

# What Is Truth?

*“God is not man,  
that he should lie,  
or a son of man,  
that he should  
change his mind.  
Has he said, and  
will he not do it?  
Or has he spoken,  
and will he not  
fulfill it?”*

—*Numbers 23:19,*  
*English Standard*  
*Version*

## A RECENT DEVELOPMENT

which has swept over this country, as well as many other parts of the world, is identifiable to most by these simple words—“leaks” and “fake news.” *The Oxford Dictionary* defines a “leak” as “an intentional disclosure of secret information.” Although the term “fake news” is not yet found in all dictionaries, its addition has begun and will surely spread. *Collins English Dictionary* now includes it, with the definition: “false, often sensational, information disseminated under the guise of news reporting.” *The Australian Macquarie Dictionary* has also added it, and designated “fake news” as its 2016 “word of the year.”

“Leaks” as described above rarely include a disclosure as to how the “secret information” has been obtained, or its source. Therefore, it is virtually impossible for the general public to know whether such statements are true or false. Even the publisher of a leak may not know the veracity of what

he is disseminating, if it has not been disclosed to him in some documented fashion.

“Fake news” is even more blatant in its disregard for truth, as it is put forth as information for public consumption with full knowledge by its source of its falsehood. To add further confusion, fake news may often be generated from leaks. The leaks may be true, or they may be false, but the fake news into which they often evolve is, by definition, always untrue.

We might wonder why these phenomena are so recently rampant in the world. The answer lies in the fact that the vast majority of mankind, regardless of where they dwell on the face of the earth, are interconnected via modern forms of communication. Man has the ability to instantly communicate with his fellows. He can both disseminate and receive information “real-time” to and from anywhere on earth through a myriad of electronic communication networks.

With this explosion of instantaneous communication, it is to be expected that some people freely engage in propagating leaks and publishing fake news. Their intents may be varied, but in most cases, they are driven by self-centered desires, or the wish to promote certain political or social agendas while tearing down others. As such, leaks and fake news come from all corners of the political and social spectrum. In today’s world, all sides seem to be intent on participating in these activities.

The general public is not without responsibility. Many have become callous to the truthfulness of what they see and hear. With leaks and fake news, there is literally something for everyone to latch

onto and claim as true and real. Whether information is factual or not is almost of no consideration to many. One recent commentary suggests that people only want to hear what they agree with, regardless of truth or falsehood. If such has become man's way of thinking, then it should be no wonder that leaks and fake news abound.

A telling sign pertaining to the foregoing discussion is shown in the following statistic. A recent search on the Internet of the terms "leaks" and "fake news" returned over 105 million hits. A similar search of the term "truth" produced only 95 million hits. This surely sends a clear message about the ever-falling condition of mankind under the present sinful conditions of this world.

## **GOD'S VIEWPOINT**

For those who desire to seek and do God's will in their life, their viewpoint on these matters will be different from the majority of the world. The leaking of secretive information without regard for its basis of truth is out of harmony with God's methods and ways. The psalmist writes, "The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant." (Ps. 25:14) Surely, all sacred "secrets" revealed by our all-wise and perfect Creator can only be of the most genuine kind. Our God can never be thought of as "leaking" information which may or may not be true.

On the other hand, God knows the secrets of fallen man, and will take the necessary steps accordingly. Various Scriptures point out this important truth. "God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be

good, or whether it be evil.” Jesus said, “Nothing is secret, that shall not be made manifest; neither any thing hid, that shall not be known.” Paul also speaks of a time when God will “judge the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.”—Eccles. 12:14; Luke 8:17; Rom. 2:16

Although the term “fake news” may seem on the surface to be somewhat innocent and harmless, its definition belies such thinking. It is false information and, at its core, consists of lies. There is no question about how God views lying. The Scriptures say that “a lying tongue . . . doth the LORD hate,” and “Lying lips are an abomination to the LORD.”—Prov. 6:16,17; 12:22

Jesus made it very clear who is the source of all lies—Satan, the devil. “He was a murderer from the beginning,” Jesus affirms, “and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.” (John 8:44) Indeed, in mankind’s earliest experience in the Garden of Eden, Satan was there to lie, saying to mother Eve, “Ye shall not surely die,” if you eat of the forbidden fruit.—Gen. 3:4

What a lie this was! Eve, as well as Adam, did indeed die, as has every generation of their offspring since. Satan, however, has continued to lie, one falsehood generating another down through the ages. Paul indicates that this great adversary of God has also used human instruments to convey many of his lies. He speaks of those whose words are “after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders.” (II Thess. 2:9) Thankfully, however, the Scriptures also speak of the time when God

will “sweep away the refuge of lies,” and waters of truth “shall overflow the hiding place.”—Isa. 28:17

## **WHAT IS TRUTH?**

This is the heart-searching question which Pilate asked Jesus as he stood before him in the judgment hall. (John 18:38) Pilate knew that Jesus was unlike any other human being he had ever known. He was also no doubt aware of the many lies and fabricated stories the Jewish religious leaders had concocted in order to get Jesus condemned to death. It was quite natural, then, that Pilate propound such a question to the Master. This same inquiry—what is truth?—has been in the minds of many sincere people throughout the ages. As evident in the foregoing discussion, today the word “truth” is used rather loosely, and applied to ideas, viewpoints, and philosophies that, in reality, are often far from the truth. Even in the field of science, much is advanced as truth which is, in fact, philosophy or supposition. In the area of religion, the situation is even more confusing.

Jesus did not answer Pilate’s question, “What is truth?” However, the night before, he said in prayer to his Heavenly Father, “Thy word is truth.” (John 17:17) The written Word of God at that time consisted of the Old Testament. Subsequently, under God’s direction of the Apostles, the New Testament Scriptures were added to the Old and we now have the entire Bible, the inspired Word of God. This is the embodiment of the “truth” of which Pilate inquired.

There is much in the Bible upon which most of its claimed adherents would agree, such as its

historical, ethical, and devotional teachings. Many also rejoice in its assurances of God's love and care for his people. However, to most Bible readers, the precious Word seems to be thought of as nothing more than a book of ancient historical records, in which are found many good and wholesome precepts that, if followed, will make us better men and women. Indeed, it is an exceedingly valuable book by which to live. Yet, few realize that also contained in the blessed Bible is God's wonderful and harmonious plan for the recovery of the human race from sin and death.

Most professed Christians believe that the majority of mankind is lost forever because they have not accepted Jesus as their Redeemer in this life. What has been lost, however, is the great truth that those whom Jesus is now calling out from the world as his consecrated footstep followers are to live and reign with him for the purpose of extending the opportunity of salvation to the remainder of mankind, the living and the dead. (Eph. 1:18-23; Rev. 20:6) This understanding is an important element of the answer to the question, "What is truth?" It helps reveal the glorious harmony of the Bible, which tells of the fullness of God's love for the whole world of mankind, demonstrated when he sent his Son to be their Redeemer.—John 3:16

All mankind will be given the opportunity for full restoration to life on the earth. Thus, the promises of God pertaining to this wider aspect of his plan for mankind are descriptive of earthly blessings. Peter uses the expression, "times of restitution of all things," and adds, "which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world

began.” (Acts 3:21) This is a great truth of the Bible, which is testified in the writings of all the prophets, yet it is completely unnoticed by many. It is a key part of the answer to the question, “What is truth?”

## **THE KINGDOM HOPE**

The coming kingdom of God is prominently taught in the Bible, in both the Old and the New Testaments. The prophecies in the Scriptures associate this kingdom with the promised Messiah, or Christ, with statements such as, “The government shall be upon his shoulder: . . . Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end.” (Isa. 9:6,7) Daniel wrote, “In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom.”—Dan. 2:44

When Jesus came, John the Baptist announced, “The kingdom of heaven is at hand.” (Matt. 3:1,2) Nearly all of Jesus’ teachings were associated directly or indirectly with this “kingdom” feature of God’s plan. His parables related to the kingdom and to its preparation, with some of them pertaining to a counterfeit kingdom which Satan would set up to deceive the people. He encouraged his disciples with the hope of reigning with him in his kingdom, saying, “Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”—Luke 12:32

In the last three chapters of the Bible, we are furnished with a symbolic description of the establishment and work of the kingdom. The followers of Jesus are shown coming forth in the “first resurrection” to “reign with him a thousand years.” A holy city then is seen coming down from heaven, and the dwelling place of God is with men, and

there is no more death. We see “the throne of God and of the Lamb,” and from that throne there flows “a pure river of water of life,” and the people are invited to come and “take the water of life freely.”—Rev. 20:6; 21:2-4; 22:1,17

This wonderful kingdom teaching has been misunderstood by most. The *King James* translation of Luke 17:21 references Jesus as saying, “The kingdom of God is within you.” However, a more accurate rendering of these words is, “God’s royal majesty is among you.” (*Wilson’s Emphatic Diaglott*) Many of the promises and prophecies of the Bible pertaining to the kingdom have been diluted to mean merely the righteous desires within man’s heart, which it is vainly hoped may one day control the lives of the majority of mankind.

To the extent that honorable men and women can enter into and control politics, it is hoped that the righteous desires of the people may become implemented by civil laws that will more effectively control and root out evil. To this arrangement has often been applied the name, “kingdom of God.” Thus, the hope of the real kingdom of promise has been lost, with the result that the only hope held out for a better world is based on the vain wish that fallen man can, in some way or other, raise himself up through his own efforts.

How meaningful are the Bible’s promises of the kingdom, however, when we take God at his word. After assuring us of the increase of Christ’s government and peace in God’s kingdom, the Prophet Isaiah added, “The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.” (Isa. 9:7) As followers of the Master, called to suffer and die with him that we might live and reign



with him, we have the privilege, through faithfulness and the Lord's assisting help, to make our "calling and election sure" in order that we may reign with Christ.—Rom. 8:17; II Tim. 2:11,12; II Pet. 1:10

Through the Scriptures, God's kingdom promises come to life, and we are given a glorious and comforting hope of coming peace, joy, health, and life for all the willing and obedient of mankind. The kingdom teachings of the Bible reveal that under that arrangement there will be both rulers and the ruled, the kings and their subjects. Jesus will be the King of kings, and his faithful followers of this age will be associated with him. The remainder of mankind will be the subjects of the kingdom, and those who obey its righteous laws will live in peace and joy forever.

## **THE WORLD'S CONVERSION**

There is yet another important feature to consider in answering the question, "What is truth?" It is the fact that the present Gospel Age is not the time in the plan of God for the conversion of the world. Jesus commissioned his disciples to go into all the world to preach the Gospel "for a witness," but he did not encourage them to believe that this would result in the world's conversion through their efforts. (Matt. 24:14) The real purpose of this worldwide witness work is explained in Acts 15:14. Here James informs us that "Simeon [Peter] hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name."

This "people for his name" are the "little flock" who are to live and reign with Christ. (Luke 12:32) At the beginning of the Gospel Age, a few of these

were selected from among the Israelites, and to these were given the privilege “to become the sons of God.” (John 1:12) There were not enough of these to make up God’s foreordained number, so the message went to the Gentiles, and throughout the age its power has been drawing from among them a people for God’s name.

This special calling is only preparatory to the ultimate objective of God’s plan. “After this,” James continues, the Lord will “build again the tabernacle [house] of David, which is fallen down.” (Acts 15:16) God’s kingdom promises were first made to the natural descendants of Abraham. Later, they were narrowed down to the tribe of Judah. (Gen. 49:10) After this, they were still further restricted to the family, or house of David.—II Sam. 7:16

Jesus became the heir of this promise. It is for this reason that the Prophet Isaiah associated the government of the Prince of Peace with the “throne of David, . . . to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever.” (Isa. 9:6,7) It is at his Second Advent, or presence, that Jesus reestablishes the throne of David, when he and his glorified church will be the spiritual rulers in that new world government. It is this which is referred to by James as building again “the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down.”

James explains that following this the “residue of men” will seek after the Lord, and “all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things.” (Acts 15:17) This will be the work of God’s kingdom. It is then that the world will be converted, “for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.”

(Isa. 11:9) There has been no lag or failure in the plan of God. James concluded, "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world." (Acts. 15:18) What confidence this should give us in the promises of God, and what courage to continue on in our own efforts to know and to do his will.

The world surely needs the kingdom. Fear fills the hearts of the people. Those who attempt to say that man's fears are unfounded, and offer the hope of immediate success, health, and happiness, are sure to get a following. However, a harmonious understanding of the Word of God offers no such temporal advantages under Satan's present rule of sin and evil. The time will soon come when blind eyes will be opened, deaf ears unstopped, and when the lame shall leap like a deer. (Isa. 35:5,6) It is close at hand, but not yet here. Meantime, the consecrated followers of the Master today have the same privilege as did their brethren in the Early Church, which is to proclaim the Truth message, even though it will be mostly looked upon as out of step with the world.

We have the great joy of telling the world of the kingdom blessings soon to come, when a "way of holiness" will be opened upon which mankind may return to God, and to health and life everlasting. (vs. 8) These truths are not "fake news," nor are they "leaks" which cannot be verified. They are, rather, the sure words of God found in the Bible, his Word, which comprise a harmonious and complete answer to the question, "What is truth?" "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth," God said. "It shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."—Isa. 55:11 ■