

## Discovering the Truth

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11-16-08

John 7:14-18

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Not long ago, in the mountains of Oregon, archeologist discovered the fossilized remains of a sea creature which resembles a crocodile. They believe this creature was about 8 feet long, and lived approximately 150 million years ago.

What I have always found interesting is the method that these scientists use to determine just how long ago these creatures lived. The common technique is to use a dating method called Carbon 14. Once a creature dies, the amount of carbon in the bones decay at a constant rate. Scientists have determined that Carbon 14 has a half-life of 5,568 years. In other words, half of the carbon in a fossil will be gone after that time. By measuring the amount of Carbon 14 remaining (if any), a scientist can determine how long a fossil has been dead.

Does anyone else see the problem here? After 11,136 years, there is no carbon 14 left to measure. It has all turned into nitrogen. So a fossil that has no remaining Carbon 14 cannot be dated beyond 11,136 years. And there is a huge difference between 150 million years and 11 thousand years. Undaunted, these scientists next date the age of the rocks around the fossil using Uranium 235. But I'm not interested in the rock. Who knows how long it had been lying around before the dinosaur died?

I can't understand how someone can claim dinosaurs lived millions of years ago when there is actually no proof that they did. But still some scientists present this as fact. They ignore the truth in their research because they have set their minds against any other possibility. And what bothers me the most is that many people blindly accept what they are told by these scientific teachers without once discovering the truth for themselves.

The reason I tell you this is because things are just as bad within the church as well. Too many Christians know only what they've been told, and never take the time to discover what is actually true.

Returning to John chapter 7, in verse 14 we find that it is now midway through the festival and Jesus finally goes up to the Temple. We are not told what He

teaches, but it obviously caught the attention of the crowd. It was unlike anything they had heard before. <sup>14</sup> *Then, midway through the festival, Jesus went up to the Temple and began to teach.* <sup>15</sup> *The people were surprised when they heard him. “How does he know so much when he hasn’t been trained?” they asked.* <sup>16</sup> *So Jesus told them, “My message is not my own; it comes from God who sent me.* <sup>17</sup> *Anyone who wants to do the will of God will know whether my teaching is from God or is merely my own.* <sup>18</sup> *Those who speak for themselves want glory only for themselves, but a person who seeks to honor the one who sent him speaks truth, not lies.* <sup>1</sup> (John 7:14-18).

A Rabbi or Teacher of the Law would always begin his lesson with the disclaimer “There is a teaching which says . . .” and then they would either read from an Old Testament scroll or quote from some other teacher. But Jesus does something different. In walks this ordinary looking man with a Galilean accent who not only can read an Old Testament scroll, but who also begins saying things with His own authority. He doesn’t say, “There is a teaching”. He sets down and teaches with authority, probably just like the way He taught on a hillside in Galilee (where He said things like, <sup>43</sup> *“You have heard the law that says, ‘Love your neighbor’ and hate your enemy.* <sup>44</sup> *But I say, love your enemies!” Pray for those who persecute you!* <sup>2</sup> (Matthew 5:43-44).

Jesus was not just another clever teacher. What He said had not been said before. Even the guards sent to arrest Jesus were amazed at the things He said and the way He taught (verse 46). And oh, how these people in the Temple wanted to believe He was the Messiah (verse 31), but unfortunately they were waiting for the teachers and religious leaders to confirm their suspicions (verse 26). However, those who set their minds against the idea just would not believe. And what is alarming is that these were the men who taught in the Temple and in the local Synagogues. These were the men who opened the sacred books and told the people the Word of God. They had been called to lead and serve. They had been called by God to speak His word with clarity, and to give direction to those who came seeking

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<sup>1</sup>Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

<sup>2</sup>Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

the Lord. But even though the scriptures pointed clearly to Jesus, these teachers set their minds against the possibility, and gave direction to the people according to their own understandings.

God cries out through the Prophet Jeremiah and says, “My people have been lost sheep. Their shepherds have led them astray and turned them loose in the mountains. They have lost their way and can’t remember how to get back to the sheepfold.”<sup>3</sup> (Jeremiah 50:6) God is broken hearted over His people because those in authority have led them astray. These Jewish religious leaders did not direct people back to God or teach His word with clarity. Consequently, God promises, “For the time is coming,” says the Lord, “when I will raise up a righteous descendant from King David’s line. He will be a King who rules with wisdom. He will do what is just and right throughout the land.”<sup>4</sup> (Jeremiah 23:5). And true to His word, God brings Jesus to the people. And He then provides what is necessary to lead those who will listen back to God. God says of a coming day when things will be different. “But this is the new covenant I will make with the people of Israel on that day,” says the Lord. “I will put my instructions deep within them, and I will write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.”<sup>5</sup> (Jeremiah 31:33)

What I find interesting is that at the time Jesus was teaching in the Temple, most people only heard from God through the Priests, Pharisee’s and Teachers. The common person did not own a single Old Testament scroll. And even if they did, there was a good chance they could not read it. Only those who had been taught “Letters” (who had been educated to read) could turn to the word of God and study the truth for themselves. Bibles were not available like they are today. John also points out that the Holy Spirit had not yet been written on the hearts of those who believe (verse 39). So even He was not able to help bring clarity and direction to the people.

Today we enjoy two incredible gifts that these first century Jews never had. Not only is God’s word readily available in more translations than you can imagine,

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<sup>5</sup>Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

but we also have the Holy Spirit to help bring clarity and understanding to the truth of God. But what I can't understand is why so many people still live according to Oral Tradition; where the only word they hear from God is what the preacher says or what it discussed in Sunday school. What bothers me is that so many Christians blindly accept what they are told without once discovering the truth for themselves. I mean, what difference does it make which Bible translation you have tucked away neatly on your shelf if you never read it?

The one thing I do not want to do by standing up here week after week is to be your only source of God's word. I don't want you to depend on me to tell you what to believe, how to act, and how to live. I want you to open God's word yourself and discover His truth for yourself. You have been given these incredible gifts, God's Bible and the Holy Spirit. I believe it's high time that you start using them.

A few years ago, I made available a "read through the Bible in a year" guide. Next year I will make available a year long Disciple's program, an opportunity for you to spend a year growing in Christ-like character. I wonder, will you take the time to work seriously on your faith, or will you continue to let someone else do the work for you.