



# TRUTH

“... thy word is truth” (John 17:17)

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## SERIOUS QUESTIONS ABOUT TRUTH AND KNOWLEDGE

In both secular and religious settings, it is not uncommon for the truth to be ridiculed or discarded completely. Be that as it may, the Bible says a lot of positive things about truth. Those who accept and apply what God’s Book says about truth are blessed.

In the spiritual realm, is there anything that can be identified as “truth?” Jesus prayed to His Father, “*Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth” (John 17:17; in this article, all underlining is mine, *rdc*). Jesus said to some who refused to submit to Him, “*But because I tell the truth, you do not believe Me*” (John 8:45).*

Is it possible to know the truth? Jesus said, “*And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free*” (John 8:32). God created food “*to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth*” (1 Timothy 4:3).

Once we know the truth, does the Lord expect anything else out of us? “*And though I have . . . all knowledge . . . but have not love, I am nothing*” (1 Corinthians 13:2). “*But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves*” (James 1:22).

Is it possible that knowing the truth causes some to be lifted up with pride? The Bible says, “*We know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies*” (1 Corinthians 8:1). Paul made those statements in a context in which he was discussing whether or not Christians may eat food that has been offered to idols. Paul’s appeal was for the saints to act based on knowledge of the truth, but do not leave love for others out of the equation. Much depends on how one handles his knowledge. The apostle Paul knew the truth, but He remained humble in spirit. Therefore, knowledge, in and of itself, does not puff up a person.

Is it possible for humans to know everything about all aspects of the truth? While God’s message about how to become and remain a saved person is expressed in clear language, there are some portions of the Scriptures which are “*hard to understand*” (2 Peter 3:16). In addition, in Deuteronomy 29:29 we read about “*the secret things*” being contrasted with “*those things which are revealed.*” “*Secret*” matters are those which the Lord has kept to Himself. When it comes to revealed truth, is there anyone who has

absolute perfect knowledge of it? “*And if anyone thinks that he knows anything, he knows nothing yet as he ought to know*” (1 Corinthians 8:2). We are exhorted to continue to grow in knowledge (2 Peter 3:18), but no human ever attains perfect knowledge.

Is it possible for a person to be deceived into thinking that what he believes is the truth when, in reality, what he believes is false? After Jesus healed a blind man, some of His opposers said this about the Master: “*We know that this Man is a sinner*” (John 9:24). No, sirs, you do not *know* that. He was not a sinner. You *think* you know, but you are deceived.

Is it possible to know that Jesus is Lord and the Christ? By God’s Spirit, the apostle Peter preached, “*Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ*” (Acts 2:36).

Is it possible to know God? John’s message to first-century Christians was, “*Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments*” (1 John 2:3).

Does knowledge of the truth eliminate faith and vice versa? That is, are faith and knowledge of truth mutually exclusive? Jesus prayed for those who would believe in Him to be one, praying, “. . . *that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me . . . that they may be perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me . . .*” (John 17:21,23). Those who would *believe* the Father sent Jesus are the same ones who would *know* that truth: knowing does not eliminate faith. In fact, faith is based on knowing the evidence (Hebrews 11:1).

Is it possible for a person to depart from the truth? “*The faith*” is the truth, and the Bible says, “*Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith . . .*” (1 Timothy 4:1). Again, it is written, “*Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth . . .*” (James 5:19).

How important is one’s attitude toward the truth? It can be the difference between being saved and being lost: “. . . *among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved*” (2 Thessalonians 2:10).

-- Roger D. Campbell

## TWELVE TRUTHS ABOUT THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

Over three thousand years before Hollywood produced a movie in 1956 with the title “The Ten Commandments,” the term “Ten Commandments” was used in the Bible (Exodus 34:28). Even among those who do not profess to be Bible believers, a lot of people are familiar with the idea that there are instructions known as “the Ten Commandments.”

It is not our intention in this article to discuss the meaning of the individual commands which comprised “the Ten Commandments.” Rather, we want to set forth some observations about “the Ten Commandments” which we hope will be helpful in our approach to them and the Bible in general.

- First, there is the obvious: those ten commands were of such significance that the Lord labeled them as “the Ten Commandments” (Deuteronomy 10:4), putting them in a unique category of their own.

- When we analyze the Ten Commandments, we see that the first portion (numbers one through four: no other gods before Jehovah, make no graven image, do not take the Lord’s name in vain, keep the Sabbath) pertained to a person’s relationship with and duty to *God*. The remaining segment of the commands (numbers five through ten: honor parents, not murder, not commit adultery, not steal, not bear false witness, not covet) were about a person’s dealings with and duty to his *fellowman*.

- Violation of the Ten Commandments brought a punishment of death (at least that is true for violating a number of the ten commands). For example, serving “gods” other than Jehovah was a capital offense (Deuteronomy 13:6-10), as was taking God’s name in vain/blasphemy (Leviticus 24:16), breaking the Sabbath (Exodus 35:1,2), and committing adultery (Leviticus 20:10). Obviously, in the sight of God it was not a small issue to disobey one of the Ten Commandments.

- The Ten Commandments are recorded in two places in the Bible: Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5. It is not uncommon to see a few of the ten mentioned together in a Bible passage, but to find all ten of them recorded as a unit, one would have to read one of the two chapters noted above.

- The Ten Commandments were given at Mount Sinai/Horeb (Deuteronomy 5:1-22).

- The Ten Commandments were given to the people who at one time had been in bondage in Egypt but were delivered by God (Exodus 20:1-17). Who was that? The Israelites. Yes, Israel and Israel alone, was the nation with whom Jehovah made a covenant at Horeb, revealing to them the Ten Commandments (Deuteronomy 5:1-5).

- The Ten Commandments first were given orally (God spoke them), then later He wrote them on two tablets of stone (Deuteronomy 5:22).

- Though the Bible at times describes the Ten Commandments as “*the words of the covenant*” (Exodus 34:28), there was much more to the law which God communicated to Israel via Moses than just those ten instructions. It is said that the Jews themselves counted more than six hundred distinct commands in the old law, meaning that the Ten Commandments made up a very small percentage of the statutes which God gave to Israel.

- “Keep all of the Ten Commandments” was *not* the answer Jesus gave when He was asked, “*Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?*” (Matthew 22:36). More than a few people would think that nothing is of greater significance than the Ten Commandments, yet the Master said “*the first and great commandment*” of the old law was to love the Lord, and the second was “*love your neighbor as yourself*” (Matthew 22:37-39). Neither of those instructions about love was a part of the Ten Commandments.

- What are some other matters which are not mentioned in the Ten Commandments? We ask this question to emphasize reality, not to criticize the message of those ten statutes. Because it came from God Almighty, we know that all of the old law, including the Ten Commandments, was good (Romans 7:12). But the reality is, nothing is said in the Ten Commandments about grace, the forgiveness of sins, or Jesus. Eternal life is in Jesus (1 John 5:11), yet if I consult only the Ten Commandments, I cannot know a thing about Jesus, eternal life, and how to get into Him in order to receive that amazing blessing.

- There is no rational reason for a person living today to tell himself, “If I will keep the Ten Commandments, I probably should be okay: God will be pleased with me and I will go to heaven.” One cannot be justified by the old law (Acts 13:38,39), and as we just noted, in the Ten Commandments you and I cannot find the answer to the question, “What must I do to be saved?” We need God’s answer to that question! But, we cannot find it in the Ten Commandments, so the appeal “Just keep the Ten Commandments” is a ploy of the devil, not a plea from the Creator.

- The Ten Commandments, as a unit, are no longer binding on people living today. Christians are “dead” to the old law (Romans 7:4-7), which was abolished in its entirety when Jesus died (Ephesians 2:14-16).

-- Roger D. Campbell

## THE PRIVILEGE OF CITIZENSHIP IN GOD'S KINGDOM/FAMILY

The God of heaven has a kingdom. The prophet Daniel foretold that the Lord's kingdom shall never be destroyed (Daniel 2:44). What is His kingdom and what is so special about being a citizen of it?

To say that the Lord reigns as King means He rules in the lives of humans. Under the new covenant, in this era the Lord's kingdom is His church. Jesus promised to build His church, then in the next breath, so to speak, He promised to give Peter the keys of the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 16:18,19). It would not make sense for Jesus to talk about a building project, then give Peter keys to something entirely different, would it? The keys were for the church, which is the kingdom. The church is the realm in which the Lord reigns as King. If one is in the Christ, he is in His kingdom, and vice versa (Colossians 1:13,14).

What about the family concept? Paul wrote a letter to Timothy so the latter would know how to conduct himself "*in the house of God, which is the church of the living God*" (1 Timothy 3:15). God's house/family is His church. That would mean God's family and His kingdom are the same, too. God adds saved people to His family/church (Acts 2:47).

How does one become a member of God's kingdom/family? Not by biological birth, not by prayer, not by giving a financial donation to God's work, and not by attending worship services. One must be born again in order to enter the kingdom of God. Jesus said so (John 3:3,7). He also told Nicodemus, "*Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God*" (John 3:5). So, getting into God's kingdom involves being born of water and the Spirit. In the context of Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus about being born again, our Lord did not offer an explanation of the water or the Spirit's role in the new birth, so we must look elsewhere in the Bible to find the meaning.

Peter reminded first-century Christians that they had purified their souls "*in obeying the truth*" (1 Peter 1:22). He went on to say that those same saints had been "*born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever*" (1 Peter 1:23). They were born again (1:23) when they obeyed the truth (1:22). It came about through the seed, which is God's word. The Holy Spirit provided that seed/truth (John 16:13), and the word of God is the Spirit's sword (Ephesians 6:17). Through that sword/word/seed, God's Spirit causes people to be born again.

What about the water our Lord mentioned as part of being born again (John 3:5)? Look in the book of

Acts, and you will find your answer. The eunuch from Africa asked Philip, "*See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?*" (Acts 8:36). We then read about the evangelist baptizing the eunuch in water (Acts 8:38). Following that, the eunuch rejoiced (Acts 8:39). Why was he a happy fellow? Because he had been born into God's family, having his sins washed away by the blood of Jesus. The purpose of water baptism is to wash away sins (Acts 22:16), so when the eunuch was immersed, he was saved and the Lord added him to His family/kingdom. According to the Bible, a person has newness of life, that is, is a new/born-again person after being baptized into the Christ (Romans 6:3,4).

Those who have been born into God's family/kingdom are so blessed! **There are great spiritual blessings** which Christians enjoy in this life as citizens in God's kingdom. All spiritual blessings are available to us in the Christ (Ephesians 1:3). In Jesus, we have the privilege of prayer. As "sons of God" in the Christ (Galatians 3:26,27), we can call God our "Father" (Galatians 4:6) and come before His throne with our praise, thanksgiving, and requests (Philippians 4:6,7). In Jesus, we have redemption/the forgiveness of sins (Colossians 1:14). As citizens in the kingdom, we can ask for forgiveness as we continue to walk in the light (1 John 1:7-9) and repent of our sins (Acts 8:21,22). As God's people, we can "*offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ*" (1 Peter 2:5).

As members of God's kingdom/family, Jesus' followers also are bonded together by **great relationships with other Christians**. We are blessed to have brothers and sisters in the Lord who take to heart and carry out the Lord's instructions to *love* one another (1 Peter 4:8), *be hospitable* to one another (1 Peter 4:9), *serve* one another (Galatians 5:13), *comfort* and *edify* one another (1 Thessalonians 5:11), *exhort* one another (Hebrews 3:13), *pray* for one another (James 5:16), as well as *bear with* and *forgive* one another (Colossians 3:13). Friend, the relationships we enjoy with the caring children of God are priceless! Such selfless people make it easy for us to follow this charge of God: "*Love the brotherhood*" (1 Peter 2:17).

Those who are citizens in God's kingdom further enjoy **an optimistic outlook about the future**. Why would we not be optimistic?! As God's children, we are "*heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ*" (Romans 8:17), "*heirs of the kingdom*" (James 2:5). Because we are heirs, we have hope . . . hope of an eternal inheritance in heaven (1 Peter 1:3,4). **Heirs . . . Hope . . . Heaven**. It does not get any better than that!

-- Roger D. Campbell

## John 20:24-29 – THOMAS: A MAN MISUNDERSTOOD AND MISJUDGED

Among Bible-believers, it is likely that Thomas is most well-known for an occasion that is recorded in John 20. Thomas was one of the Christ's twelve original apostles, being listed with his fellow-apostles in Matthew 10, Mark 3, Luke 6, and Acts 1. Like all the apostles, Thomas spent a lot of time with Jesus, preached, and did miracles (Mark 3:13,14).

Other than being listed with the apostles, Thomas' name does not appear in the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, or Acts. The only information we have about him as an individual is found in the book of John. Among other things, we learn there that Thomas was called "Twin/Didymus" and was willing to lay his life on the line for His Lord (John 11:16).

What about John 20? In that chapter, we read that Jesus rose from the dead, two of His disciples ran to the tomb and found it empty, and the Lord appeared to Mary Magdalene (John 20:1-18).

Following that, on the same day, which was the first day of the week, the Christ appeared to His disciples behind closed doors. He showed them His hands and His side and, as we would expect, the disciples were glad to see Him (John 20:19,20).

What about Thomas? The Bible says, "*Now Thomas, called the Twin, one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came*" (John 20:24). The Bible does not reveal the reason(s) Thomas was not with the other apostles when the Christ appeared to them, but we know this: he missed out on a special opportunity.

The other disciples shared with Thomas the wonderful news that they had seen the Lord. Thomas responded by stating the conditions under which he would believe that they had seen Jesus (and that He was alive again): "*Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe*" (John 20:25). So, Thomas said he wanted to *see* and *touch* the Lord before he would be convinced.

After eight days, Thomas got his chance to hear, see, and touch the risen Lord when He appeared to His disciples and Thomas was present (John 20:26). That day Jesus told Thomas, "*Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side, Do not be unbelieving, but believing*" (John 20:27).

In that instance, Jesus told Thomas to do two things: (1) Use his finger and hand to touch the Master's body and (2) believe. Did Thomas actually reach out and touch Jesus' body as he had longed to do and the Master instructed him to do? The Bible does not say. What about the part of believing that Jesus had risen? After Jesus' statement about touching

Him and believing, Thomas' reaction was, "*My Lord and my God!*" (John 20:28). Truer words were never uttered! Indeed, Jesus is Lord and He is God. Thomas believed both of those truths. Because he saw the risen Savior, Thomas could (and did) go forth to speak as an eyewitness of His resurrection (Acts 4:33).

Many refer to the apostle Thomas as "doubting Thomas." In fact, in modern times some employ the words "doubting Thomas" when referring to a certain type of person. When I Googled "doubting Thomas," here is what appeared on my computer screen: "a person who is skeptical and refuses to believe something without proof." Please consider this: if faith is based on evidence (and according to the Bible it is, Hebrews 11:1) is it wrong to say, "I will believe only that for which there is evidence?" No, it is not!

Did you know that *none of the other apostles* believed the testimony of those who told them they had seen the risen Lord and that He was alive? It is true: not one of them believed. After Mary Magdalene saw the risen Christ, she went and told His closest followers (apostles). "*And when they heard that He was alive and had been seen by her, they did not believe*" (Mark 16:9-11). Later, "*He appeared to the eleven . . . and rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who had seen Him after He had risen*" (Mark 16:14).

When did the other apostles believe that Jesus had risen from the dead? When they personally saw Him, that is, *when they were given credible evidence*. When was Thomas convinced that Jesus was alive again? Same answer: *when he was given credible evidence*. When Thomas proclaimed that he would not believe Jesus had risen until he saw it for himself, he was simply asking for the same evidence that his buddies had received. Remember, true faith is based on proof.

As for me and my house, we do not identify him as "doubting Thomas" because he did not do anything different than his fellow-apostles did. He sought evidence. There is nothing wrong with that. To be consistent, if I am going to call Thomas "doubting Thomas," would I not need to call Matthew "doubting Matthew," call Peter "doubting Peter," and do the same with all of the other apostles who failed to believe until they were given *convincing proof*?

-- Roger D. Campbell

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