

Minister's Message – February 2010

Doctors Doctor the Data

Where would you go to find the most reliable findings of medical research? The most prestigious journal 'The Lancet' is where most of the world goes. But can we believe everything that is published in this journal? Twelve years after its publication, the editors have finally retracted a paper that was found to be based on fraudulent research. A doctor in Britain was more concerned about money and reputation than the truth. The doctor doctored his data.

It is over two decades since the famous, now infamous, Dr William McBride doctored his data. His colleague who discovered his fraud said on ABC TV in 2001 "Science is based on the pursuit of truth, so you cannot imagine reality into place. And here was Bill 'cooking the books', so to speak, to try and prove his case".

Where would you go to find the truth about climate change? The IPCC is a panel of the world's top climate scientists. No one is supposed to question their findings. But of late doctored data has been discovered in their 'weighty' report. A glaciologist had data indicating the Himalayan glaciers would melt within three decades. It has been found that his data was doctored. His findings conveniently fitted his hypothesis.

Can we be absolutely sure that what scientists tell us is true? Many scientists are concerned for the truth – I speak as one who has published a number of scientific papers. But scientists are only human and sometimes other concerns outweigh their concern for the truth. We may not want to admit this, but the 'truth' is out there. This must be of great concern to those who place all their faith in science and technology.

What is truth and where can we find it? Is there anything that is absolutely true? Is there anything we can put our faith in? Human history tells us that putting our faith in men or women, whether politicians, preachers or scientists, will always be doubtful. Two thousand years ago there were men who 'cooked the books' about the resurrection of Jesus. They bribed the guards at Jesus' grave to say that his disciples came at night and stole his body (Matthew 28:11).

Where can we find truth? Jesus said 'I am the way the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father except through me'. Jesus was not just a man – he is also God. Jesus was not born in sin like every other human being. He resisted Satan and every temptation to lie. Every word that Jesus spoke is true because Jesus is the truth.

One day Pilate, the Roman governor, asked Jesus what is truth? Without waiting for the answer he left (John 18:38). What a tragic day this was for this man. He was standing in the presence of the truth. He was staring in the face of the truth. But he went out.

Have you, like Pilate, asked 'what is truth?' Do you believe whatever scientists tell you is true? Do you believe that scientists can save you from death? Do you believe they can give you eternal life? If so, your faith is tragically misplaced. Jesus alone is the truth. You can completely trust what Jesus said. Read for yourself what he said in the Bible. Jesus promises you eternal life when you believe that he is the Christ, the Son of God. 'Repent and believe in the gospel' is what Jesus tells you to do.

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