

**Systematic Theology**  
**Are You Sure? The Certainty of Truth in a Postmodern World (Part 2)**  
**Selected Scriptures**  
**October 7, 2007**

*Tom Pennington, Pastor-Teacher*  
*Countryside Bible Church, Southlake, Texas*

It's my goal tonight to finish our study of postmodernism and the truth - to see exactly what it is that the Bible says, and particularly that Christ Himself says, about truth and how we can know the truth.

Archimedes, the great Greek mathematician, was the first to comprehend and explain the basic physics behind the simplest of machines, the lever. He said it is an incredibly, almost limitless, power machine. He said this, "Give me a place where I may stand, and I will move the world. Give me a place where I may stand and, with a lever, I may move the world." In other words, if he could find a place for his lever's fulcrum, outside the world, using the power of a lever, he could move the earth itself.

In Greek, Archimedes' words, "a place where I may stand" are the words *puesto*. *Puesto*. Philosophers use those words to describe the foundational presuppositions of our positions - the philosophical positions we hold. For us as Christians, the Bible is our *puesto*. It is the base, the fulcrum, that justifies our knowledge and our truth claims.

Some argue, "Wait a minute. That's circular reasoning! If the Bible is your fulcrum, the place where you stand, then you're saying, essentially, this: we believe the Bible is God's Word because it claims to be, and we believe its claims because it's God's Word. That's circular reasoning." Well, we have to admit, that it is a kind of circular reasoning. But listen carefully. Whenever anyone is talking about an ultimate source of authority, there will always be, without exception, a kind of circular argument. Because you must ultimately appeal to that authority. And if you were to cite another authority to prove it, then the thing you cited becomes your newest high authority.

Let me give you an example. If I were to appeal to science to truly prove the validity of the Bible, then I have said that science is in fact my highest authority. It's the rule by which I

measure everything else and its truthfulness - it's factual nature. So, you can't appeal to anything else to prove your absolute authority, regardless of what it is. Now, sometimes, people hide this reality when they're telling you their position. They assume it without proof, they bury it beneath a lengthy discussion, or they just don't make their circular arguments explicit. But when it comes to any truth claim, understand that lying back of that claim, is a foundational authority - a *puesto*, a place where they stand.

Let me give you a couple of examples. Take Mormonism for example. What lies behind Mormonism? Ultimately, their authority, the place where they stand, is the Book of Mormon. And we could even say that, ultimately, it goes back from that to Joseph Smith himself. That is the place where they stand. That is their place of authority - their foundational authority. What about the philosophy of empiricism - the idea that the human senses are, in fact, the foundation of authority that we have - what we see, what we observe, what our senses take in? Well, there, you have empiricism - the human senses themselves - are the foundational authority. What I see, what I can smell, what I can taste, what I can hear - my senses become the ultimate authority. In rationalism, it's human reason. In every case, it's impossible to prove that that foundation is a legitimate foundation by using another foundation.

So, the key question - where I'm going is this - the key question to ask when you encounter any religion or philosophy, comes down to this: what is their authority? What is the place where they stand, below which, they cannot go? What is their *puesto*?

With that in mind, what is the authority for postmodernism that we've been studying together? What is their *puesto*? Remember that its basic tenant is that there is no absolute truth. And so, with that in mind, how does modernism, postmodernism rather, come to that conclusion? How do they conclude there is no truth or, if there is truth, we can never know it? What is the base authority to which they appeal in making that observation?

Ultimately, the postmodernist's authority is either his own reasoning or the collective reasoning, the consensus of the community, in which he lives. So, the sole basis of his belief is either his

own mind, or it is a consensus of community opinion. That's the basis of the postmodernist's right to make this observation: there is no truth and, if there is truth, we can't know it.

For us, of course, our *puesto*, as Robert Raymond says in his systematic theology, is the Bible. Why is it the Bible, you ask? Well, really back of that is the person of Jesus Christ. Everything we believe, even what we believe about the Bible, ultimately goes back to **the integrity** and credibility of Jesus Christ. And He staked His credibility on what? You tell me. What did Jesus Christ stake His own credibility on? The resurrection.

Turn with me to John 2. John 2. At the beginning of His ministry, Jesus cleanses the temple. You remember the story. John 2 and look with me at verse 18. After He cleansed the temple, he'd taken a scourge of cords and driven out the moneychangers. He'd made it the place of prayer that it ought to be. Verse 18 of John 2: "The Jews then said to Him, 'What sign do You show us as your authority for doing these things?'" On what basis are you doing this? Where do you get this kind of authority? And Jesus gives them a remarkable answer in verse 19: "Jesus answered them, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.'" Now, they misunderstood. The Jews said, "[Look] It took forty-six years to build this [Herod's] temple [and it still wasn't completed, by the way. Are you going to], and will You raise it up in three days?' But He was speaking [John the Apostle says] of the temple of His body."

Now, what's going on here? Jesus, when asked for a basis for His authority - proof of His authority - said, "*My resurrection is the proof I offer you.*" You know what Jesus was essentially saying? He was saying, "*If I am raised from the dead, then everything I do and everything I teach should be embraced as right and true.*" So, to determine what we should believe about the truth we need to determine what Jesus Himself taught, because He was, in fact, resurrected from the dead. He did establish His credibility. Then we know that whatever Jesus taught about the truth, is true, and that we can embrace it as well. Because Jesus, we could say, is our ultimate place where we stand. Jesus Himself is our ultimate *puesto*, to use the philosophical expression.

Now, last week we went through a brief history of ideas. We looked at premodernism which - a philosophy that believes that the knowledge of the truth was based on the authority of God's

revelation. We looked at modernism which believes that truths exist but the only reliable way to know truth is through the scientific method - the use of reason and the senses. We looked at postmodernism - the philosophy that really came on in about 1970. Premodernism lasted from the beginning of the world, essentially, until about the early 1600s (1610), when Descartes said, "I think therefore I am" - the sort of formal beginning, if you will, of the Enlightenment and of human reason reigning over the determination of truth. And the Enlightenment's influence and modern thinking, that is, the scientific method - human reason determining truth - lasted from the early 1600s to about 1970, most would agree. And then, beginning in about 1970 (the early 1970s), this concept of postmodernism was born. Postmodernism is essentially the embrace of two very simple ideas. It's the idea that you can never be certain of the truth, if truth exists at all, and there is no universal explanation or narrative of meaning.

At its heart, postmodernism is a rejection of certainty about anything. Unfortunately, it's also infected the church. (You're not seeing this anywhere, are you? Okay. I kept going just in case they got it. I didn't want to be out of step, but I'll just ignore it, I guess, and move on).

Postmodernism has influenced the church. It came in academically through some scholarly books that were written by professors at Christian colleges and universities and seminaries. And, popularly, it came in through primarily the Emergent Church movement and its primary authors.

The consequences of postmodernism in the church are huge. Essentially, we are reduced now to believe that truth is not absolute. The Bible does not contain propositional truth. No one can claim their interpretation of the truth is certain. Sin is subjective. And there is no body of necessary doctrine that must be believed.

Last time, we looked at what the Bible as a whole has to say about the truth. We looked at truth being objective, that is, outside of us. Truth is universal; it's not merely a localized reality. Truth is eternal; it's not temporal. It spans from eternity past into eternity future. And it's propositional, that is, it's communicated in propositions that can be either true or false, but not both.

Tonight, I want us to look at the testimony of Jesus Christ. What does Jesus Himself have to say about the issue of truth? As I said a moment ago, ultimately, our basis for believing what we believe is Jesus Christ, because of the credibility that He built through being raised from the dead. He affirmed Himself and everything He did and everything He taught as truth by His resurrection from the dead.

When you look at Christ, understand that ultimately the truth of God was revealed and manifested in His person, in Jesus Christ Himself. John 1:14 says that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. And He was full of, what? Truth. He was full of truth. In John 14:6 Jesus said to Thomas, my name's sake, there on the night before the crucifixion, He said, "I am the way, and [I am] the truth..." There is a very exclusive claim in an inclusive age. In a world that's adrift in a sea of relativism, Jesus claims that everything He is, everything He says, and everything He does is absolutely, objectively true - "*I am the truth. I embody truth.*" And everything else is false because Jesus goes on to say, "no one [man] comes to the Father but through Me." "*There's only one truth, only one way, and I am the truth, and I am the way exclusively. I'm the truth about God. I'm the truth about sin. I'm the truth about heaven. I'm the truth about hell. Trust me!*", Jesus said.

When you examine the ministry of Jesus, who was full of truth and who claimed to be truth itself, you discover that He repeatedly taught several foundational points about truth. And I want to take you through those in the time we have remaining tonight. Jesus taught several foundational points about truth.

First of all, language is fully capable of expressing truth from one mind to another. I showed you last week how postmodernists, including James Derrida, are saying things like language is incapable of communicating truth. Jesus said it's very capable of communicating truth. In John 8:26 Jesus says, "I have many things to speak and to judge concerning you, but He who sent Me is true; and the things which I heard from Him, these I speak to the world." Jesus said, "*My Father is true, He's communicated that truth to Me, and I am using words to communicate that truth to you.*" Language is fully capable of expressing truth.

In John 12:49 Jesus said, “For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me a commandment...” Listen carefully to what He says. He’s given me a commandment “as to what to say and what to speak”. Jesus said, “*I am only speaking what the Father has communicated to Me in words, commanded Me to do. That’s what I’m saying. That’s what I’m speaking.*” So, Jesus said language was perfectly sufficient for the Father to express these truths to the Son and perfectly sufficient for the Son, in turn, to take and express them to the Father or to the people, rather, of Israel in the first century and to us through His apostles.

Robert Raymond writes, “Every theory that would endorse the idea that literal truth cannot be revealed or communicated propositionally from God to man, because language is incapable, is ultimately an attack against Jesus Christ. For in the days of His flesh, Jesus Christ taught the multitudes using the known languages of Aramaic and Greek (by the way, Jesus probably spoke 3 languages - Aramaic, Greek, and Hebrew - but He taught in Aramaic and Greek), claiming, as He did so, that He was imparting spiritual, eternal truth. Thus”, Raymond says, “every denial of the possibility of a literally true verbal revelation from God to mankind, strikes directly at Jesus Christ in His role as prophet and teacher, for He claimed to be the deliverer of just such a revelation. So, language is perfectly sufficient, and Jesus’ ministry affirms that again and again.

A second point that Jesus makes about truth is that God has revealed absolute truth to us through human agents, language, and propositions. God has communicated His absolute truth to us through human language and agents and propositional statements. The way we know this is the reality that Jesus affirms the Old Testament Scripture, He affirms His own teaching, and He even pre-affirms the New Testament.

Let’s look at each of these. First of all, when it comes to the Old Testament Scriptures, understand that by the time of Christ, the Hebrew Old Testament was usually divided into two parts or three parts. When they spoke of the Old Testament, they would most commonly say “The Law and the Prophets”. That was their shorthand for the Old Testament - the law being the first five books (all of which Moses wrote), the prophets being all of those books that were written by those who actually held the prophetic office, and if there was a third one added, it was

called the Writings. But most often, the Old Testament Scriptures are just called The Law and the Prophets.

And in Matthew 5 - turn there for a moment. Matthew 5:17. Notice what Jesus says about the Law and the Prophets, that is, the Old Testament. Very familiar passage. Matthew 5:17: "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets [that's the Old Testament]; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill." *Not to destroy it but to keep it, to affirm it, and to teach it.* Verse 18: "For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished." Jesus is clearly referring here to the entire Old Testament. What He says is, "*the Law and the Prophets (the Old Testament) in its entirety will be accomplished.* That is the same thing as saying, "*It is true, and it will be just as it's spoken. It's trustworthy.*" And, in fact, notice verse 18. It's true even down to the smallest Hebrew letter and to the smallest stroke on a Hebrew letter. That's what those words mean. Christ affirmed the Old Testament's truthfulness.

In Luke 24:44: "Now He said to them [His disciples], 'These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.'" He affirms the truthfulness of the Old Testament. Twenty-four times in the gospel, we read something like this, where Jesus says, "It is written" or one of His apostles, under His authority, writes "It is written" followed by an Old Testament quotation. So, Jesus certainly affirmed absolute truth, communicated through the human messengers in the Old Testament.

But Jesus also affirmed that, not only of the Old Testament, but of His own teaching. In John 3:11 Jesus says, "Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know and testify of what we have seen..." He says, "*Listen, I'm giving you accurate testimony. What I'm saying is true.*" John 7:16: "So Jesus answered them and said, 'My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me.'" John 8:40, Jesus says, "But as it is, you are seeking to kill Me [He says to His enemies], a man who has told you the truth [Jesus said, 'My teaching is truth'] which I heard from God..."

In that same chapter, John 8...in fact, turn there for a moment. John 8:45. John 8:45. In that same basic context, Jesus says, “But because I speak the truth, you do not believe Me. Which one of you convicts Me of sin? If I speak truth, why do you not believe Me?” Jesus was affirming again that His own teaching was truth. God was communicating the truth through Him. He took what the Father had told Him to say, as we saw a few minutes ago, and He spoke the truth Himself. In John 15:15 Jesus says, “...all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you.” In His high priestly prayer, in John 17:14 Jesus prays to the Father: “I have given them Your word...” Jesus said, “*I’m speaking the truth and this truth didn’t originate with Me. It originated with the Father who commanded Me to share this truth.*” In John 18:37, Jesus makes this startling statement at His crucifixion: “For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world [He tells Pilate], to testify to the truth. [Jesus said, ‘Part of the reason I came was to testify to the truth’]. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice”, He told Pilate. So, Jesus not only affirms the truthfulness of the Old Testament, He also affirms the truthfulness of His own teaching.

Let me take it a step further. Jesus affirms the writing of His apostles. You say, “Well, wait a minute, they didn’t write till after He was gone.” That’s true! He pre-affirmed it. He pre-authenticated the truth of the New Testament by explaining that they would be protected and guided in their writing.

Look at John 14, in the upper room discourse, in John 14:26. Jesus tells the disciples, “But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.” Folks, this is not a promise to you and me. Jesus hasn’t spoken to us personally and physically. We haven’t heard Him speak and the Holy Spirit isn’t recalling to us what Jesus actually spoke to us. This was a promise to the apostles. He’s saying to them, “*When the Spirit comes, He’s going to further teach you what I have begun to teach you and He will bring to your remembrance everything I have taught you.*” This was Jesus promise to us and to them, that they would be able to remember accurately what He had taught them during those 3, 3 1/2 years, while He was on earth.



Turnover - in the same context - John 16:12. Jesus says, "I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now [this is just before they leave the upper room to go to the Garden of Gethsemane]. But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine; therefore I said that He takes of Mine and will disclose it to you." Again, this is not a promise to you or to me. This is a promise to the apostles. Jesus was pre-authenticating the New Testament for us. He was telling them that the Spirit would further teach them what He had begun to teach them and that He would recall to their minds the things that Jesus had taught.

I mean, think for a moment about the old apostle John, writing his gospel - the gospel of John that we're just looking at - some 50 years after Jesus' death and life. But listen to how John finishes his gospel. He says in chapter 21:24, "This is the disciple who is testifying to these things and wrote these things, and we know that his testimony is true." He was merely affirming what Jesus had told him.

Listen, Christ could not have been more direct about His confidence in the truth of Scripture. He affirmed the Old Testament, he affirmed His own teaching, and He pre-affirmed or pre-authenticated His apostles through the work of the Spirit to write the truth. The Spirit would lead them and guide them into, what? "All truth", Jesus said. So, there's no question. But what... When we look at the teaching of Jesus that God has revealed this absolute truth to us - through human agents, through human language - and we have the truth of God.

The next point that we need to see in our Lords teaching us about truth, is that truth can be rationally understood by the mind. There's no code here to decipher. There's no mystical experience. There is the grasping of the truth by the mind. Do you remember what Jesus said on numbers of occasions to the Pharisees and the disciples when they were misinterpreting the Old Testament? It was really a slap in the face to these scholars in the law. He said to them in, for example, in Matthew 12:3, 5 - He says, "Have you not read?" "*Have you not read?*" What's the implication? If you would just bother to read it carefully, you'd get it! Scripture is clear. Christ

uses that same expression some seven times in the gospels, rebuking the religious leaders. You know what Jesus was calling for? A straightforward, rational understanding of the Scripture. And yet we have people who are connected to the Christian church today, saying that it is arrogant to assume that you can read a passage and comprehend it with your mind.

In Luke 24:25, Jesus said to the disciples on the Emmaus Road, after His resurrection: “And He said to them, ‘O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken!’” You know what Jesus was saying? He was saying, “*The problem isn’t that the Old Testament is just too obscure, you can never get the truth about Me there.*” He’s saying, “*No! The truth is clear. You could understand it, but you are slow of heart to believe what the prophets have written.*”

In John 3:11 Jesus says, “Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know and testify of what we have seen [I read that just a moment ago. But He goes on to say in the next phrase], and you do not accept our testimony.” Jesus didn’t say, “*You know, there’s no way in the world you could ever grasp what I’m saying.*”

Now, it is true that Jesus sometimes spoke difficult things. He sometimes spoke in parables so that they were intended for His disciples. But much of what Jesus said was very straightforward. In fact, the Jews understood it well enough when Jesus said, “Before Abraham was, I AM”. They got it. They picked up stones to stone Him. They understood His implication. And so, the truth of God’s Word is comprehended and understood by the use of the mind.

Now, let me make one clarifying statement. The human mind can grasp the basic clarity of the Word of God. But to fully grasp with spiritual richness, in a life changing way, requires the work of the Spirit of God and what the Bible calls “illumination”. “Open the eyes of my heart that I may behold wonderful things from your law”. “Open my eyes”, the Psalmist says, as some of you been meditating on the last week. Same thing in Ephesians 1: “I pray that the eyes of your heart [their understanding] may be enlightened - *that they would really grasp it. Oh, they’ve read it before; **they**’ve heard it before. But Father I’m praying that You would help them to truly grasp it.*” So, understand there are two different things I’m talking about here. The

Bible can be understood with the mind. But to be really spiritually grasped in a life changing way, requires the work of the Spirit of God to illumine our understanding.

An illustration I often like to use is the stained-glass illustration. Behind that screen is a stained-glass window. At night, there's no light coming through it, and so, you really see the image. You understand what's there. You recognize, it's a cross. You see that there're multi colors. But that's a whole lot different than seeing that stained glass window in the daytime, when the light is streaming through it. It's like the light comes on and you see it in its richness, and power, and grace, and beauty. And it moves you. That's what I'm talking about with the Scripture. There is illumination. There is understanding and then there is illumination. But truth can be rationally comprehended by the mind.

The fourth point that Jesus makes again and again about the Scripture and the truthfulness of Scripture, is this: the truth propositions revealed in Scripture - this is very important - the truth propositions revealed in Scripture, have only one meaning - *only one meaning* - and that is the one the author intended. This is absolutely crucial.

You know there's an attack on this today from the Emergent Church - the philosophical approaches of **post**modernism. But sadly, there's even attack on this within evangelical churches that have nothing to do with postmodernism. And here's the attack in evangelical churches. How often have you heard somebody say - read a passage and then say, "Well, let me tell you what that means to me." Can I say, respectfully, "Who cares what it means to you?" That's not the question. It doesn't matter what it means to me. The question is: what did John the Apostle mean? What did Jesus mean? What did Luke mean? What did Paul mean? Because Scripture - every truth proposition in Scripture only has one meaning and that is the author's intended meaning.

In Matthew 22. Turn there for a moment. Matthew 22:29. Matthew 22:29. You remember the Sadducees were trying to stump Jesus and **He** hits them pretty hard too here. He says in verse 29, "You are mistaken, not understanding the Scriptures..." Wow! You know what Jesus was essentially saying? You have misunderstood what the Scripture writer intended to communicate.

Jesus was affirming both the fact that a given passage has one meaning and that single truth, that single intended truth of the writer, can be understood by the mind. That's what He was saying. You misunderstood what the Scripture was saying. In other words, I as the reader don't give meaning to this text. Whether it's the evangelical variety of "Let me tell you what it means to me" or it's the postmodern variety of "This text has no meaning till I give it meaning" or "the community gives it meaning". Either way, Jesus says, "*No! You can misunderstand the Scripture - what it says, what it intended to say.*"

In John 5, Jesus makes the same point. John 5:39. Jesus says, "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me." Now, this is probably best understood as a command - "Search the Scriptures!" Jesus was telling them to keep searching the Scriptures because, so far, they had missed the intention of a number of passages about Him. They had misunderstood the original authors' intention and missed Christ altogether.

In John 20:30-31, as John shares the reason he wrote his gospel, he says, "Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that [in order that] you may believe that Jesus is the Christ [Messiah], the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name." Here you have John selecting specific material with one purpose in mind and that's the purpose he expected his readers to get. Where in the world would John have learned such a premodern idea? John was taught by, and his words were pre-authenticated by our Lord. That's where he learned that idea - that the author gives meaning to the text and not the reader.

Now, I know I'm showing you the testimony of our Lord about the truth but there are a couple of passages outside the gospels that I just can't resist bringing up at this point. Turn to Galatians 1. Galatians - **this is** really an incredible statement that Paul makes. Galatians 1:8. He said, "*You know, I've heard there's this other gospel you're pursuing. It's a perversion of the gospel of Christ.*" Verse 8: "But even if we [that is, I as an apostle], or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what

you received, he is to be accursed! You know what Paul is implying here? He is implying that the people in the churches in Galatia had a right to evaluate the teaching of an apostle or even an angel, that they had a rule which they could use in that evaluation, and it was the Scripture. Hodge writes, "If then the Bible recognizes the right of the people to judge the teaching of apostles and angels, they are not to be denied the right of judging the doctrines of bishops and priests. Essentially, the apostle Paul was saying the truth has meaning. There's only one gospel and everything else is, what? A false gospel. What I've taught you is the true gospel and everything that doesn't fall in line with that is falsehood.

Peter, in 2 Peter 3, writes about Paul's writings. He says, "*Our brother Paul writes in all his letters.*" And he says this, "*There are some things that are hard to understand*". You understand that, right? I mean we encountered some of those just this morning. But then Peter says this, "[Those hard-to-understand things in Paul], untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction." Peter is arguing that Paul's letters are to be interpreted in keeping with, what? The author's intention. And to come to any other conclusion than what Paul intended to communicate, is to distort the Scripture. And the result of such a distortion of Scripture is your own destruction. So, the truth propositions revealed in Scripture have only one meaning and that meaning flows from authorial intent.

There's one last point Jesus makes about truth that you really need to get. This is where it really comes down to the bottom line. We can be certain of the one true meaning God intended to communicate. We can be certain of the one true meaning God intended to communicate. Jesus Himself claimed to be certain. In John 12:50 He says, "I know that His commandment is eternal life; therefore the things I speak, I speak just as the Father has told Me." Jesus said, "*I'm absolutely certain I'm getting it right.*" You say, "Well yeah, of course! I mean, Jesus can be certain. But what about us?" Well, Jesus also made it clear that we could be certain about the essential doctrines of the Christian faith. I'm not talking about every nuance that's in Scripture - of course not. I'm talking about those fundamental, foundational doctrines on which the church of Jesus Christ has always stood. We can be certain.

Look at John 7. Our Lord affirms this in crystal clear terms in John 7. And look at verse 14: “But when it was now the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and began to teach. The Jews then were astonished, saying, ‘How has this man become learned, having never been educated?’ [How did He become such a scholar with the Scriptures, having never had a formal rabbi’s education?]. So Jesus answered them and said, ‘My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me.’” There, again, He affirms the truthfulness of what He’s teaching - from God. And then He makes this incredible statement in verse 17. Star this verse; it’s absolutely crucial. Jesus says, “If anyone is willing to do His [the Father’s] will, he will know of the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak from Myself.” You know what Jesus was affirming? He was affirming that where there is a willing heart to embrace the truth of God, there can be certainty about the truth of God on foundational issues. Obviously, here, He’s talking about, what? His own claims - who He was.

I encourage people, when I encounter people that are either new in their faith or they’re uncertain of their faith, I encourage them to read the Gospel of John because just listen to the claims of Jesus Christ. Listen to what He says. If you have a willing heart to do what pleases God, then you will come to understand, as Jesus says here, “*the one who is willing to do His will, will know of my teaching whether it is of God or whether I speak of myself.*”

You know the reason people can live their lives reading the gospels, encountering the gospel, even teaching in academic institutions and never really come to faith and repentance in Jesus Christ? Jesus explains it here. They’re not willing to do His will. They don’t want to change. They don’t want all of the baggage that comes with Christ like giving up their sin.

Over in John 8 - just the chapter over, John 8:43. Jesus says, “Why do you not understand what I am saying? It is because you cannot hear My word. [It’s because] You are of your father the devil...” He takes it back to original sin. You have no capacity to connect with God, to understand God. Instead, you’re connected to the devil. Verse 45: “But because I speak the truth, you do not believe Me. Which one of you convicts Me of sin? If I speak truth, why do you not believe Me?” Verse 47 (here’s why): “He who is of God hears the words of God; for this reason you do not hear them, because you are not of God.”

Over in John 17:8. I invite you to turn there - John 17:8. Our Lord makes this point in His high priestly prayer. This is a crucial text because Jesus makes several points here in this one verse. He says (verse 7): “Now they have come to know that everything You have given Me is from You [they understand that I’m not the ultimate source of what I’ve thought them. You are. Verse 8]; for the words which You gave Me I have given to them [Words. Look at that - words]; and they received them and [they, Jesus says, have] truly understood that I came forth from You, and they believed that [notice that propositional statement. They believed that. They believed something to be true - a fact - that] You sent Me.” So, Jesus, here in this one verse, affirms that He is speaking the truth, that He’s giving them the truth of God in words and that they have not only heard them, they have received them by faith, and they have understood factual propositions to be true. They were fully able to understand the propositional truth He had taught them. So, we can be certain of the one true meaning God intended to communicate certainly regarding all of the foundational doctrines of the Christian faith.

Now, there’s several conclusions, very briefly, I want to make from our study over the last two weeks. Couple of conclusions you need to understand. First of all, postmodernism’s approach to truth has four huge problems. We’ve discovered these together. Four huge problems.

The first and foremost - this is by far the most important - is that it runs contrary to the clear teaching of Christ, as well as the rest of Scripture. What postmodernism teaches about truth is absolutely contrary to what Jesus taught about truth and to what the rest of the Scripture teaches about truth.

Second huge problem... That’s the most important one but let me give you a couple of others. Second huge problem: postmodernists have to use propositional truth statements to argue for their view. Think about that for a moment. If I stand up here and say, “There is no truth. I’m a postmodernist and there is no truth!”, what have I just done? I’ve made a propositional truth statement arguing that there are no propositional truth statements. It’s inconsistent.

Third huge problem with postmodernism is the argument that there is no metanarrative that is overarching explanation of reality. The argument that there is no overarching explanation of reality is, what? An overarching explanation of reality. Again, what they're denying, they're affirming at the same time.

A fourth huge problem is postmodernism cannot be consistently practiced in the real world. Let me show you what I mean by that. When I had the chance - and I've told you this story before, but I want to give it again in this context. When I had the chance to be up at Southern Seminary, Dr. Mueller was showing John MacArthur and I around. We were there for - John was speaking at the preaching series and I was there with him as his assistant. And he was showing us around and he made the statement at one point, or he was telling us the story about the last group of professors he had to fire. I don't remember now if there was one or a group. I want to say there was a group of them. And they called them into the office, and he said to them, "I want to know (these men were postmodernists) ..." He said, "I want to know if you affirm our doctrinal statement." Their response was, "Well, you know (typically postmodern) ..." They said, "Well, you know, written document - it's subjective and open to interpretation i.e., we can make it say whatever we want it to say. We give it meaning." And Dr. Mueller said, "Well that's all I needed to know. You're fired!" And they said, "Wait a minute! You can't fire us!" He said, "Well, I just did! Why can't I?" They said, "Well, we have contracts." He said, "Well, you know written documents - they're subjective, they're open to interpretation. I give them meaning." And then he said this to them and he's absolutely right. He says, "You're a bunch of hypocrites! You want to deal with the Bible that way, but you don't want me to deal with your contract that way. You can't live in the real world as a postmodernist because you don't want anybody dealing with your contracts like that."

Another illustration that I love is from D.A. Carson. He spoke on this whole issue and a woman, who had written a book attacking absolute truth, came up to him afterwards. And they were having this discussion and he decided to take a little unique tack with her. And so, he said, "You know Ma'am", he said, "I really appreciate the way that you affirmed your total confidence in the truth by writing a book like that filled with ironic sarcasm against those who reject the truth." She was livid. "Wait a minute! No, that isn't it at all what I was saying. I was saying there is no



truth.” “Oh no, it was clear to me that **you were** affirming the truth. That’s what I read in your book.” And she continued to get more and more livid. And he said, “Look, I just want you to see that, as a writer, you don’t want me to inform your words. You want me to read your book with authorial intent. And yet you don’t want me to read the Bible that way.” So, you can’t live in the world as a postmodernist. You can’t really live here and be consistent. Those are the problems.

A second conclusion is, in dealing with a postmodern, the best place to start is with Jesus Christ and His claims. Show the postmodernist what Jesus taught. Start with John 14:6. Boy, that’s a slap in the face! “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father but through Me.” And then show the man or the woman that they are setting their own mind or the community’s view against Jesus Christ. What you’re really doing is exposing where they stand, that they’re saying their mind is a heavier, weightier authority than Jesus Christ.

Thirdly (third conclusion), is when you simply believe what Jesus taught about the truth, then all of the tragic consequences of postmodernism are reversed. And all of a sudden you will believe that truth is absolute. You will believe that the Bible is filled with truth propositions that can be understood. You will believe that we can be certain about the interpretation of essential truths, that sin is objective, and that there is a distinct body of necessary doctrine that ought to be taught and believed and defended and passed on to the next generation - which is what the church has always believed.

As we close our time together, turn to the second-to-the-last book in the Bible. Jude, the half-brother of our Lord, wrote this little letter. I just want you to say two verses. He writes in verse 3: “Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation [I wanted to write to you about the joy of the salvation we enjoy and confirm you in it. He says I wanted to do that but], I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend [fight] earnestly for the faith [in other words, for a body of doctrine called **the** Christian faith. The body of doctrine] which was once for all handed down [by God] to the saints [by Christ]. For certain persons have crept in unnoticed [that is, into the church], those who were long beforehand marked out for this

condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness [license and into sin] and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.”

Folks, Jesus is the truth. He gave us the truth and we have a responsibility, if we're going to be faithful to Him, to teach the truth to our children, to teach the truth in this church, to defend the truth against error - graciously, yes, but contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. We stand on the shoulders of 2000 years of church history. Let's not be ashamed of that. And to defend the truth and to pass it down to the next generation. The baton is in our hands. As parents, as friends, as a church we need to pass... Defend the truth and teach the truth and pass it on to the next generation. *“I am the truth”*, Jesus said. May we love Him enough to defend His truth.

Let's pray together.

Father thank You for the Word that we've studied tonight. Thank You for our Lord. Thank You that You affirmed everything He was and everything He taught by raising Him from the dead, that He is the place where we stand. He is the justification for everything that we believe. And Father I pray that You would help us to grasp what Jesus taught about the truth and to defend it, to teach it to our families, teach it here within the context of this church, to defend it against terror and those who would attack it - both from without and from within. And help us to be faithful to pass the truth on to the next generation, unharmed by the attacks of the postmodernists who would rob it of all meaning. Father may You be true and every man a liar. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen!