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Bible Facts Concerning Truth

In the 18th chapter of the gospel of John, we find an interesting exchange between Jesus and the Roman governor named Pilate and it culminates with Pilate finally asking Jesus a very serious question... "*Pilate saith unto him, **What is truth?***" John 18:38.

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There are many people today saying this is truth, that is truth, there is no truth, etc... How do you know what is truth and what is not? What do you do when confronted with the question, "**What is truth?**" What do you declare to be the final authority in determining what is truth? Do you know how to use the Bible to discover truth? If you do discover it, do you believe and uphold the truth or do you crucify it as Pilate did?

So what does the Bible declare to be the correct principles to use in determining '*what is truth?*' Let's take a look and see...

The FIRST Principle in determining Bible truth is that we are **never to study the Word of God without praying for the gift of the Holy Spirit and for wisdom first.** Luke 11:13 says, "if ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall [your] heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?"

James 1:5 says, "if any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all [men] liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him."

"Never should the Bible be studied without prayer. Before opening its pages, we should ask for the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, and it will be given." {White, Christian Education, p. 59}

The SECOND Bible principle is the principle of conditions. Like every other principle found in the Bible, a condition is something that is not stated everywhere. However, it is stated somewhere and so it does apply, even in places where it is not specifically stated! In fact, many conditions and principles apply everywhere. Conditional statements can be described in many different ways with "if", "unless", and "except" being the most common words used.

A simple example to look at is the posting of speed limits. The law states that you are to travel at or below a certain speed; the law also states that official emergency vehicles, on official emergency business, may exceed the speed limit. The exception to the law is not stated on every speed limit sign, but it is stated somewhere, and so it does apply everywhere—even where it is not stated!

Many conditions are found at various places throughout the Bible. The word "if" is used about 1,600 times in the Bible (KJV), and is found in almost every book of the Bible. But here is where many people get off track: they do not realize that conditions can apply—even in places where the condition is not specifically stated!

Just one example is in the well-known story of Jonah and the whale. If you read the entire book of Jonah, you will not find one single conditional statement regarding the destruction of Nineveh at the end of the forty days; yet the prophecy was obviously conditional: because the people repented, and GOD did not destroy their city at the end of the forty days. The unstated condition was: if you don't repent Nineveh will be destroyed.

In regard to determining Biblical truth, our summary of beliefs states:

#1. This summary of beliefs is for the purpose of confessing Christ and His truth (see Matt. 10:32,33; 28:20; Rev. 19:10; 22:9). The summary has no authority of its own, and should never be used to settle doctrinal controversy. The Word of God is the authority for resolving any doctrinal differences (see Matt. 22:29; 2 Tim. 3:16). Doctrinal differences are not decided democratically (majority rules) but only by the weight of evidence found in scripture. Since it is "**impossible for God to lie**", all of His Word is truth (Heb. 6:18; see Titus 1:2; Psalm 119:142; John 17:17); this means that true doctrines will be in harmony with "**every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God**" and "**all that the prophets have spoken**" (Matt. 4:4; Luke 24:25). Nevertheless, it is dangerous to base any doctrine on only one text (see Isa. 28:9-13). Actually, since God "**cannot lie**", one text would be sufficient if and only if it was interpreted correctly, but fallen humans are susceptible to misinterpretation, so before accepting any doctrine there should be at least "**two or three witnesses**" from inspiration in support of it (Deut. 17:6; 19:15; see 1 John 5:6,8; John 15:26; 14:26; 16:13; 2 Peter 1:20, 21). On the other hand, no doctrine should be taught or believed as long as there are two or three texts for which no answers (which will stand up to close examination) can be given—regardless of how many texts seem to support it (see 1 Peter 3:15; Matt. 22:12,34; Rom. 3:19; Titus 1:11).



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We can have confidence that He guards His own word and throws a barrier around it, and prevents those who sincerely trust in God and put implicit confidence in His word, from erring far from the truth, though they may not understand the Hebrew or Greek.

"In order to know the truth as it is in Jesus, we must give ourselves to thoughtful, prayerful study of the Scriptures. We must know what the word of God is to us, what the truth is to us, and what it means to be doers of the word of God, and not followers of cunningly devised fables. The greatest blessing bestowed upon the world is the privilege of understanding the oracles of God. The word of God should not be a dead letter to us, but spirit and life; for through the truth we are to be sanctified." {White, Signs of the Times, April 6, 1891 par. 2}

In order for us to be that special people of God... His Remnant... we must follow Jesus whithersoever He goeth and His path has been laid out in His word. Friends, when we follow the narrow path of the Lord Jesus, we will learn 'what is truth?' and it will surely set us free! Amen.

Joel Laswell
Director/Speaker, Eternal Truth Ministries

Here is another good example from the Scriptures: "but the Comforter, [which is] the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, **he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance...he will guide you into all truth.**" (John 14:26; 16:13).

Some people may think that these promises are unconditional, merely because the conditions are not specifically stated in the verses. However, there are many conditions that must be fulfilled, before we should expect to be guided into all truth; and although they are not stated in the above verses, they are found elsewhere throughout the Bible. It is important for us to meet the conditions before we can have confidence of being led into all truth.

THIRD Principle All Scripture is necessary, and may be understood by diligent study.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 says: "**All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.**"

"We must examine the Scriptures, determined to know what is the truth; and whoever comes to the Bible with a **humble, teachable spirit**, whether he be rich or poor, honored or despised, shall know of the doctrine as he renders obedience to the rays of light that fall upon his pathway. He will not be left to be deceived by the delusions of the enemy, to be swayed hither and thither by the doctrines of devils." {White, Review & Herald, March 28, 1912 par. 3}

"The Bible with its precious gems of truth was not written for the scholar alone. On the contrary, **it was designed for the people; and the interpretation given by the common people, when aided by the Holy Spirit, accords best with the truth as it is in Jesus.**" {White, Testimonies to the Church, Vol. 5, p. 330-1.}

FOURTH Principle Every word must have it's proper bearing on the subject.

"And Jesus answered him, saying, **It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.**" Luke 4:4.

The Word of God contains many words—and "every word" is "profitable". This means that when we are studying God's Word,

we need to give due consideration to “every word”; we need to think about the purpose for each word. If we take the words which were inspired by God’s prophets, or spoken by JESUS Himself, and ignore them, or treat them as if they had no meaning whatsoever, then we might as well forget about being guided “into all truth”, because it just won’t happen.

All possible meanings for ‘every word’ also need to be determined. See if and how the same word is used elsewhere in the context. See if and how the same author used the same word in a different context. See if and how another Biblical author used the same word; and also see how the word is used in sources such as a concordance or dictionary.

It is possible that a Bible version may have translated a word poorly or just outright wrong. The original Inspired word can be determined, by looking at the usages of the original Hebrew or Greek word by using a Strong’s Concordance, Hebrew and Greek lexicons, etc. It would do you well to have such books available and learn how to use them in studying the Scriptures!

FIFTH Principle Scripture must be its own explainer. If I depend on a minister or teacher to explain it to me, and they should guess at it’s meaning, or desire to have it so on account of their creed, or because they’re thought to be wise... then their guessing, desire, creed, or wisdom is my rule of faith and practice and not the Bible!

Matthew 23:8-10 says: “*But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ.*”

Notice 1 Peter 3:15: “*But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and [be] ready always to [give] an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear...*”

“*We must study the truth for ourselves. No living man should be relied upon to think for us. No matter who it is, or in what position he may be placed, we are not to look upon any man as a perfect criterion for us. We are to counsel together, and to be subject to one another; but at the same time we are to exercise the ability God has given us to learn what is truth. Each one of us*

Ecclesiastes 7:14

7:14 **In the day of prosperity** be joyful...

Ezekiel 4:6

4:6 And when thou hast accomplished them, lie again on thy right side, and thou shalt bear the iniquity of the house of Judah forty days: I have appointed thee **each day for a year**.

2 Peter 3:8

3:8 But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day [is] with the Lord as a thousand years, and **a thousand years as one day**.

THIRTEENTH Principle) To know whether you have the true historical event for the fulfillment of a prophecy... If you find every word of the prophecy [after the figures are understood] is literally fulfilled, then you know that your history is the true event. But, if one word lacks a fulfillment, then you must look for another event, or wait its future development. For God takes care that history and prophecy agree, so that the true, believing children of God may never be ashamed.

“But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace [was] upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.” Isaiah 53:5-6.

“But those things, which God before had showed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled.” Acts 3:18.

The most important principle of all, **principle 14**, is that you must have faith. “**...faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God**” Romans 10:17. A mental acknowledgement of the truth will not save anyone in and of itself. **“But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him”** Hebrews 11:6. It must be a faith that requires a sacrifice, and, if tried, would give up the dearest object on earth.

We must also have faith that God will never forfeit His word. **“Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him.”** Proverbs 30:5.

If you wish to understand them, use the symbols consistently... for example, the definition of the term beast is the same whether it is found in Daniel 7 or Revelation 13.

*“And the disciples came, and said unto him, **Why speakest thou unto them in parables?** He answered and said unto them, **Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.** For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. **Therefore speak I to them in parables:** because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand.”* Matthew 13:10-13.

NINTH Principle Visions are always mentioned as visions.

*“And he said, Hear now my words: **If there be a prophet among you, [I] the LORD will make myself known unto him in a vision, [and] will speak unto him in a dream.**”* Numbers 12:6.

TENTH Principle If a word makes good since as it stands, and does not go contrary to the simple laws of nature, then it must be understood literally; if not, then it must be understood figuratively.

*“So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, **having seven heads and ten horns.**”* Revelation 17:3.

ELEVENTH Principle Figures always have a figurative meaning, and are used a lot in prophecy to represent future times, and events; such as beasts meaning kingdoms; waters meaning people; lamp meaning Word of God, etc...

*“And four great beasts came up from the sea, diverse one from another... **These great beasts, which are four, [are] four kings, [which] shall arise out of the earth.**”* Daniel 7:3, 17.

TWELVETH Principle Figures sometimes have two or more different significations; as day is used in a figurative sense to represent three different periods of time. 1. Indefinite period 2. A day for a year. 3. Day for a thousand years. Notice these three examples:

must look to God for divine enlightenment. We must individually develop a character that will stand the test in the day of God. We must not become set in our ideas, and think that no one should interfere with our opinions.” {White, Review and Herald, June 18, 1889.}

While some people trust in man, and religious leaders—others go to the opposite extreme, and think that all religious teaching is wrong. However, the Bible talks about good religious “teachers” so God does not condemn all teachers. God condemns those who teach lies and error! So how do we know whether someone is teaching truth, or error? We must search the scriptures our self. But it’s not enough merely to read the Word of God: we must know how to search it! That’s why the Bible gives us these principles!

SIXTH Principle To understand doctrine, bring all the Scriptures together on the subject you wish to know; then let every word have it’s proper influence, and if you can form your theory without contradiction, you CANNOT be in error. I am going to spend a bit of time on this one because this is usually the source for almost all the divisions in Christianity.

Isaiah 28:9, 10 says: *“Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts. **For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little.**”*

*“And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in **all the scriptures** the things concerning himself.”* Luke 24:27.

*“We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: 1:20 **Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.**”* 2 Peter 1:19-20.

“In searching the Scriptures you are not to endeavor to interpret their utterances so as to agree with your preconceived ideas, but come as a learner to understand the foundation principles of the faith of Christ. With eager interest, with fervent prayer, come to the word of God, that you may know what is truth...” {White, Counsels on Sabbath School Work, p.26}.

We must take every word in its proper context too. A friend of mine said this about context:

*“If you take the four letters “TEXT” out of the seven-letter word ‘CONTEXT’, you have only three letters remaining: “CON!” And in the Bible, if you take the ‘text’ out of ‘context’—you have the perfect formula for: a spiritual con!” (Simkin, *The First Principles of the Oracles of God*, p.6).*

Some people will compile a lot of Scriptures, and make a fairly impressive case for their position, but if you study each individual Scripture in it’s context, you will find that they have been taken out of context. The problem is that most people do not put forth enough effort to check it for themselves and so they fall prey to deception.

In looking at the context of a word or phrase: it is important to look at the rest of the verse, and even the verses surrounding it. This is called the ‘narrow context.’ It is also important to consider the wide context like the whole chapter, and maybe even the whole book. One must have an understanding of the author of the book, who it was originally written to, when it was written, and why it was written—the circumstances existing at the time. Knowing all of this will make it much easier to grasp the original intended meaning of each word and phrase.

So when we are examining all of the statements, on a particular subject: we need to come to a conclusion that harmonizes with **every** statement on the subject—in other words, there will not be any contradictions. Our conclusion will then be based upon the weight of evidence found in God’s word!

Since there can be more than one possible meaning for a word, or a phrase: there can be more than one possible meaning for a statement too, or even a whole verse, so we should look for a meaning of each statement or verse, which fits with every other statement on the subject!

Say for example you have found as many as thirty different verses directly dealing with a topic. Out of those thirty verses, twenty-seven of them harmonize nicely with your conclusion—but the other three just won’t fit... they contradict your conclusion. **What should you do?**

Many people will keep the twenty-seven verses, ignore the other three, and think that they have the truth pertaining to that topic! Especially since they have so many verses which seem to support their theory! But what about those other three verses? Did God lie those three times?? NO WAY! We must go back and re-examine all thirty verses prayerfully, **until we are led to a conclusion that has no contradictions!**

I believe that God may give other statements in Scripture that will correct a wrong understanding of other statements. But if we ignore such statements (such as the three verses in the example above) because they contradict our original understanding, how can God correct our error in thinking?! We will become guilty of taking away from the word of God, all the while thinking that we have the correct view of the topic—the truth! Instead of trusting in our own understanding, we should say, with the apostle Paul, **“... let God be true, but every man a liar ...”** (Romans 3:4).

SEVENTH Principle) Nothing revealed in Scripture can or will be hid from those who ask in faith, nothing wavering.

“The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.” Deuteronomy 29:29.

“The idea that certain portions of the Bible cannot be understood has led to neglect of some of its most important truths. The fact needs to be emphasized, and often repeated, that the mysteries of the Bible are not such because God has sought to conceal truth, but because our own weakness or ignorance makes us incapable of comprehending or appropriating truth. The limitation is not in His purpose, but in our capacity. Of those very portions of Scripture often passed by as impossible to be understood, God desires us to understand as much as our minds are capable of receiving.” {White, Education, p.170.4}

“...all things [are] possible to him that believeth.” Mark 9:23.

The next six principles involve the study of Bible prophecy...

EIGHTH Principle) God has revealed things to come, by visions, in figures and parables; and in this way the same things are often-times revealed again and again, by different visions, or in different figures and parables. The symbol in a vision, figure, and parable, is consistent throughout Scripture.