



# Bible Student's Notebook™

## The Herald of His Grace

Presenting *every man* perfect in Christ Jesus. Colossians 1:28

Volume XII  
Issue 282

## What Is Truth?

by – Don Bast

“**W**hat is truth?” This was Pilate’s final question in his cross-examination of our Lord before giving Him over to be scourged and crucified.

These three crucial words were in response to Jesus’ two-fold reference to “*the truth*.”



*For this also have I been born, and for this have I come into the world, that I should be testifying to **the truth**. Everyone who is of **the truth** is hearing My voice* (John 18:37-38).

By His Own admission, Jesus came to earth to testify to “*the truth*,” and those of “*the truth*” will recognize His voice.

The life and death of Jesus testified to “*the truth*,” so much so, that He could say, “*I am the Truth*” (John 14:6). He alone could make this claim, for He alone was the Word, in the beginning (John 1:1), Who,

*became flesh and tabernacles among us, and we gaze at His glory, a glory as of an only-begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth* (John 1:14).

The best short answer to our question, “What is truth?” is found in John 17:17,

*Thy Word is truth.*

### WE CAN DO NOTHING AGAINST “THE TRUTH”

*We are not able to do anything against **the truth**, but for **the truth*** (II Corinthians 13:8, Young’s Literal).

Truth needs no defense and our goal is only to align our hearts and minds with it. I trust that my dear fellow saints, who are of “*the truth*,” will be able see beyond my words and hear His voice: the clear declarations of Christ, which is the basis of “*The Truth*.” They alone can produce real faith in us (Romans 10:17).

My prayer is that in the following pages, the reader might discover a greater freedom to worship

*the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father also is seeking such to be worshiping Him* (John 4:23).

We, the children of God, share a common spirit: it is “*the spirit of truth*” (John 14:17). Together we look to Him, Who is faithful, knowing that if we remain in His Word we

*will know **the truth**, and **the truth** will be making us free* (John 8:32).

The spirit and the Word always agree!

Our confidence is in Him to guide us into all of “*the truth*” (John 16:13). We are God’s house, which is the ecclesia of the living God, the called-out company; and as the pillar and base of “*the truth*” (I Timothy 3:15) on the earth, we have an all-important role in God’s purpose and plan. The Good News for today, proclaimed in His Word,

*is not such as man approves of; for, in fact, it was not from man but by a revelation from Jesus Christ* (Galatians 1:11-12, Weymouth).

(see **TRUTH**, page 2599)

## **Bible Student's Notebook™**

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This weekly publication (52 times a year) is dedicated to:

- the proclamation of the riches of God's abundant, exceeding grace (Romans 5:20; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7);
- the affirmation of God's purpose to save all mankind through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (1 Timothy 2:3, 4; 4:10; Titus 2:11);
- the "preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began" (Romans 16:25);
- true freedom and liberty apart from law (Galatians 5:1);
- the organic nature of the church, the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12);
- the distinct message and ministry of Paul, the apostle to the nations (Romans 11:13);
- the importance of receiving all whom Christ has received (Romans 14-15);
- the recovery of rich Biblical truth that has too long remained hidden under the veils of traditionalism, prejudice, misunderstanding, and fear (Mark 7:7, 13);
- the completeness of the believer in Christ (Colossians 2:10), with:
  - total forgiveness of sins (Colossians 1:14);
  - identity in His death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6);
  - adult sonship position (Galatians 4).

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## **Bible Student's Notebook™**

PO Box 265, Windber, PA 15963

Office: (800) 784-6010

Local: (814) 701-0063

bsn@studysshelf.com

www.BibleStudentsNotebook.com

Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr. – Editor

(clyde@studysshelf.com)

André Sneider – Managing Editor

Rick Lemons – Associate Editor

### Department Managers

Clyde L. Pilkington, III – Office

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**TRUTH** (continued from front page)

The beloved apostle was surely conveying the heart of the Father when he penned these timeless words;

*I am having no greater joy than hearing of my children walking in the truth (III John 1:4).*

**THE SCRIPTURES ARE ABLE  
TO MAKE YOU WISE**

Today, we have more knowledge available than is even fathomable. We have books galore, 24-hour days of television and the personal computer, arguably the most prolific source of information ever at our fingertips. We can “google” almost any topic through the information highway and find a choice of thousands, maybe millions of sites to visit to increase our knowledge.

The masses, especially the young, around the globe seem to be addicted to learning something new about somebody or something continually, and yet the majority are

*never able to come to a real knowledge of the truth (II Timothy 3:7, Weymouth).*

I am so thankful that, not unlike Timothy, from a babe I have been acquainted with the Sacred Scriptures, and am convinced that they are able to make us wise for salvation through faith, which is in Christ Jesus. Here, above all else, do we find a source of inspiration

*beneficial for teaching, for exposure, for correction, for discipline in righteousness, that we may be equipped, fitted out for every good act (II Timothy 3:15-17).*

**ARE THERE CONTRADICTIONS IN THE BIBLE?**

I have had a respect and love for the Bible, above all other books, as long as I can remember. I grew up on the front pew of a Mennonite Church, where I was emphatically told that the Bible was the “*inspired Word of God*” (II Timothy 3:16), and therefore it had no contradictions whatsoever. How could it? It was God’s Word.

The more I studied for myself, however, the more I began to realize that many verses in the Scriptures

seemed to disagree with, and even contradict, others. For years I just ignored many passages and managed to manipulate others to fit into my current belief system. It was a very long and difficult process that brought me to the place that I could honestly face the fact that there are many contrary verses in my precious Bible.

Having said that, I still firmly believe that “*All Scripture is inspired by God,*” if we are referring to the *original Sacred scrolls*, for in them there is no controversy. From beginning to end the original Scriptures are not unlike the prophecies of old that came not

*from the prophet’s own prompting; for never did any true prophecy come by human will, but men sent by God spoke as they were impelled by the Holy Spirit (II Peter 1:20-21, Weymouth).*

Unfortunately, the *original scrolls* are not available to us today. The thousands of scrolls we still do have were copied by mere mortals, as were the translations from them into the various languages, therefore we possess no perfect Bibles. If we did, even the most sincere seeker of truth is limited in his ability to comprehend the Word of God.

These facts should not discourage us from studying God’s Word, but rather cause us, in our search for “*the truth,*” to be diligent to find the best Bible translations available to us, and also to pray for God to give us a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the realization of Him, each time we meditate on His Word (Ephesians 1:17-18).

Our main goal should not be just to acquire a knowledge of His Word, which is very good. The purpose of our study is an acquaintance with His ways, which is *better*, and a realization of God Himself, which is *best*. Our *supreme goal*, in all of our endeavors in life, should be *to know Him!*

**GOD IS LIGHT**

We look only to Him for understanding because “*God is light, and darkness in Him there is none*” (I John 1:5). From His precepts we gain understanding.

*His Word is a lamp to our feet, and a light to our tracks (Psalms 119:104-105).* ►

Any sincere seeker of truth, who has the spirit of God homing in him, can go directly to the Scripture and find enlightenment and inspiration. We strongly reject the notion that “the Clergy” are the chosen recipients and dispensers of God’s truth. Every message, verbal or written, including every Bible translation, is only inspired to the degree that it is in accord with the inspired *Sacred Scrolls*.

Often it will be profitable to look at several different translations. *Weymouth’s* of 1912 and *Rotherham’s Emphasized* are two I have learned to love, although the translation of my choice is the *Concordant Literal*. All the Scripture passages quoted in this writing are from that version, unless otherwise stated.

A.E. Knoch’s commentary on the *Concordant Literal Version* will emphasize the point at hand.

The inspired Scriptures are the sole and sufficient equipment for the man of God in these trying times. All else has failed and fallen into ruin. It has become an imperative and absolute necessity that the sacred writings should be recovered in something like their pristine purity, for they alone are the last resort of the saints. Their inspiration is confined to the original text. Whatever promises the closest contact with the inspired records, and the safest index of their contents is the best equipment possible for the man of God. The *CONCORDANT VERSION*, the consistent sublinear of the Greek Text and its concordance, will, we trust, be used by God to meet the one prime necessity of the times.

Whatever version we may be reading, we will, from time to time, read a verse that seems to go against other truths we have come to love. At these times it is normal to sense an immediate jab of dread. When this happens further study is required, and it will shed more light. Although there is an explanation for every apparent contradiction, our faith is not in our understanding of truth, but it is in Him Who is “*the Way, and the Truth, and the Life*” (John 14:6). If we remain in His Word we will find peace and be drawn closer to the heart of God and His truth.

### ABSOLUTE VS. RELATIVE

Being able to identify what is absolute truth and what is relative truth may not solve the complete mystery,

but will often shed new light on the subject. Both may be the Word of God and therefore true, but under different circumstances. There are times when knowing this fact will be enough to clear up the confusion.

Absolute: 1. perfect; complete; whole, 2. positive; definite, 3. not doubted; actual; real, 4. not dependent on, or without reference to, anything else; *not relative* (*Webster’s New World College Dictionary*)

Relative: 1. related each to the other; dependent upon or referring to each other 2. regarded in relation to something else; comparative 3. meaningful only in relationship; *not absolute* (*Webster’s New World College Dictionary*)

Every aspect of our belief system must be established on a solid premise that is grounded in *absolute truth* if we are to have real faith in God and His Word. A good starting point is to identify the primary thought in any given passage; that which is perfect, definite, real and not dependent on or in reference to anything else.

Likewise if we are to find true meaning in the *relative truth*, we must also recognize what it is dependent upon and compared to. It is a serious mistake to explain away an *absolute truth* in order to make it comply with a *relative truth* when they appear to contradict.

### GOD HIMSELF IS THE PRIMARY SUBJECT

First and foremost, God is the real subject of divine revelation, rather than man. All other characters in the Bible receive their value from contact with the Deity, and reflect His glory, not their own. The evangel (gospel) itself is the good news of what God has accomplished through His Son Who is giving Himself a correspondent Ransom for all (I Timothy 2:6).

The primary theme of the Sacred Scriptures therefore, is God Himself. He is the source (Creator), the channel (Sustainer) and the object (Disposer) of all,

*seeing that out of Him and through Him and for Him is all* (Romans 11:36).

He is the only and wise God. There is none beside Him. Page after page the inspired Word reveals His character.

## WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE ARE HID IN GOD

King Solomon's words ring as true today as they did when they were first penned.

*My son, if you take my words and store up my instructions within you, attending with your ear to wisdom, and if you stretch out your heart to comprehension, indeed if you call out for understanding, and you lift up your voice for comprehension, if you seek it as for silver and search for it as for buried treasures, then you shall understand the fear of Yahweh, and you shall find the knowledge of God. For Yahweh Himself gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and comprehension (Proverbs 2:1-6).*

In the heart of every child of God there is a deep longing to discover truth and a conviction that only God's truth can make us free. What a blessing, for the humble servant of God, to know where to look for these treasures of wisdom and knowledge, that are concealed in the God and Father, of Christ (Colossians 2:3).

### THE CRY OF EVERY HUMAN HEART IS TO KNOW HIM

*It is the glory of God to conceal a matter (Proverbs 25:2).*

God desires to be sought after and graciously grants numerous nuggets of truth for us as we dig ever deeper. We recognize that the desire is planted by Him, and that it is a desire to know Him,

*though He is not far from any of us, for in Him we live and move and are (Acts 17:28).*

Regardless of our education and our God-given intellect, truth is readily available to us. If that is what we really want we will find it, for our God is "a Rewarder of those who are seeking Him out" (Hebrews 11:6). When God opens the eyes of our heart, many of the most contentious issues debated by the wise of this world become profoundly simple. A sincere seeker of truth, with a childlike faith, will receive the clear declarations of the Bible and find strength in time of need.

## THE GREATEST OF ALL PURSUITS

The Scriptures, for the most part, reveal themselves, and seldom do they require a lot of explanation. Almost without exception human reasoning is referred to as a bad thing in the Bible.

*For since, in fact, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom knew not God, God delights, through the stupidity of the heralding, to save those who are believing (I Corinthians 1:21).*

The greatest of all pursuits in life is the long uphill climb to know Him. We are all on the same journey:

Some through the waters, some through the flood,

Some through the fire, but all through the blood;

Some through great sorrow, but God gives a song;

God leads His dear children along.

(George A. Young, *God Leads Us Along*, 1903)

Paul's exhortation to Timothy was to be remaining in what he had learned and verified from the Sacred Scripture, "being aware from whom he learned it" (II Timothy 3:14-16). Remaining in "the truth" we love requires faith and obedience, not greater intelligence.

*The Word heard does not benefit those hearers, not having been blended together with faith (Hebrews 4:2).*

It is much more a heart issue than it is human intelligence.

Our challenge is to "Herald the Word," not our theories.

*Stand by it, opportunely, inopportunely, expose, rebuke, entreat, with all patience and teaching. For the era will be when they will not tolerate sound teaching, but, their hearing being tickled, they will heap up for themselves teachers in accord with their own desires, and, indeed, they will be turning their hearing away*

*from the truth, yet will be turned aside to myths*  
(II Timothy 4:2-4).

*All have sinned and are wanting of the glory of God* (Romans 3:23).

## GOD IS LOVE

After coming to the realization that God is the primary subject in the Bible, we next must see, above all else, that “*God is love*” (I John 4:8). His love for the world is such that He gives His most precious possession, His only-begotten Son, that the world may be saved through Him (John 3:16-17). Every verse and every thought in The Book must be subservient to the absolute fact that “*God is love.*” This truth is vital to knowing Him and properly understanding all Scripture.

*Through one man sin entered into the world, and through sin death, and thus death passed through into all mankind, on which all sinned* (Romans 5:12).

When the accusers of the woman caught in adultery persisted in questioning Jesus, He said to them,

*Let the sinless one of you first cast a stone at her.*

We know how the story unfolds:

He is All-Powerful and He is All-Knowing, *but* His wisdom and strength are grounded in His love. The love of God is the most powerful force in the universe. Every thought and imagination must be brought into subjection to the all-encompassing truth that *God is love!*

*Now those hearing it came out one by one, beginning with the elders, to the last. And Jesus was left alone, the woman also being in the midst* (John 8:7-9).

## WORDS NOT FOUND IN SCRIPTURE

Some may object to using words like “absolute” and “relative” because they are not found in the Scriptures. My answer to this objection is this; do we not use many words that are not found in Scripture, like “metaphor,” and phrases like “figures of speech” to explain scriptural concepts? Let us not confuse this simple method of identifying truth with endless human reasoning that uses non-scriptural words to explain non-scriptural principals, just because they have found a place in man-made, religious creeds which have no foundation in Holy Writ.

No honest, sane person would throw the first stone inferring that they don't fall short of the ideal in some area at some time. Compared to the righteousness and justice of God, we are all sinners and have *missed the mark.*

Coming close to being perfect, by works of law, as Saul of Tarsaus did, is not good enough.

*For anyone who should be keeping the whole law, yet should be tripping in one thing, has become liable for all* (James 2:10).

One would be hard pressed to find a single chapter in the Bible where *absolute* and *relative* truth cannot be identified. It would be a mistake, on my part, and a distraction to spend too much time justifying this point. These types of discussions are wearisome and not faith building. One simple example will suffice.

This is the absolute truth of God, and therefore a healthy fear of Him is the *beginning* of knowledge. Only the foolish despise wisdom and discipline (Proverbs 1:7). May we find great consolation in the fact that this, also, is by God's design, so that, by works of law, no flesh at all shall be justified, in His sight (Romans 3:20; Galatians 2:16).

## THERE IS NOT ONE WHO IS JUST

The book of *Romans* spends a lot of time and space expounding that there is not one who is just. Three short verses will summarize Paul's thoughts.

## GOOD, PIOUS AND JUST MEN IN SCRIPTURE

There are many passages in the Scriptures that clearly identify certain individuals who are “just.” I will list only a few.

*Not one is just – not even one* (Romans 3:10).

*Noah is a just man. Flawless became he in his generations* (Genesis 6:9).

Now Joseph, her husband, **being just** and not willing to hold her up to infamy, intended covertly to dismiss her (Matthew 1:19).

There was a man in Jerusalem, whose name is Simeon. And this man is **just and pious**, anticipating the consolation of Israel, and holy spirit was on him (Luke 2:25).

And lo! A man named Joseph, belonging to the counselors, and **a good man and just** from Arimathea, a city of the Jews (Luke 23:50).

Obviously, if you take all of these verses at face value, we have a contradiction. Half of them say *no one is just*, and the other half name *people who are just*. This makes perfect sense as long as we understand that those called “*just*” are so, only *relative* to other people, usually their contemporaries, or those of the same class etc. Yet even these so-called just people, when compared to God’s absolute righteousness, *miss the mark* and fall short. Both groups of verses are *true* declarations of Scriptures when understood in their context.

### GLEANNING THE GREATER TRUTH

I realize this is a very basic example, but nevertheless will suffice to make the point and establish the principle. As is often the case, saints of God get so caught up in trying to establish their position in regards to a teaching in question that they overlook the heart of the passage. When it comes to the *justice* of God, as with many other truths, there is a *deeper truth* that God reveals to His enlightened ones, along with the *absolute* or *relative* points of view.

The adversary knows quite well that, if we are preoccupied with trying to prove either position, we will miss the greater truth that can be gleaned when both sides of the “argument” are accepted as being true in their right context.

God’s justice demands absolute righteousness, and every human being who ever lived, other than the only-begotten Son, has *missed the mark* and fallen short. This is by God’s design and is in preparation for presenting the “good news” that Christ died for the sins of the world. To have a Savior there must be sinners.

For to vanity was the creation subjected, not voluntarily, but because of Him Who subjects it, in expectation (Romans 8:20).

We did not ask to be born subject to vanity. We had nothing to do with the mortality that Adam introduced to the human race, which made us all sinners, lacking the glory of God – *but this is not the end of the story*. We also had nothing to do with the glorious victory of God procured for us at Calvary. We were

*justified gratuitously in His grace, through the deliverance, which is in Christ Jesus* (Romans 3:24-25).

Truth is truth! We just accept the declarations of Scripture, by faith, for what they are. When the *absolute* is different than the *relative*, then it is necessary to make the distinction. Both are true, but under different circumstances. Keeping the process simple and sticking to the basics is the goal, as much as possible.

### PRAY FOR A SPIRIT OF WISDOM

When we believe the evangel, the eyes of our heart become enlightened, but we still must pray for a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the realization of God. Figuratively speaking, our heart is the center and core of our spiritual being and the seat of our motives, which also are a primary factor in the growth of spiritual understanding. The heart, therefore, is enlightened as our love for the truth takes seed and matures. The Father has a special love and blessing for those who love His truth and keep His Word. He actually comes to them and makes His abode in them (John 14:23).

*Seeing that you are sons, God delegates the spirit of His Son into our hearts* (Galatians 4:6).

*And the anointing which you obtained from Him is remaining in you, and you have no need that anyone may be teaching you, but as His anointing is teaching you concerning all, and is true, and is no lie, according as it teaches you also, remain in Him* (I John 2:27).

*May the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, be giving you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the realization of Him, the*

*eyes of your heart having been enlightened, for you to perceive what is the expectation of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of the enjoyment of His allotment among the saints, and what the transcendent greatness of His power for us who are believing, in accord with the operation of the might of His strength, which is operative in the Christ, rousing Him from among the dead and seating Him at His right hand among the celestials, up over every sovereignty and authority and power and lordship, and every name that is named, not only in this eon, but also in that which is impending: and subjects all under His feet, and gives Him, as Head over all, to the ecclesia (Ephesians 1:17-22).*

### **BEWARE WHAT YOU ARE HEARING!**

Between two parables regarding sowing seed, which represents God's Word, we find this exhortation;

*Beware what you are hearing! With what measure you are measuring, it will be measured to you, and it will be added to you (Mark 4:24).*

Everyone who hears and loves truth, when it is revealed, has the promise that more will be added to them.

In the parable of the talents we learn that everyone who has shall be given more, and he shall have abundantly, "*yet from the one who has not, that also which he has shall be taken away from him*" (Matthew 25:29).

When it comes to learning truth there is no such thing as standing still or remaining neutral. We are either going forward or backward. When the love of the truth is not received an operation of deception kicks into motion (II Thessalonians 2:10-11).

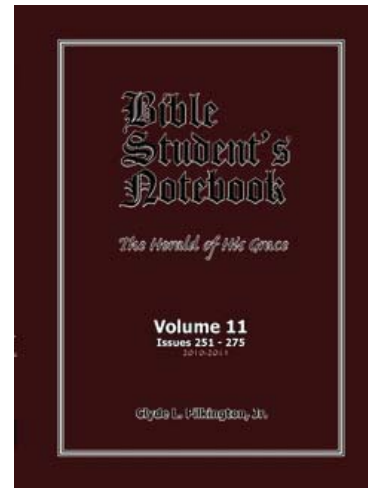
*Now this is the judging: that the Light has come into the world, and men love the darkness rather than the Light (John 3:19).*

The Lord is the just Judge, and has a wreath of righteousness for those who love His advent (appearing) (II Timothy 4:8).

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