

The Truth On Trial

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[0:00] John chapter 18 verses 28 through 40. Then they led Jesus from the house of Caiaphas to the governor's headquarters. It was early morning.

They themselves did not enter the governor's headquarters so that they would not be defiled but could eat the Passover. So Pilate went outside to them and said, What accusation do you bring against this man?

They answered him, If this man were not doing evil, we would not have delivered him over to you. Pilate said to them, Take him yourselves and judge him by your own law.

The Jews said to him, It is not lawful for us to put anyone to death. This was to fulfill the word that Jesus had spoken to show by what kind of death he was going to die.

So Pilate entered his headquarters again and called Jesus and said to him, Are you the king of the Jews? Jesus answered, Do you say this of your own accord?

[1:03] Or did others say it to you about me? Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered you over to me.

What have you done? Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews.

But my kingdom is not from the world. Then Pilate said to him, So you are a king. Jesus answered, You say that I am a king.

For this purpose I was born. And for this purpose I have come into the world to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.

Pilate said to him, What is truth? After he said this, he went back outside to the Jews and told them, Hey, I find no guilt in him.

[2:04] But you have a custom that I should release one man for you at the Passover. So do you want me to release to you the king of the Jews? They cried out again, Not this man, but Barabbas.

Now Barabbas was a robber. So it ends the reading of the word of the Lord. Please be seated. Thank you.

Thank you, praise team. Thank you, expanded band. Man, you guys are great up there. Thank you. Most people will probably admit that we live in confusing times.

Whether it's about AI, or gender, or politics, geopolitical and national politics, etc. We live in confusing times.

We are confused. But there are some basics that I think stand out. The world seems confused about truth.

[3:17] Is there absolute truth? Sometimes people don't even agree to this historical truth. That's the world. Truth. But what about the church?

I think the church is confused about the kingdom of God. And how it relates to the world. And I think our passage this morning gives us help in both these cases.

And maybe in so doing, help us live more faithfully for Christ. Christ. In all areas of our lives as his kingdom people. You see, the kingdom and truth are essential to who we are in this world.

So if you don't mind, today I want to focus, like I said on one aspect, I want to focus on the kingdom, the kingdom of truth. So let me ask you a question. What kingdom receives the majority of your attention?

The kingdom of God? The kingdoms of this world? Keep in mind, at the trials of Jesus, remember there are three trials, there's a big question that's overarching everything.

[4:33] The big question. Is Jesus the Messiah, the king of the Jews? That's the big question.

Even within this context here in Pilate, he keeps referring to him as the king of the Jews. I didn't read the rest of it. He says it again and again. The king of the Jews, the king of the Jews.

That's the big deal. Who is Jesus? See, if he is the Messiah, the king of the Jews, that means his reign goes beyond Israel.

It goes beyond Judaism. Because Jesus would be the savior and king, not just of one nation, but he'd be the savior and king of the world. He'd be the savior and king of all the nations for all time and eternity.

He would be the savior and king of all those from every tribe, language, nation, and tongue who put their faith in him. But what is the truth?

[5:43] Pilate's cynical question is really the governing thought, I think, in this section. What is truth? And in particular, what is the truth about Jesus?

First of all, I want you to notice that Jesus is an inconvenient truth to the world. Verses 28 to 32, I read, I won't read them again, but I hope you have your Bible in front of you.

In that section, Jesus is first of all brought before Pilate by the Jewish authorities. This section really focuses on their thinking and what's going on with them.

Now, John doesn't tell us about the trial before Caiaphas, the high priest. He skips a lot of stuff. And he moves straight, right here, to this issue with Pilate and what the Jews were thinking.

Because, remember, before Pilate, Jesus was convicted of blasphemy.

[6:51] For he admitted under oath that he was the Messiah. You see, it was in Matthew 26. And the high priest said to him, I adjure you by the living God.

Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus said to him, you have said, you have, you have said so. But I tell you, from now on, you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of power and coming on the clouds of heaven.

Then the high priest tore his robes and said, he has uttered blasphemy. What further witness do we need? You have now heard his blasphemy. What is your judgment? And the Sanhedrin answered, he deserves death.

Then they spit in his face and struck him and some slapped him saying, prophesy to us, you Christ. That's all right.

Can you hear me? Am I still on? All right, there we go. Prophecy to us, you Christ. Who is it that struck you? Now that's Matthew 26. Matthew tells us what happened at the trial of Caiaphas.

[8:05] Now we skip to when they bring him before Pilate. Now keep in mind, they were breaking all the rules of Jewish prudence of Judaism. That was an illegal question.

You cannot force a man to incriminate himself and they forced him under oath to do just that. So they're breaking all the rules, all their own law.

They are breaking in order to get Jesus gone. Now, they brought Jesus to Pilate who's the Roman governor.

When you come before the Roman governor, you were supposed to present a charge against the accused. Now, here's their problem.

Pilate asks them what's the charge. They know, you really don't like me today. Not you guys.

[9:06] should I use this? No, it's not. Not on.

Should I switch? All right. So they're supposed to give a charge. Pilate is waiting for the charge.

He's asking for the charge. They know they're trapped. they can't say blasphemy because he doesn't care about that. He doesn't care about their laws and religion.

So they hem and haw. And they say something very vague. He's an evildoer. Otherwise, we wouldn't be here. It's like they were saying to Pilate, trust us.

He's a bad man. You can believe us. He's not a good guy. Now, Pilate wasn't stupid. He didn't go for it. But they hoped that would be enough.

[10:10] They hoped their being there in force, their being there, you know, and Pilate not wanting to cause any trouble, you know, he wanted to keep the peace.

They hoped that would be enough. But it wasn't. Jesus was an inconvenience that Pilate didn't want to deal with either. So in verse 31, Pilate says to them, take him yourself and judge him by your own law.

He doesn't get tied up in some religious wranglings and foolishness. He didn't understand their religion anyway. So he's trying to get rid of Jesus.

Remember, keep in mind something. Pilate had already caused a huge ruckus with the Jews when he first came. Historically speaking, we don't know this, we know this from history now.

Pilate showed up and he wanted to show his devotion to the emperor so he had banners all around the city with the emperor's face on it all around the city where the Jews felt that was idolatrous.

[11:18] It was a huge riot. Huge riot. This is all before Jesus was born. There's a huge riot, or later. He was born but earlier. And so Pilate did not want to cause any more ruckus in the kingdom because listen to me, what the Romans wanted for their governors was two things.

Your job, when we send you into a region, you got two things to do. Get the money, taxes, keep the peace. That was their job.

Get the money, keep the peace. Pilate got the money but the peace sometimes was a little fragile. He did not want any trouble from these Jewish people so he's trying to get them to handle their own religious disputes themselves.

Now, hmm, but in order for Jesus the inconvenient truth to be done away with, the Jews needed Pilate.

It's a conspiracy. They needed Pilate to put him to death. They even say it in verse 31. It is not lawful for us to put anyone to death.

[12:45] The Romans held the power of life and death over all their people. They would not give that to regions or to other people groups.

It was their way of asserting authority. You live and die based upon what we say. So the Jews, the Jews who hate the Romans are trying to use them now.

They're trying to suck up in order to get Jesus dead. Now here's the thing. What was driving them so much to get Jesus put away?

I think I found it. James even talks about it. In James chapter 3, it's not on the screen, so if you got a Bible, turn there. James chapter 3 verses 13 through 18.

In another gospel, Pilate says he knew they had turned Jesus in because they were jealous of him. Now watch what James says. Who is wise?

[13:54] Now keep in mind, these Jewish leaders are the wise ones. They are the wise ones of their people. Okay? Here's this. Who is wise understanding among you?

By his good conduct, let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth.

Now, this is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic.

For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere.

They were, that's them. The whole jealous, bitter jealousy, selfish ambition, they thought they were wise, but they were actually unspiritual, earthly, and demonic.

[15:22] Because they were jealous of Jesus, and they were trying to keep their place. You saw this last week, they were trying to keep their positions in of authority, and they were terrified that the Romans would take away their power.

So Jesus is very inconvenient to such people. Jesus teaches us true wisdom that James says, see, we think of wisdom as trying to figure out hard things, hard ideas, right?

It involves that, don't get me wrong. But James says wisdom involves meekness. It involves ability to humble yourself and not put yourself first, and not seek your own rights.

It is entrusting yourself and your rights to Christ, to the living God, and not bursting in and taking control and taking power.

That's the opposite of meekness. when you fight for power, you're not meek. They're fighting for power.

[16:41] But here's the question I got to ask you. I said this is pertinent. Isn't that what we're doing? Aren't we fighting for power?

Come on, Christians. Aren't we wrestling for power? we're trying, we'll come back to this in a minute, but listen, is the church too often, and Christians in our fears of influence, using the world's methods to achieve power and influence?

what does James say that is?

That's not God. Unspiritual. He uses the word unspiritual, earthly, and demonic.

they aim to put Jesus to death as a lawbreaker because they're in darkness. But if the eyes of their hearts were open, they would worship Jesus as the law giver.

[17:54] Bitter jealousy and ambition will blind you to who Jesus is and what he's doing. Be wary of that, brothers and sisters.

in your own hearts because you'll miss Jesus and what he's doing. Second thing I want you to know is that I want to spend the rest of my time here and what little time I have left.

Jesus' kingdom of truth is not governed by this world. Now he says this. This is profound. This caught me up.

It grabbed me. I never thought about it in these ways. I hope I'm not crazy. I heard that. So Pilate goes back in.

He realizes the Jewish leaders are determined to put Jesus to death. His curiosity is peaked now. According to Luke, their full accusation against Christ being king reads like this.

[18:58] They began to accuse him, Luke 23, 2. They began to accuse him, saying, we found this man. Listen to what they say. Misleading our nation and forbidding us to give tribute to Caesar and saying that he himself is Christ a king.

That's their whole accusation. So Pilate goes back into the headquarters where Jesus was being held and pointedly asks him. He gets in his face. Listen here. Are you the king of the Jews?

And Jesus gets coy with him. Jesus doesn't, Jesus, I'm not saying he's playing with him, but he is being coy. He answers this question with a question without giving away anything at first.

Here's my paraphrase. Do you think I am a king? Or did you hear that somewhere? If you don't know, you better ask somebody. It's almost like he's doing with Pilate what he did with his disciples. Who do you say that I am? Pilate. But Pilate won't bite. He asks him, am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered you over to me.

[20:10] What have you done? Kevin Smith translation. Don't play with me. I don't care about your politics. Your own people want you dead.

What did you do? Pilate. That's how Pilate's coming at him. Now I want you to notice three things. Jesus admits to having a kingdom but not of this world. Now when he says his kingdom not of this world, he doesn't mean his kingdom has no interest or impact in this world.

He's not saying that. He's saying his kingdom is not governed by the rules or dictates of this world. Now by kingdom, what does he mean?

This is important to our church. We're going to be a kingdom focused church. What does this mean? By kingdom, he is speaking of his rule and reign over all creation visibly seen in his people who follow him.

[21:16] Now keep in mind, keep in mind, reign and rule. Reign means he's a king over a people and a place. Rule speaks of the authority he has to actually govern them.

Jesus is not like the king of England. The king of England reigns but does not rule. His reign is really only symbolic.

Who rules England? Parliament. English monarchs reign symbolically only and do not rule.

Jesus is not like them. He's no paper monarch. He reigns, he's king, he's monarch, and he governs. Oh, I love him. He said, remember in the Great Commission, all authority in heaven and earth has been given to me.

[22:21] That's who your king is. come on, y'all. Listen, when Jesus was casting out demons, some of the people, religious leaders probably, said he was doing it by the power of the devil.

That's called the unpardonable sin, by the way, to give the devil credit for what God is doing. listen to this.

Jesus said to that, Luke 11 20, if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

Here's the thing we do. Here's what we do. We miss it. We look at Jesus healing people, that includes casting out demons, we talk about God's mercy and love.

That's true. Don't get me wrong, that's true. It's just not the big picture. We focus on the mercy and the love of God there, but Jesus didn't say that.

[23:25] He said, if I cast out demons, that means the kingdom of God is here. That means God is reigning and ruling in this place at this time.

He's showing off, he's showing you his power and his glory. that you may know that your situation is not governed merely by the things of this world.

But the kingdom of God is exercising authority because the king has authority in heaven and in earth. He can break the bonds of demonic powers.

He can break the bonds of political powers. He can break the bonds of sin and illness and even death. The kingdom is what he's doing.

And it is a kingdom of love and mercy and grace.

[24 : 30] he's but he was showing them what's really going on behind the scenes. Here's the thing.

When fully come in this kingdom there will be no illness, no power of darkness and no poverty. For the king will set everything right.

He will right every wrong, heal every pain, deliver from every bondage. He will come and he is coming. The results of the fall and sin will be eradicated forever when the king comes in all of his power.

He's giving us a taste of the coming kingdom. So what do we say to that? So the kingdom of God is present already, yet at the same time is not yet in future.

right now we're enjoying the, what should I call it, the preamble of the kingdom? I don't know. Right now we're enjoying, but there's more to come people.

[25 : 40] More to come when the king comes. That's why we long for the coming of Christ.

Because the kingdom will come in all of his power and glory in him.

Jesus has the right to reign and rule because of what John said in the beginning of his gospel, in the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God.

He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him and without him was not anything made that was made. The word is Jesus and in verse 14 it says in the word became flesh and dwelt among us.

The word becomes Jesus of Nazareth. The son of God has always existed for he created all things. Paul will pick it up.

He's singing in Colossians 1, 15 and 17. He, because of Jesus, is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. That means he's chief.

[26 : 40] For by not that he was created but that he is chief, he is leader. For by him all things were created in heaven and on earth visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities, that's all spiritual forces.

All things were created through him and for him. He is before all things and in him all things hold together, cohere.

If Jesus sneezed, the universe would disappear. The son of God closed his eyes, you would blink out of existence.

All that you see and cannot see with your naked eye he created. This is why he has all authority in heaven and in earth.

It all belongs to him. This is the king of the kingdom. This is the king who is reigning right now and will reign in fullness at a light of time, but he's reigning right now.

[27 : 49] So then the question is, okay, kingdom is not of this world. So how then does this kingdom advance? How is this kingdom revealed? How is it how? It is through his servants who are his church, his embassy of the kingdom.

If the kingdom is a car, the church is the engine. Because the church is not the totality of the kingdom.

Think of the kingdom as the big circle and the church is a smaller circle within it. The church exists for the kingdom, for the glory of the king and his kingdom.

We are emissaries of the kingdom of God in this world. You have been, you've seen this before, we've been sent by the king.

Here's the thing, the word church refers to an assembly that is called together. That's what it means. That's how it is defined.

[28 : 53] But here's the thing, at all times, we are citizens of the kingdom, living under our king's loving, gracious, powerful authority and laws.

We're always citizens of the kingdom. Wherever you go, as you go into the world, you are to be salt and light, as ambassadors of the kingdom, you are to bring the influence of Christ and his kingdom to bear on all of our relationships, all of our vocations, all of our situations, all of our recreations, you are always a citizen of the kingdom wherever you go.

Some of you have traveled out of this country. You have a passport. That passport tells wherever you go, say you say you go to China, you show up in China, that passport tells them you are a citizen of the United States of America.

Wherever you go in China, you will be a citizen of the United States of America and you will be subject to our laws.

Now, we will give China some leeway with you, but in the end, you got to deal with us if you act a fool. So don't do it, right? Wherever you go, you have a spiritual passport.

[30:18] It says you are a citizen of the kingdom of heaven. King Jesus is your reigning monarch forever and ever. But in this, and you are subject to his laws and his ways and his customs wherever you go.

And here's the beautiful thing about Jesus. He's not like the earthly kings. Wherever you go, he goes with you. Personally, the spirit of God, the spirit of the king goes with you in every situation, in every part of creation.

You will never go to a place where your king is not there before you and there with you. you go and the kingdom is revealed as you interact in his name in every situation.

And we spend most of our time in the kingdoms of the world. Keep in mind, that's where you spend most of your time but on Sundays and other times too but especially on Sundays, we are the called out.

We are the church. We are called into the gathering. You're always a citizen of the kingdom but once a week or wherever, you are the called out, the church brought together, gathered together.

[31:54] What do we do when we gather together? We worship. We receive instruction. We're strengthened. We're encouraged through loving fellowship together. That's why this is so important.

This gathering, the church is not this building at all. Never has been, never will be. When we gather, we gather as the church.

We are the stones. We are the true temple. The presence of God is in us. When we gather, we gather as citizens of the kingdom who've been called together to worship the living God.

And when we disperse, we disperse as kingdom citizens to make disciples of the nations and to bring the knowledge of Christ to bear on the ignorance and darkness of the world.

Church, kingdom, both important, but not the same thing. kingdom, how does this, how do we display this kingdom lifestyle?

[33:04] Well, Matthew 16, 610, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven, we pray. That's the Lord's prayer. The kingdom cannot be manifest in us unless we're praying.

We must call upon the king to manifest his kingdom, to manifest his will in us and through us. We must call upon him fervently because we are in a dark place.

Romans 14, 17 through 18, for the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. Whoever thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men.

Where do we see, how do we see the kingdom in us? Righteousness and joy and peace.

Righteousness, we bear the image of Christ.

We are a joyful people. We may not always have what we want, but we have the joy of the Lord. In the midst of our sorrow sometimes, sometimes even in the midst of our pain, when we get up off the floor, we've been weeping all night.

[34:11] Weeping may endure for a night, maybe for nights, but joy comes in the morning. Why? Because the joy of the Lord is our strength. our joy is tied to who he is and what he has done.

Therefore, we go into the world a people of joy. And it gives people's attention. We are a people of peace. I can't, brothers and sisters, how we are failing at this.

we cause so we cause as much ruckus and fuss as the world. We are argumentative.

Not you guys, I'm just saying those people. We are argumentative. I keep telling you, I'm sorry, I just, stop believing everything somebody tells you on the internet.

that. Oh, because your favorite talking head said it. Did you see it? Do you know that it's true? And when we purpose, we start sending the stuff out, slandering people, talking about folk.

[35:17] Do you know, were you there? Which one of you? did you know these people lie? Y'all don't know?

Your favorite talking heads lie and get misled. And they pass on stuff to you, and then you pass it on, and now you're slandering people you don't even know.

What happened to love your neighbor as ourselves? Do you want people to lie on you and slander you? But we do it because it's on the internet. It must be true because so-and-so said it.

If I didn't see it, listen y'all, I'm on social media. I don't, if I said, oh yeah, you said, they said that really? I check it out for myself.

Stop believing. Stop using the world's methods. I gotta finish this sermon. This 30s, oh maybe I should save it for next week, I don't know. We're using the world's methods to advance the kingdom of God.

[36:24] Jesus said his kingdom is not of this world. He said if they were, my people would fight. Listen, listen, my people would fight. That's what got me. The world uses bombs and lasers and all that kind of stuff to fight, to attack, to defend.

they use politics and political pressures to get nations and people to do what they want. In your job, there's politics, they use it to get you to do whatever.

When Jesus says, my servants don't fight using the world's methods, see, if he, listen, if Jesus' servants, who are the angels and his disciples in particular, but certainly the angels, if they fought the way we're fighting, Jesus would never have gone to the cross because they would have rescued him and kept him from going.

Here's the point. We cannot use the world's power and the world's methods of wielding power to achieve the kingdom of God. Amen.

Amen. We tried it already. Study church history. Brothers and sisters, the medieval church in Europe, they tried it already.

[37:55] The popes wanted to run the nations. They were princes, not of the church, but of the nations. They fought wars and battles, the Catholics against the Protestants. And when your nation won, the nation became whatever the leader was.

he would impose, okay, we're Catholic this year. Okay, next year we're Protestant. And they would impose the religion upon the people. And there were nations going back and forth.

And the pope was in the middle of all those things. We tried this. It doesn't work. Christian nationalism and things like that don't work. It does not achieve the kingdom of God because it's using worldly power.

Doesn't mean Christians shouldn't be in politics. Doesn't mean Christians shouldn't be in places of authority. When the righteous prosper, the city rejoices. We want godly people in places of authority.

But don't think that that somehow is ushering in the kingdom. We got to come back to ourselves.

[39:01] I'm talking to some of you. I know I am. Because y'all spend so much time listening to the world's methods that you're forgetting what the kingdom's methods are. You're fighting the battle with the wrong weapons.

You're bringing a knife to a gun fight. You can't win that way. What are the weapons that we bring? For though we walk in the flesh, we do not wage war according to the flesh.

For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God.

we take every thought captive to obey Christ. Listen, we bring the word of God to bear on people's ideologies and thinking. We bring the word of God to bear.

We're people of prayer. We're people of loving, self-sacrificial influence. we're laying on our lives.

[40:00] We're following our Savior. And if necessary, we suffer unjustly like our Savior. Because we know that if we die, he will raise us up.

Physically and spiritually. If we suffer, we know. If we trust him, he will lift us up in due time. We cannot advance the kingdom using the weapons of this world.

Jesus warned us not to do that. He refused. Okay. That's it. I'm done. You know, I was reminded, you know, some of you, all of you, a lot of you are football fans.

And I've come into this church, I love getting to hear more about college football. Y'all got me excited about SEC football. I don't watch it, but that got me excited about it.

And some of you are, you know, Bama fans. Okay, don't shoot me if you're not. I'm just saying. And I love that roll tide. I like that.

[41:13] Well, Nick Saban retired and they had a new, they got a new coach, Kalen Boer, Boer, he knows it. Boer, yeah.

Now, here's what happened when he came in with a whole new playbook. Right? He didn't say, Nick, give me your playbook. No, he came in with his whole new playbook and the team had to learn the new playbook.

They had to study it. Now, I don't know how technical it was. It probably was technical in some cases, probably was difficult at times. But they had to learn this new playbook so they could play according to the scheme that this new coach had brought them.

If they wanted to be productive, if they wanted to really win, they had to follow his playbook. And so, in Christianity, there's something similar here. You've been drafted out of the kingdom of darkness. You, I don't know if you were first round, second round, it don't matter. You're on the team. You've been drafted. You are now part of the kingdom of God. Listen, and we can't, and we need to stop spending our time trying to tell our king, our head coach, how to run the team.

[42 : 23] We can't tell him he got the playbook. He got the scheme. Our job is to learn the playbook.

So we can do our part. Each one of you has a part. Each one of you has a place on the team. But you gotta know how you fit in the playbook to know how you can function best on the team.

So what book are you reading? What playbook do you spend your time in? The old playbook?

Are you spending your time in the playbook of the kingdom of heaven so that you can know how to think about the world, how to see the world, and how to engage the world, how to live as kingdom people, how to live as Christ's disciples whom he gave himself for?

That's the good news. He gave himself for his team. He took one for the team so that we could be victorious, so that we can rise above the pit of the world and live as his kingdom people for his glory.

[43 : 44] Which kingdom are you spending your time thinking about the most? Christ? Which kingdom are you spending a good portion of your time studying the most so you can change the way you see things?

And let Christ show you how to live. Father, we are confused. The church in America, we're confused.

we want our freedoms and thank you for them. But we seem to be fighting for them in the way the world fights.

And we're not according to your kingdom values and kingdom methods. Help us, Lord. Deliver us, Lord. Help us to follow Jesus no matter where he leads.

Help us to follow Jesus. Amen.