



But in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. – Matthew 15:9

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Pilate's Question:

John provides more detail about the last week of Christ's life on earth than any of the other three evangelists. Part of that detail is the following conversation between Jesus and the Roman governor, Pilate.

“Are you the king of the Jews?”

“Is that your own idea,” Jesus asked, “or did others talk to you about me?”

“Do you think I am a Jew?” Pilate replied. “It was your own people and your chief priests who handed you over to me. What is it you have done?”

Jesus said, “My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place.”

“You are a king, then!” said Pilate.

Jesus answered, “You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.”

“What is truth?” Pilate asked. With this he went out again to the Jews....
(John 18:33-38)

The fact that Pilate left after asking such a key philosophical question suggests he asked the question as a sort of rhetorical jab at Jesus. He may have meant, “You talk to me about truth, but nobody knows what that is.”

It calls to mind a comment made last weekend by a prominent former mayor, "Truth isn't truth." The man was trying to say that just telling the truth may not save someone being lured into a "perjury trap."

Many years ago my employer wanted to do some statistical process control on some of the operations at the factory. The plant manager purchased some software called SQC-Pack from a company in Ohio. Years later, in another push to use statistics to improve our processes we hired a state manufacturing assistance agency. They got us to use Minitab, a general statistical package that includes all the functions in the older program.

But I still get a monthly e-newsletter from the company. For years I enjoyed the Quality Quiz feature in each newsletter. But then the writer and company owner died. But there was one other feature I came to enjoy, a monthly quality blog by a former auto company executive, David Schwinn.

This month's article addressed the topic of truth (it came out BEFORE the weekend comments noted above). But the definitions David offered left me a little concerned. There seemed to be a lot of room for "truth" to be whatever is widely accepted. In this forum we're learning that a lot of ideas that are nearly universally believed are not true.

I believe there IS an absolute truth to the universe. The only problem is that such truth is infinite, like the universe and its creator, and our brains are amazingly finite. So we could never comprehend all truth. That should lead us to be humble about the things we believe and always willing to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit when it turns out that things we've believed all our lives were distortions of the truth or even outright lies.

Let's return to the words of Jesus to Pilate. "Everyone on the side of truth listens to me." Earlier in the same book we read: But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth."

The Word of God should be a focus of our attention. But it will lead us astray if we do not actively seek the guidance of the Spirit as we read it. The goal of the Scriptures is not for us to study them "to death." Their goal is to lead us to Jesus. If we do not come to Jesus, Bible study will turn us into arrogant, unteachable persons who do not know Jesus.

Which brings me to an answer to Pilate's question that would have made a huge difference in Pilate's life. Truth is a person. Truth is Jesus. That's why Jesus said

what he said. Maybe Pilate had an inkling of what Jesus was saying, but I'm guessing his secular mind didn't want to ponder such ideas. Much the worse for him, I'm afraid.

My invitation, then, is for you to come to the Word through the Spirit to find and make friends with Jesus.

Sincerely,

Elkanah

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