

Jesus juva

Sunday, February 22, 2026 | Missio Dei

Week 11 | Acts 17:16-21 | “What Is Truth?”

READ: Acts 17:16-21 (ESV)

¹⁶ Now, while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him as he saw that the city was full of idols. ¹⁷ So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be there. ¹⁸ Some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers also conversed with him. And some said, “What does this babbler wish to say?” Others said, “He seems to be a preacher of foreign divinities”—because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection. ¹⁹ And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, “May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? ²⁰ For you bring some strange things to our ears. We wish to know therefore what these things mean.” ²¹ Now all the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there would spend their time in nothing except telling or hearing something new.

In John 18:37-38, Jesus tells Pilate, “For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.” Sadly, rather than probing the Lord any further, the Roman cynically replied, “What is truth?” and then walked away. This passage typifies the epistemological despair prevalent throughout the Roman Empire at that time. Romans thought of truth as unknowable, and the Roman governor was no exception.

Pilate had been shaped by a culture that had itself been molded by the greatest philosophical minds in the history of the world—e.g., Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. For centuries, these schools of thought tried to establish the *Arche* (“first principle”). If they could discover the foundation of the universe, they could explain its meaning. However, the history of philosophy is one of abject failure—theories proposed, opposing theories would point out a logical fallacy, and never-ending debates would ensue. By the first century, the competing schools at the time (Stoics, Epicureans, and Skeptics) had argued each other into a stalemate. Truth felt subjective and unreachable.

Sadly, times haven’t changed all that much. Today, we’re inundated by information. The smartphone is a supercomputer in our pocket, capable of telling you anything in less than a second. However, this information can be extremely biased, and news outlets are the clearest example of this. Whether you’re a progressive, conservative, or moderate, you can find a

source that reflects your ideological leanings. This is the age of experts, yet depending on who you ask, *this* expert can seem more of an expert than *that* expert. We are no better or worse off than Pilate; despite having more information, we lack clarity and wisdom in discerning truth. Even E.O. Wilson, a world-renowned evolutionary biologist, lamented this era, saying, “We are drowning in information, while starving for wisdom.”

However, Wilson is only right if you’re looking in wisdom-less places. We don’t have to starve; we can become wise. We can know right from wrong. We can find what all the philosophers couldn’t: truth. After all, today’s passage helps us answer the question, “What is truth?”

Vs. 16 – Paul was in the city of “Athens.” What’s remarkable is that from a secular perspective, Athens is one of the greatest, or at least one of the more well-known, cities of the ancient world. **But from a scriptural perspective, Athens is little more than a detour.** Paul was there only because he had been run out of town in Berea. And it appears that Corinth, which lays about forty miles west of Athens, holds a far more prominent place at this time, being the capital city of Achaia, and in the NT, no less than four Paulin epistles were written to Corinth, two of which (the second and fourth), are preserved in the canon of Scripture as 1 and 2 Corinthians. Though doubtless, Paul must’ve passed through it multiple times, given his many missionary travels, once the narrative leaves Athens in Acts 18, there is only one other mention of the city in 1 Thess. 3:1. And even then, it’s in reference to Acts 17.

By Paul’s day, in AD 50, Athens was about five hundred years past its heyday.¹ In the 5th century BC, it controlled much of Attica, encompassing approximately 1,000 square miles.² Plato founded the Academy in 387 BC, and in the ensuing centuries, the cities produced many of the greatest minds and philosophies the world has ever known. In fact, **democracy**, the belief that a government should be ruled by the people, traces its origins back to Athens. Population totals are hard to come by, but estimates suggest that around 250,000 people resided in or near Athens during its golden age.³

But by the first century, its inhabitants had shrunk to **about 25k**.⁴ This is likely due to Alexander the Great’s successful military campaigns, which enabled the Greek people to find new and better opportunities abroad. Admittedly, Athens still occupied a unique place in the pecking

¹ Bandy, Alan S., [*An Illustrated Guide to the Apostle Paul: His Life, Ministry, and Missionary Journeys*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books: A Division of Baker Publishing Group, 2021), [104](#).

² Martin, Hubert M., Jr., “[Athens \(Place\)](#),” in *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), [1:513](#).

³ Harvey, John D. and David Gentino, [*Acts: A Commentary for Biblical Preaching and Teaching*](#), Kerux Commentaries (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Ministry, 2023), [385](#).

⁴ Bandy (2021), *ibid*.

order, being widely recognized as a place of learning. But even its claim to be a center of wisdom, architecture, and art was dwarfed by that of Alexandria, Egypt.⁵ **Though Athens was once at the top, it was the perennial bridesmaid in the ancient world, playing second fiddle to many cities far more impressive and prominent.**

Nevertheless, there was a great opportunity for gospel expansion in this historic town. Luke tells us that Paul, while waiting for his companions (Silas and Timothy) to arrive from Berea, "**his spirit was provoked within him as he saw that the city was full of idols.**" This is likely a reference to the many "herma" [pictured below], which were marble busts depicting various Greek gods. The city was littered with these like trees in a forest. **One ancient geographer noted that "the Athenians are far more devoted to religion than other men."**⁶



Vs. 17 – In response to the rampant idolatry in Athens, Paul "**reasoned**" (cf. vs. 2) with whomever he could. As a Christian, he would not stand idly by when he saw his fellow man so deeply and profoundly misled.

Luke says Paul "**reasoned**" in two spaces:

- 1.) The Sacred – Paul talked "**in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons.**"
- 2.) The Secular – Paul talked "**in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be there.**"

Takeaway #1: Truth belongs in the **marketplace** as much as in the **church space.**

While we mustn't become legalistic, practicing our religion before all to be seen by all (cf. Mt. 6:1-6), we do the gospel a great disservice if we do not share it with those around us. Jesus said,

"You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under

⁵ Myers, Allen C., "**ATHENS,**" in *The Eerdmans Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), **104**.

⁶ Bandy (2021), *ibid*.

people's feet. You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven" (Mt 5:13-16).

A true Christian practices their faith in public as well as in private. What we learn on Sunday must impact Monday.

It is one thing to admit on Sunday morning that gender is determined by God, quite another when you're confronted with the evils of transgenderism on Monday morning.

It is one thing to admit on Sunday morning that marriage is between a man and a woman, quite another when you're confronted with the evils of homosexuality on Monday morning.

It is one thing to admit on Sunday morning that life begins at the moment of conception, quite another when you're confronted with the evils of abortion on Monday morning.

Being the "salt of the earth" means preserving the earth from the rot and decay of sin. Being the "light of the world" means pointing the world to the only solution to every problem: Jesus Christ. This is what'll save the world.

Whether Paul was "in the synagogue" or "in the marketplace," he was contending for the faith. He was sharing the gospel. He was speaking truth into the lives of anyone who just "happened to be there." He was not ashamed. How about you? If so, be warned, Christ said, "And I tell you, everyone who acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man also will acknowledge before the angels of God, but the one who denies me before men will be denied before the angels of God" (Lk 12:8-9).

Our faith ought not be a mere inward reality, something confined only to the spiritual plane; it ought to be evident in every sphere of life—e.g., social, financial, emotional, familial, political, recreational, vocational, educational, medical, and so on. Whatever we do, wherever we go, we are official ambassadors for Christ. We are not our own. We're bought with a price (cf. 1 Co 6:19). And our chief prerogative is to "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that [Christ has] commanded" (Mt. 28:19-20). And it is impossible to fulfil that great commission if we do not promote our Christian faith in the marketplace as much as we do in the church space.

Vs. 18-20 – Interestingly, for the most part, we've been told that throughout Paul's missionary journeys, it's been the Jews who've been the first to respond, be it favorably or unfavorably. However, in Athens, the initial responders weren't from the synagogue but “of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers.” So, rather than Paul dealing with a bunch of theologians, he’s now interacting with “philosophers.” The term “philosopher” is a compound of two Greek terms: *sophos* (“wisdom”) and *philos* (“love” or “friend”), so a philosopher is a lover or friend of wisdom. But interestingly, the term Luke uses didn’t refer to novices but “normally designates a professional or semi-professional person involved in scholarly activities.”⁷ Hence, these men were well-learned in their respective fields.

Both Epicureanism and Stoicism were established in Athens around the same time.

An “Epicurean” philosophy proposed that the purpose of life was to experience tranquility through maximizing pleasure and minimizing pain. Attainment of *Ataraxia* (αταραξια, *ataraxia*), meaning “tranquility,” was therefore the purpose of life.”⁸ Practically speaking, classic Epicureans sought to master themselves, living a life of moderate asceticism.⁹ They were polytheists, believing in many gods, but, like agnostics today, they thought of the gods as having little to no interest or involvement in human existence.¹⁰ The Epicurean was free to pursue whatever gave them the most pleasure and, as such, they avoided negative people and rejected the idea of judgment in the afterlife.¹¹ In fact, Epicureanism taught that the chief problem with humanity is their fear of God and retribution after death.¹² Hence, truth was found in rejecting these notions and in satisfying one's needs with simple pleasures, such as a good meal and good friends.¹³ Famously, Thomas Jefferson held to Epicureanism.¹⁴

Anthem: “Hakuna Matata” from *The Lion King*

⁷ Louw-Nida (1996), 384.

⁸ Parker, N.T., “Epicureanism,” in *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*, ed. John D. Barry et al. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).

⁹ Tripolitis, Antonia, *Religions of the Hellenistic-Roman Age* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002), 39–40.

¹⁰ Spencer, Richard A., “Epicureans,” in *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. David Noel Freedman, Allen C. Myers, and Astrid B. Beck (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 417–418.

¹¹ Parker (2016).

¹² Bartholomew, Craig G., and Michael W. Goheen, *Christian Philosophy: A Systematic and Narrative Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 56–57.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Brown, Colin, *Christianity and Western Thought: From the Ancient World to the Age of Enlightenment* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic: An Imprint of InterVarsity Press, 1990), 1:52.

Fictional Icon: Bilbo Baggins from *The Lord of the Rings* or Mr. Miyagi from *Karate Kid*

A “Stoic” philosopher held significant influence in the ancient world with many famous Romans like Cicero (106-43 BC), Seneca (4BC-AD 65), and Marcus Aurelius (AD 121-80),¹⁵ holding to this system of belief. Given that we get our term “stoic” from this philosophy, stoics prized dignified resignation above all else, even in the face of death. As Bartholomew and Goheen explain, “Stoic philosophy is deterministic; that is, all events are causally determined in an ironclad inevitability to which all must submit. What will happen will happen; whatever will be will be.”¹⁶ Human beings were mere actors on stage, playing out a predetermined scene. Unlike the Epicureans, who believed in multiple, albeit disinterested, gods (polytheism), the Stoics were pantheists, believing not in many deities but in a divine Logos that permeated the universe and all living things—e.g., like “the force” in Star Wars. However, there is no “dark side” Logos, and the divine Logos is fully rational and intelligible rather than quasi-mystical and experiential.

Anthem: “Que Sera Sera (Whatever Will Be, Will Be)” from *The Man Who Knew Too Much*

Fictional Icon: Aragorn from *The Lord of the Rings* or Spock from *Star Trek*

Practically speaking, Epicureans and Stoics both sought tranquility in all situations. But the major difference between their two disciplines was in their respective approaches: Epicureans maximized joy and minimized all negativity, while the Stoics maximized logic and minimized all worldly attachments. The former asks, “What must I avoid to live in peace?” The latter asks, “What must I endure to live with virtue?”

The response to Paul was equal parts **contempt** and **curiosity**.

Some were **contemptuous**. They said, “What does this babbler wish to say?” As you might’ve guessed, to call someone a “babbling” wasn’t a term of endearment. It was pejorative that, literally translated, meant “picking up seeds,” and it referred to those “whose communication lacks sophistication and seems to pick up scraps of information here and there: scrapmonger, scavenger...picker-up of learning’s crumbs...people who spend their time around stores and markets to pick up scraps from the produce and live

¹⁵ Bartholomew (2013), [55–56](#).

¹⁶ Bartholomew (2013), 56.

off them.”¹⁷ Essentially, these philosophers called Paul a **chatterbox, windbag, or motor-mouth**. They thought he knew some buzzwords but lacked any real grasp of the information.

Nevertheless, some were still curious. They said, “**He seems to be a preacher of foreign divinities,**” and brought him to “**the Areopagus.**” This term refers both to a location and a council.¹⁸ Areopagus, from the Greek *areo* = Ares (the god of war), and *pagus* = hill, was a famous structure situated on an elevated outcropping in the heart of the city. Given its connection with the god of war, this location is often referred to by its Roman designation, Mars Hill. But “the Areopagus” also referred to a special council responsible for maintaining civic order, resolving legal matters, ensuring that religious customs were properly upheld, and approving the content of philosophical and moral education. In particular, they were the ones who would have to vet and approve the introduction of any foreign gods.”¹⁹ **Hence, Paul wasn't facing so much a legal tribunal as a public forum**. This is why they say, “**May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? For you bring some strange things to our ears. We wish to know, therefore, what these things mean.**” What Paul did in this moment would determine whether he'd be allowed to keep teaching in the public square.

When it came to Paul's preaching, **two topics** intrigued the philosophers:

First and foremost, Paul's message was **Christocentric**; it was all about “**Jesus.**” They had never heard of Jesus before, yet, given that they called Paul a “**preacher of foreign divinities,**” it's clear the apostle presented Jesus as divine. If there were a new god these philosophers had never heard of, they wanted to know more.

Secondly, Paul's message was **Easter-centric**, emphasizing “**the resurrection**” of Jesus. The Christian teaching on the afterlife was unique, especially compared to that of the Epicureans and Stoics. Essentially, the Epicureans **were annihilationists**, believing that, upon death, a person ceased to exist. And, generally speaking, the Stoics believed in something called “recurrence,” which, **like reincarnation**, taught that upon death a person would join with the universe and be reborn, but unlike reincarnation, the person's identity ceased to exist at the moment of death. All this to say, Paul's doctrine of the resurrection—i.e., the personal and bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ and the belief that, through Christ's resurrection, all Christians will be resurrected, retaining

¹⁷ BDAG (2000), 937.

¹⁸ Bandy (2021), 107.

¹⁹ Ibid.

their personalities and living forever in a glorified state—would've been totally "foreign" to these Greek philosophers.

Vs. 21 – Luke chimes in at this point with some helpful commentary. He says, “Now all the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there would spend their time in nothing except telling or hearing something new.” Though the philosophers were interested in hearing Paul, they weren’t hanging on his every word. Keener explains that their level of inquiry is the “sort of intellectual exercise in which judges of a contest, rather than religiously humble seekers, indulge themselves.”²⁰ In other words, while this moment is a key point of interest in church history, in which Christianity is pitted against Greek philosophy, for the philosophers, it was just another day. Paul stood before them today, but he was an idle curiosity; another would stand before them tomorrow.

How ironic that while the philosophers thought of Paul as a “seed-picker” (cf. vs. 18), Luke thought of the philosophers as a bunch of “babblers,” spending their time “in nothing except telling or hearing something new.”

Takeaway #2: If you’re only after what is **new**, you’ll never discover what is **true**.

The Athenians were great listeners. They were great thinkers. They were great talkers. To their credit, they said, “**We wish to know, therefore, what these things mean.**” But they did little else other than listen, think, and talk. They were, in the words of Paul himself, “**always learning and never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth**” (2 Ti 3:7). **They were good at learning things but not so much at knowing the truth.** And I dare say, that is the very same problem with many in the so-called 'information age.' We have no shortage of information, but there's a great scarcity of truth.

How do we rectify this? By having a proper epistemology.

Everyone starts from a set of assumptions we think are true. Epistemology is the study of how we know things; it helps us discover whether our assumptions are true or false. In this discipline, there are several methods by which a person can know something, but the three easiest to explain are “the consensus method,” “the inductive method,” and “the deductive method.”²¹

Option 1 – The Consensus Method (“Middle-out”): We consider all the opinions and the position with the most proponents is the correct one (e.g., “The practice of taking

²⁰ Keener, Craig S., *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014), 3:2612.

²¹ Other epistemological ways of knowing are the abductive reasoning method and the rationalism method.

people's word for things is not a mere convenience...it is an essential part of our cognitive life." - C.A.J. Coady). But relying solely on this method would be to commit a host of logical fallacies: appeal to the people, appeal to authority, middle ground, confirmation bias, and so on. Just because everyone says something's right doesn't make it *objectively* right, right?

EXAMPLE: Before WWII, Neville Chamberlain's government pursued a strong, widely supported peace-at-all-costs policy toward Adolf Hitler. Churchill was mocked as a warmonger for voicing his concerns, but he was ultimately proven right.

Option 2 – The Inductive Method ("Bottom-up"): We make observations and from those observations, conclusions (e.g., "A wise man, therefore, proportions his belief to the evidence." – David Hume). But relying solely on this method would be to commit a host of logical fallacies: hasty generalization, anecdotal fallacy, post hoc ergo propter hoc (assuming that because "Event B" happened after "Event A," "Event A" *must* have caused it), and so on. The evidence before you seems to be saying something, but how do you know your sample size is *objectively* big enough?

EXAMPLE: For centuries, Europeans believed all swans were white. However, in 1697, Dutch explorers reached Australia and discovered black swans. A single observation destroyed millennia of "confirmed" knowledge.

Option 3 – The Deductive Method ("Top-down"): You start from a first principle, assuming that it is unquestionably true (e.g., "I think therefore I am" – Descartes). Arguably, this is the gold standard when it comes to epistemology, at least from a logical standpoint. But relying solely on this method would be to commit a whole host of logical fallacies: begging the question/assuming the premise, garbage in/garbage out, rationalism over empiricism, and so on. You've been *told* something is true your whole life, but are you sure that the truth you've been sold is *objectively* true?

EXAMPLE: Many learn the limits of deductive reasoning when they discover that, though pop culture and maybe even one's parents affirm the existence of Santa, the evidence to the contrary is overwhelming.

When it comes to epistemology, there is no single silver bullet that will lead us to the truth on our own. As with most things, a *mixed* approach, in which observers use all their powers of observation, is the *best* approach. The Athenians were great at the first two approaches, but they lacked the third. They were great philosophers but horrible epistemologists because they

started from a faulty premise that mankind can know what is true solely by logical inquiry. Objective truth **must** come from without, not from within, to be truly objective. Any conclusion based on internal evidence is inherently biased. True revelation must come from an external force to achieve an unbiased conclusion.

Thomas Aquinas, a 13th-century friar, argued that philosophy can do only so much. For instance, it can argue for the existence of a divine being. Aquinas famously provided five such arguments: unmoved mover, first cause, contingency, gradation, and design. **However, while philosophy can contend for a creator, Aquinas admitted that it cannot tell you the identity of that Creator.** This is why he referred to theology as the “Queen of the sciences” and philosophy as the “handmaid of theology.”

Philosophy/epistemology is mythology without theology. If our basis for knowing truth is absent of God, whatever conclusion we come to is devoid of objective truth. We’ve gone to the handmaid rather than the Queen. As such, though we may call it truth, it becomes little more than a myth. When our way of deciding what’s true leaves God out, disregarding the only truly objective perspective in the universe, we end up basing our lives on made-up stories that are themselves based on manmade theories. **All intellectual pursuits will lead us astray without some tangible scriptural touchstone by which we can start, test, and observe the world around us.** We need the Scriptures to guide us; otherwise, we’ll spend our time “in nothing except telling or hearing something new” (Ac. 17:22). The endless pursuit of the “new” yields nothing true.

C.S. Lewis famously said, “I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen: not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else.” The truths of Scripture are the only certifiable way that we can come to a knowledge of truth. Was not Jesus Christ the only person to ever say, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (Jn. 14:6)? If so, it is logically sound to assume the truthfulness of that statement until sufficient data can be produced to disprove it.

For those who are searching for truth, allow me briefly to make the case for Christianity:

Let’s start from the premise that the God of the Bible exists (deductive/top-down approach) and then look for clues to see if the claims in Scripture are true, say, for instance, via the historical method (inductive/bottom-up approach), and then test those claims in the real world (consensus/middle-out approach).

Christianity is a powerhouse of scientific inquiry: Isaac Newton (Father of Classical Mathematics), Johannes Kepler (Father of Celestial Mechanics), Francis Bacon (Father of

the Scientific Method), Gregor Mendel (Father of Genetics), Robert Boyle (Father of Chemistry), Louis Pasteur (Father of Microbiology), and so on, were all devout Christians.

Christianity is a powerhouse of social reform:

The abolition of slavery was achieved via the efforts of William Wilberforce and the Quakers, both of whom were motivated by Christian ethics.

Based on the doctrine of the *Imago Dei*, that all people were born in the image of God, St. Basil of Caesarea founded the first large-scale hospitals in the 4th century.

Harvard, Yale, and Princeton, three of the greatest institutions for higher education in the US, were initially Christian schools.

Christianity is a powerhouse of humanitarian efforts:

World Vision operates in over 100 countries, with an estimated budget of \$1.6 billion, focusing, among other things, on providing clean water to those in need.

Samaritan's Purse operates in over 100 countries, with an estimated annual budget of \$1.2 billion, focusing, among other things, on disaster relief.

Last year, Medical Missions Outreach (MMO) mobilized 22 teams, served 31,912 patients, and 4,118 made a decision for Christ.

Based on these factors alone, Christianity has the corner market on truth. No other world religion has discovered the ***most*** truth and done the ***most*** good for the ***most*** people for the ***most*** time.

The validity of Christianity is self-evident for those with eyes to see. Romans 1:20 teaches us, God's "invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So [men and women] are without excuse." God can be "perceived" in nature.

As David said, "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. There is no speech, nor are there words, whose voice is not heard. Their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world" (Ps 19:1-4).

Okay, so if God can be "perceived" in nature, why isn't everyone a Christian? Paul also says in Romans 1:21-23, "For although [mankind] knew God, [we] did not honor him as God or give

thanks to him, but [we] became futile in [our] thinking, and [our] foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, [we] became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.” There is no way to come to God by mere intellectual inquiry. All such methodology is “empty deceit” (Col 2:8). Salvation occurs when observation—what we see in the world—and revelation—what we read in the Word—come together.

Hence, if you're only after what is **new**, you'll never discover what is **true**. Or, if **novelty** trumps **validity**, you'll never have **stability**. But there is great stability for those who build their house upon the Word of God. To paraphrase **Psalm 1**, if we delight ourselves in the law of the Lord, meditating on his word, day and night, we'll be like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither.

The Athenians are about to be confronted with the unaltered and objective truth of Scripture. But the real question isn't how they'll respond to the truth, but how will you?

Soli Deo Gloria

Video Description:

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In John 18:37-38, Jesus tells Pilate, “For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.” Sadly, rather than probing the Lord any further, the Roman cynically replied, “What is truth?” and then walked away. This passage typifies the epistemological despair prevalent throughout the Roman Empire at that time. Romans thought of truth as unknowable, and the Roman governor was no exception.

Pilate had been shaped by a culture that had itself been molded by the greatest philosophical minds in the history of the world—e.g., Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. For centuries, these schools of thought tried to establish the *Arche* (“first principle”). If they could discover the foundation of the universe, they could explain its meaning. However, the history of philosophy is one of abject failure—theories proposed, opposing theories would point out a logical fallacy, and never-ending debates would ensue. By the first century, the competing schools at the time (Stoics, Epicureans, and Skeptics) had argued each other into a stalemate. Truth felt subjective and unreachable.

Sadly, times haven’t changed all that much. Today, we’re inundated by information. The smartphone is a supercomputer in our pocket, capable of telling you anything in less than a second. However, this information can be extremely biased, and news outlets are the clearest example of this. Whether you’re a progressive, conservative, or moderate, you can find a source that reflects your ideological leanings. This is the age of experts, yet depending on who you ask, *this* expert can seem more of an expert than *that* expert. We are no better or worse off than Pilate; despite having more information, we lack clarity and wisdom in discerning truth. Even E.O. Wilson, a world-renowned evolutionary biologist, lamented this era, saying, “We are drowning in information, while starving for wisdom.”

However, Wilson is only right if you’re looking in wisdom-less places. We don’t have to starve; we can become wise. We can know right from wrong. We can find what all the philosophers couldn’t: truth. After all, today’s passage helps us answer the question, “What is truth?”

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