gone now. It's not enough to say that he has sent his Spirit in his place. That's crucial. We believe he has. But Jesus said he was born to bear witness. He said he came into the world to bear witness. If we want to hear the witness that Jesus came to bring, we have to get back to those years when he was here—the years of his incarnation, when he walked and talked and worked and loved and died among men. That's what we have to see and hear.

How do we do that? Suppose you are saying this morning, I am persuaded that I need to discover THE TRUTH and live my life by it. I see that relativism won't really work. But how can I get back to the testimony of Jesus? How can I be sure the Bible really gives the testimony of Jesus? And how can I be sure the testimony of Jesus is true?

The answer I want to give to these questions this morning in the few minutes we have left is this. You get a copy of the four gospels—the first four books of the New Testament. And you sit down in a quiet place alone and you begin to listen to the testimony of these four witnesses, and through them listen

to the testimony of Jesus as it comes through.

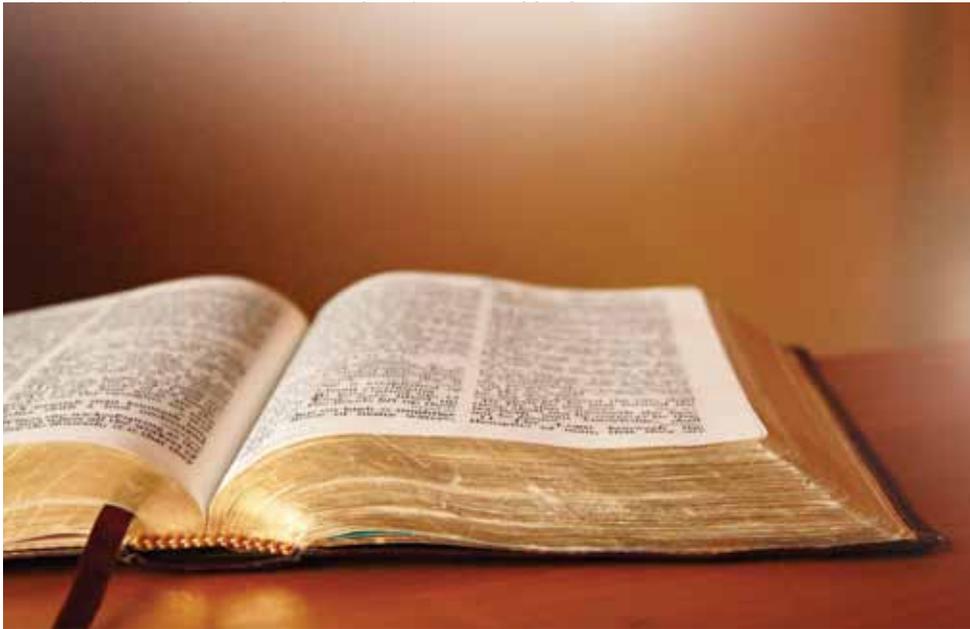
You ask God, if he is alive and real, to help you see the truth. You watch what Jesus does. You listen to what he says. You think about the attitudes that he shows. And you make a judgment whether these writers and this man have integrity and credibility or whether they are frauds or poor religious dupes.

THE SELF-AUTHENTICATING MESSAGE OF SCRIPTURE

I believe that God has made us dependent on the Bible for the testimony of Jesus today because the Bible has the power to convince people that Jesus' testimony is true.

J. B. Phillips was translating the New Testament from Greek to modern English 40 years ago and said afterwards, "[I] felt rather like an electrician rewiring an ancient house without being able to turn the mains off" (Letters to Young Churches, London, 1947, p. xii).

When he finished with the gospels, he said, "There is an almost childlike candour and simplicity, and the total effect is tremendous. No man could ever have set down such artless and vulnerable accounts as these unless some real Event lay behind them" (The Ring of Truth, London, 1967, p. 58).



What I am saying is that the way you credit a witness is by listening long and hard to him to see if you sense that he is conning you or if he has the ring of truth. That's what you must do with the gospels. Dr. E.V. Rieu was a scholar who translated both the ancient poet Homer and the four gospels from Greek into modern English. He was not committed to their spiritual content at the time.

But he said, "I got the deepest feeling that I possibly could have expected. It . . . changed me; my work changed me. And I came to the conclusion that these words bear the seal of . . . the Son of Man and God. And they're the Magna Carta of the human spirit" (The Ring of Truth, London, p. 56).

In other words if you will go to the gospels as they stand in the Bible and listen earnestly and carefully and openly, with a willingness to do the truth if you see it, then the witness of the writers and the testimony of Jesus will prove to you their credibility.

Christmas means that Jesus was born and came into the world to bear witness to the truth. The witness of his work and his words is preserved in the gospels. Read them afresh in the coming year with a willing heart and you will know THE TRUTH that he came to bring.

EXHORTATION

The closing exhortation is that you not be like Pilate when you hear the truth. Pilate's response to Jesus in verse 38 was

a cynical, or perhaps hopeless, "What is truth?"

If Pilate had been listening earlier when we criticized relativism of being self-contradictory, I think he would perhaps have said, "I'm not included in your criticism because I don't say truth is relative and I don't say truth is absolute. All I say is, I don't know what truth is. It may be relative. There may be an absolute truth. I just don't know. And so I can't be accused of contradicting myself because I just don't know. I suspend judgment."

And that may be where some of you are this morning. You may be non-committal about Jesus not because you think he is untrue but just because you don't know. You live with a suspended judgment on the matter.

Let me ask you a question to see if you are really being honest with yourself. Do you suspend judgment and plead ignorance on the issues that really matter to you and where your personal interest is at stake? Or do you just suspend judgment only in those areas that seem unimportant or troublesome to you?

I have never met or heard of a person who has any trouble believing in moral absolutes when he is punched in the nose. He immediately believes that the

aggressor is absolutely guilty. And if a judge said, "Not guilty because truth is relative and for him it was a good thing to punch you in the nose and you can't put the monkey of your absolutes onto his back," then you would say that this judge is a bad judge.

The point is this, Pilate may say—you may say—"I don't know what absolute truth is, and I don't think I can find out." But the truth is, when your own personal interest is at stake, you won't act as though you don't know what truth is. We have very strong convictions when our life and property are at stake, don't we? Strange how agnosticism and relativism are blown away when our rights and our life are on the line!

So I plead with you this Christmas that you realize how much is at stake in the Jesus' claim to bring the truth. It is a matter of eternal life and death. Your life is on the line. And Jesus says in another place (John 7:17), "If anyone's will is to do God's will, he will know whether the teaching is from God."

Jesus was not born to keep secret the truth of God. He was born and came into the world to bear witness to the truth, the unchanging absolute truth of God. Realize how much is at stake. Take up the gospel and read. And you will know the truth and the truth will set you free.

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KID'S KORNER: KNOWING THE TRUTH BY CARINE MACKENZIE



Have you ever told a lie to get out of trouble? 'No, I didn't touch that,' when you did. Or, 'But I have done my homework,' when you haven't. God hates lying and warns us against it in his Word.

The Bible tells us in the book of James that the tongue is a very small part of our body, but can do a great deal of harm. The words that we say can cause pain and trouble to ourselves and others. We all make mistakes and often say things that are wrong. Deliberate lying and deceit is against God's holy law.

If someone is called to be a witness in court, he must promise to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth - not hiding any of the facts or adding in things that did not happen. It is a crime to be a false witness in court.

God has commanded us to tell the truth at all times, even if it makes us unpopular. Micaiah was a prophet of the Lord, a man who spoke God's message. King Ahab wanted advice about going to war against Syria, but he only listened to those who said he would win. Micaiah was sent for by the king. Someone told him, 'All the others have prophesied success for the king; you should do the same.' Micaiah answered, 'I will say what the Lord tells me.' Micaiah told the truth. He foretold disaster. Ahab did not like the truth and ordered Micaiah to be thrown in prison on a diet of bread

and water. All Micaiah had done was speak the truth, even when it was difficult. Micaiah wanted to obey God's commandment about telling the truth.

Gehazi was the servant of Elisha the man of God. Elisha was used by God to heal the leprosy of Naaman the Syrian army captain. Naaman wanted to give a token of thanks to Elisha, but he refused. Later, Gehazi decided to chase after Naaman. He made up a story about visitors coming to Elisha's house and he would now accept some silver and clothes for them. Naaman gave him even more than he asked. Gehazi came back home and hid the money.

When Elisha challenged him he said, 'I haven't been anywhere.' But God had revealed to Elisha what Gehazi had done. Because of his lying and deceit, Gehazi was punished with leprosy, the same disease as Naaman.

Lying is a serious sin which God hates. It deserves God's wrath and curse. But the glory of the gospel is that Jesus Christ came to this world to bear our sin in his own body on the cross.

God is the God of truth. Jesus described him as the only true God. He does not lie.

One of the names of Jesus is 'the truth'. 'I am the way, the truth and the life,' he said (John 14:6). All that Jesus said was true. 'He did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth' (1 Peter 2:22).

The Bible is true. Every word is from God and can be trusted completely. God wants us to believe it and obey it.



Quiz Time!

BIBLE SEARCH (using King James Version)

Find the missing word from the text. The initials of your answers will spell out an important word from the story.

Your answer here!

1 The truthful lip shall be established for ever: but a lying _____ is but for a moment. (Proverbs 12:19).

1

.....

2 Be not _____ with thy mouth and let not thine heart utter anything hastily before God . . . (Ecclesiastes 5:2).

2

.....

3 _____ and works righteousness and speaks the truth in his heart (Psalm 15:2).

3

.....

4 Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them around your neck; write them on the _____ of your heart. (Proverbs 3:3).

4

.....

5 Everyone who is of the truth _____ my voice. (John 18:37).

5

.....

The Lord is My Shepherd

*The LORD is my shepherd;
I shall not want.*

*He makes me lie down
in green pastures.*

He leads me beside still waters.

He restores my soul.

*He leads me in paths of righteousness
for His name's sake.*

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,

*I will fear no evil,
for You are with me;*

*Your rod and Your staff,
they comfort me.*

*You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies;*

*You anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.*

*Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD
forever.*

Psalm 23:1-6



KNOWING GOD'S TRUTH BY CATHERINE MACKENZIE

'I'm a truth seeker,' the young girl exclaims as she sits beside a wind battered tent, cigarette in hand. 'We're all looking for truth. We're on the journey...'

'Lying on your C.V.?' A young man chats to a friend on the train. 'Everyone does that these days! Who wants someone on staff who isn't creative with the truth now and then?'

Pick a person on the street and ask them 'What is truth?' and they probably will express themselves in a similar way to that girl or that guy; Truth is looked on as either not important or as something everybody wants, in thirty-one different flavours.

The young girl with the cigarette is looking for 'truth' but like many does not realise that facing the real truth is hard. The young man on the train doesn't think truth is that important, but will he feel the same way when he gets caught out – or perhaps when he is deceived himself?

Truth is tough. And it matters. We need to face up to that reality. So from this

standpoint let's ask the question that Pilate asked, 'What is truth?'

It is hard to hear because it tells us what we are really like. We can be good at believing lies about ourselves. Humanity has developed the knack of ignoring evil – especially when it is close to home or within our own skins. But the Bible tells us that:

All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Romans 3:23

You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies. John 8:44

But it is necessary to hear and to obey the truth because the truth of God's word also warns us of the consequences.

For those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury. Romans 2:8

*All your words are true;
all your righteous laws are eternal.*

Psalm 119:160

God's Word also gives us the solution. Jesus is the only solution. He is the truth that we have to believe in.

Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.' John 14:6

And the truth is that those who come through Christ to the Father are promised a glorious eternal future through Christ's saving work on the cross: You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free. John 8:32

How wonderful!

Every word of God's word is true: The sum of your word is truth, and every one of your righteous rules endures forever. Psalm 119:160.

It is impossible for God to lie. Hebrews 6:18.

I'm glad, really glad that truth is important and that real truth is rigid. The next time I'm in an aeroplane in the middle of a lightning storm I'll be glad when the pilot is being fed his coordinates from the flight tower, that he's taking his bearings from an exact source. If he was communicating with the flight tower of cigarette girl or c.v. guy he'd be hearing, 'Right a bit, left a bit. We're all on a journey – we'll get there in the end. Let's get creative with how we're going to crash land!'

So what about your eternal destination?

Open your Bible you've got the truth to read – about you, about Christ and about your future.

You're a sinner. You need saving – and the truth is Jesus Christ is the only one who is going to do that!

THE PEOPLE OF THE REFERENDUM

BY CATHERINE MACKENZIE

It's over now – the referendum. The polling stations are closed, the posters are coming down and we, the people, look on at the aftermath.

Facebook ended up being my point of reference for information during the debate. Here are some quotes from my newsfeed before, during and after the Independence Referendum on September the 18th 2014.

Three Ministers

1. “So be it, Lord; thy throne shall never Like earth’s proud empires, pass away; Thy Kingdom stands, and grows forever, Till all thy creatures own thy sway.

Queen Victoria selected this hymn for her Diamond Jubilee in 1897. One hundred years later it was sung when Britain handed control of Hong Kong to China in 1997, closing one of the last chapters in the imperial story. But Christ has never lowered his banner or handed over control of any his conquests. Whatever the outcome on the 19th, Jesus reigns.”

2. “What we need is a wholesale redemption of politics. Christians who love Christ and love liberty need to stand for the things we believe in. We need to employ the politic of Christ’s Kingdom here in Scotland and in the United Kingdom. We need to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength and love our neighbour as ourselves (Mark 12). And we need not be surprised if we suffer for it. We need to long for and pray for the day when the glory of God will cover the earth. And in the meantime we need to reflect that glory in the pulpit, in the pew and, as much as we can, in the parliament. Both Parliaments.”
3. “Ultimately of course I am hoping for real change - which only comes from the Gospel! That is our only hope ... The work goes on - whatever the political system. May God give myself and all His people, strength to continue that battle until the end. And may He grant the grace and mercy so that we may see revival and renewal of the Kingdom in all the kingdoms of these islands.

A Church Elder

The vote is over. The referendum is finished, but let’s make sure that one thing continues – that we don’t just have a day of prayer for Scotland, that we pray without ceasing for the land that used to be known as “the Land of the Book”.

A Young Man

I’ve been pretty much silent on this debate... I hope I am more explicit about expressing my faith, because I care about Jesus much more than this independence thing, and want you to know that He loves you too; but somehow I hope we don’t have to fall out on this. Is it possible to hold strong, life-defining beliefs, want others to realise the truths that you believe, and yet still live at peace with folk who don’t agree? And do we have the humility to turn around and accept that we were wrong if eternity conspires to point us in a different direction from where we started?

A Parent

I make no secret of the way I voted but regardless of the outcome I want the people of Scotland to unite together for a better, fairer, ethical, moral country

– remembering that “here we have no continuing city”.

A Sixteen Year-old girl

“As I placed a cross in my chosen box, I couldn’t help but think of a man, the Light of the World, who stepped down into darkness, who was nailed to a cross for you and me – that is the greatest sacrifice for freedom in the history of mankind.”

The Lord of all the Earth

Isaiah 40:15, “*Surely the nations are like a drop in a bucket; they are regarded as dust on the scales; he weighs the islands as though they were fine dust.*”

Psalm 22:28, “*For dominion belongs to the Lord and he rules over the nations.*”

Psalm 105:1, “*Give praise to the Lord, proclaim his name; make known among the nations what he has done.*”

Ephesians 4:31-32, “*Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.*”

HOPE IN THE WARM HEART OF AFRICA

BY REV. DR. MALCOLM MACINNES

Malawi is a fascinating country. It is warm with sunshine, and its society is warm with friendly people.

If you have lived with 'creature comforts' you will soon realise that many of our luxuries are not essential to life nor to serving God. These comforts possibly often get in the way of our commitment to Christ, so the more we have of material things, the more grace we need to relate in the right way to our Lord. Having returned from six weeks in the country, we thank God for the rich spiritual experiences enjoyed from his hand. One week was spent in the north, at Rumphi, Mzuzu, and Chintheche, and the remaining time in Dzuwa, the Mission village.

The short history of this 'Joy to the World' Mission station, is a story about drilling wells for water, erecting buildings for medical purposes, for education, a mill for grinding maize, and houses for staff accommodation. All the work has been done in the name of the Lord Jesus, and so it continues. The material needs of the community are

addressed, and so also are the spiritual ones. Witchcraft was a frightening power in the community less than a decade ago, but now a Christian Medical Clinic stands on the former site of the witch-doctor's home. The local primary school has nine hundred children on the roll, and for them, a rota system of village women provide lunch each day. There is a large Nursery building, from which children's voices can be heard reciting their lessons after their teachers.

The first new building for the Dzuwa Christian Academy opened for classes on 8th August. The building has two large rooms and a smaller middle room for storage. The Mission plans, under God, to have a future, so each year a similar building will be opened, and another Grade of education can be added to the school programme. There is an adjacent building to be the Library and Administrative Office. A Head-Teacher's house has been built, and also another two semi-detached houses for staff.

The Mission leaders under God, have vision. They have formed the first congregation of their registered church, Associated Presbyterian Church of



Malawi. The village system of Chief still prevails to some extent, and we had some Village Chiefs attend our meetings, including the 'Chief of the Chiefs' at our last worship service. It was my privilege to minister to this congregation over these weeks. A Chief from another village approached the leadership of the church offering a site for the building of a church in his village. The offer was accepted with enthusiasm. Visitors from other villages, see Dzuwa and the benefits of having a Christian mission. They want it for themselves. Subjects we looked at were Leadership, Church Mission, Office-Bearers in a Congregation, Baptism, Lord's Supper, Men's God-given Responsibilities, Young People for Jesus, Marriage Seminars, Women's Issues (addressed by Catherine), Marriage Services, and

Outdoor Gospel Evangelism. We work, but it is God who makes the Word effective in human lives.

The language? This is where we bemoaned the blight of Babel. We picked up some elementary phrases, but depended on translators, and we thank God for the gift he has given them. We often wished that we could speak the language, especially when surrounded by children who were desperate to engage in conversation. God has no problem with language, and he gathers in people from every tribe and language and people and nation. (Revelation 5:9).

For Malawi, and Dzuwa in particular, pray for the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts and lives of the people, that God sustain their vision and enlarge it to his praise.

SEPTEMBER PRESBYTERY HIGHLIGHTS
BY REV. ROSS MACASKILL



September's Presbytery was held in Fearn APC in Hilton. It was wonderful to go by the farmland past the activity of harvest and down to this scenic village on the East coast and to meet with some of the folk there.

This is a new initiative of Presbytery to have our meeting on occasions in places other than Kingsview, Inverness. We hope that this will be an encouragement to us all as we share in the work that we are involved in.

On this occasion we heard from three of our congregations (Tain, Oban and Edinburgh) and the work that they are involved in. From these reports it was clear that the work of the gospel is not without its difficulties. Discouragements come in suffering, bereavement and through the choices that people make but the Lord is faithful and there are also many things for us to give thanks for.

It is wonderful that in each of our congregations the life-changing gospel is proclaimed freely. The seed of God's Word is scattered and just as the harvest has come from the farmland at this time we look forward to and pray for the Lord's own harvest to come.

We also give thanks for Laurence Mackenzie our General Treasurer and for all that he does for us. Laurence was happy to report that our financial obligations continue to be met and encouraged our continued prayerful support of the financial administration of the church. In addition to being our General Treasurer, Laurence was appointed to Convener of the Business Committee of Presbytery. Please remember him in prayer as he takes on this new role.

Laurence takes over this work since the passing of Roderick MacKenzie. We were certainly reminded of that loss as we met in Hilton. Not only in the present but in times past there have been so many committed to the work of the gospel among us. Tribute was also paid to the late William Fraser. Alexander Murray spoke of his commitments, including being General Treasurer himself. We give thanks for those who have gone before us and in whose debt we are. May the Lord help us to follow in their place and to faithfully support to the cause of Christ among us.

"Thank you" to the Office-bearers in Hilton and to the ladies who provided food and refreshments for the Presbytery as we met.

*Jesus answered them,
 "Truly, truly, I say to you,
 everyone who practices sin
 is a slave to sin.*

*The slave does not remain
 in the house
 forever;*

*the son remains forever.
 So if the Son sets you free,
 you will be free indeed."*

John 8:34-36

Donald and Margaret Fraser's Golden Wedding Anniversary

Donald was born and bred at Stratherrick near Inverness and Margaret came from the Island of Harris.

When Donald left school he went to work for Flemings in Inverness and stayed there for 50 years as he worked his way up to be a sales executive.

Margaret went to Glasgow to train to be a nurse and started her first job as a District Nurse in Kiltarlity, near Inverness where she was very popular with patients and locals, doing far and beyond her duties and spent some very happy times there and then moved on to become a midwife at Raigmore Hospital and worked in the Special Baby Care Unit.

Donald and Margaret both worshipped at the Free Presbyterian Church on Chapel Street, Inverness and that is where they first met and later got married there.

As time passed they had a son David who works locally and like his father is very involved in the church and then they had a daughter Anne who is married and has two children, making Donald and Margaret very proud grandparents.

Donald has been an elder for many years and was treasurer for the APC News since it started and only stepped down



over a year ago after 15 years service but still takes an interest and attends all the committee meetings sharing his experience and knowledge with the newer members.

Donald still has plenty more to occupy his time. He organises the church lunch club, finds speakers and arranges annual outings. He also arranges a rota for the men in Kingsview to take services in the local residential homes and prepares the calendar, listing times of services and all the other activities which go on at the church. Furthermore, he makes up the

rota for the after church praise times and presenting in the church is another of Donald's duties.

Margaret is also very involved with church activities including the rota for tea and coffee after the evening services and taking a share of the cooking for the lunch club and arranging the rota and other duties as well.

They are both involved with Blythswood Care helping out wherever they can.

After all that, they still manage to find time to visit their grandchildren as well as entertain people in their home and Donald likes to potter in the garden raising their own vegetables.

We wish Donald and Margaret a very happy Golden Anniversary and wish them every success in their future.

"Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh"
(Genesis 2:24).



Announcing the Birth of Robert John Ferguson

At 5.26 pm on Wednesday 15th October Robert John Ferguson (8 lb 9 oz) was born to Dr John and Louise Ferguson. Dr John is the minister of the APC congregation at Kingsview Christian Centre in Inverness. He and Louise were married on 24th November 2012 and are delighted to announce the birth of their son and grateful to the Lord for this new life and member of their family. Praise the LORD for this new addition to the covenant family at Kingsview.

"For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself" (Acts 2:39).

O God Of Truth

*O God of truth, Whose living Word
Upholds whate'er hath breath,
Look down on Thy creation, Lord,
Enslaved by sin and death.*

*Set up Thy standard, Lord, that we,
Who claim a heavenly birth,
May march with Thee to smite the lies
That vex Thy groaning earth.*

*Ah! would we join that blest array,
And follow in the might
Of Him, the Faithful and the True,
In raiment clean and white!*

*We fight for truth, we fight for God,
Poor slaves of lies and sin!
He who would fight for Thee on earth
Must first be true within.*

*Then, God of truth, for Whom we long,
Thou Who wilt hear our prayer,
Do Thine own battle in our hearts,
And slay the falsehood there.*

*Still smite; still burn; till naught is left
But God's own truth and love;
Then, Lord, as morning dew come down,
Rest on us from above.*

*Yes, come: then, tried as in the fire,
From every lie set free,
Thy perfect truth shall dwell in us,
And we shall live in Thee.*

*We are pleased to announce
the wedding of Gerald M. Epp
and Amanda Veira (from our
Vancouver congregation).*

The wedding is to take place on
Saturday, January 31, 2015, Lord
willing in João Pessoa, Brazil
(Amanda's hometown). Please keep
them in your prayers.



"GIFT AID – SCOTTISH CONGREGATIONS

The UK tax authorities have asked charities to amend the Gift Aid declaration form for those contributors who make offerings to the God's work. The General Treasurer of the Scottish Presbytery, Mr Laurence Mackenzie, respectfully asks that Congregational Treasurers ensure that all contributors have signed the new forms and mailed them to him at the following address:
3 Sunnybank Lane, Greetland
Halifax, HX4 8LN.

If anyone has any questions, please do contact Mr. L. Mackenzie at this email address:
laurence.r.mackenzie@btinternet.com.

Our ability to continue, financially, as a denomination is completely dependent on reclaiming the tax you have paid on your contributions. May the Lord bless you for your kindness.

If you are a UK tax-payer and are not currently contributing through Gift Aid I would urge you to prayerfully consider this matter; essentially it adds 20% to what you give to the work of Christ. A Gift Aid declaration form is available for download on our website: www.apchurches.org/gift-aid-scottish-congregations.

SUBSCRIPTIONS & RENEWALS FOR APC NEWS

The APC News is published 6 times per year beginning with the January/ February issue. The cost is £10 per year including postage and is considered as a donation.

I would like to thank everyone who has paid their subscriptions also those who have given generous donations. However there are still a few who have yet to pay their subscriptions. Therefore, I would like to remind you to please send your subscriptions to the address below at your earliest convenience. Thank you.

Clark Walls, Treasurer (APC News)

Please send your subscription fee to:

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Dens Road Church

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6.30pm; usually Wed 7pm

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7AG
Tel: 0131 466 6247
email: jrossapc@googlemail.com

Sunday 11:30am and 5pm
Bible Study Wed 7:30pm at 47
Southhouse Broadway, EH17 8AS

FORT WILLIAM

Services held jointly with the Free
Church, High Street
11am & 6:30pm,
Wednesday 7:30pm

Contact: Donald MacNicol
Tel: 01397 712405

INVERNESS

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www.sermonaudio.com/kingsview

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Kinlochbervie: Day Care Centre

Main Street, 11am
Lairg Church: 6pm
Rogart Church: 2pm (2nd and 4th
Sunday only)
www.lairgchurch.blogspot.com

LOCHINVER

Every Sunday at the Lochinver
Lochinver Free Church at 3pm

Contacts: *Mrs E. MacKenzie*
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Mrs I Macaulay
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Campbell Street Church – 11am &
6:30pm, Wed 7:30pm

POOLEWE

Joint Worship with Free Church,
Services Inverasdale
10.30am (with Sunday School);
Aulbea 12 noon (with Sunday
School); Poolewe 6pm

SKYE AND HARRIS

Revd. Dr Wayne Pearce
Bruach Taibh, 2 Borve, Arnisort,
Portree, Skye, IV51 9PS
Tel: 01470 582421
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wayne.pearce66@btinternet.com

SKYE: Portree APC Church,
Staffin Road – 11am & 4:45pm,
CofS, Dunvegan – 12:45 & 6:30pm.
Mid-week service Wed 7:30pm,
1st, 3rd, 5th Portree; 2nd, 4th
Dunvegan. Thurs – Bible Study
Portree 2nd & 4th at 7:30pm

HARRIS: Church of Scotland
building in Scarista every Sunday
at 12 noon and 6 pm.
Local Contact: *Mr Finlay*
MacIennan Tel: 01859 550252

STORNOWAY

Interim Moderator: Rev. John van
Eyck TAIN & Fearn; 72 Keith Street
– 11am & 6:30pm, Thu 7:30pm.
www.apcstornoway.com

TAIN & FEARN

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email: juaneyk@gmail.com

Tain Church, Upper King Street –
11:30am; Hilton Church 10am, Wed
7:30pm. Joint evening services, 1st,
3rd, 5th Lord's Day Hilton; 2nd, 4th
in Tain; www.sermonaudio.com/tainfearnapc

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First Service: 2:00 pm
Second Service: 6:30 pm

Wednesday Bible Study: 7:00 pm

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can be obtained on the website
at www.apchurches.org or by
contacting the General Treasurer of
the Scottish Presbytery:
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