

The Truth On Trial Part 2

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[0:00] John chapter 18, we're in this place where Jesus, on the eve of his crucifixion, is interacting with the Roman governor, a man by the name of Pontius Pilate.

! So let me pick up the read once again. We've covered a portion. What do you have up there? What verse is that? Okay, yeah, I see it now. Okay, we'll start there then.

Beginning at verse 28. 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. And Pilate said to them, take him yourselves then and judge him by your own law. They said to him, but it's not lawful for us to put anyone to death.

[1:11] 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 the 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 or did others say it to you about me? What do you think, Pilate? 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 this world. Pilate said to him, so you are a king. I knew it. I saw you. Jesus answered, you say that I am a king.

Now here's where our text picks up this morning. You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I came, I have come into the world to bear witness to the truth.

[2:17] Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice. And Pilate said to him, what is truth? After he had said this, he went back outside to the Jews and told them, hey, I find no guilt in him.

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? And they cried out again.

Not this man, but Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a robber. That is the word of the Lord.

Please be seated. During 9-11, my wife and my family and I, we lived in the, as many of you know, we lived in the D.C. area.

We lived in a place called Bowie, Maryland, which is nine miles east of D.C. We had moved out of this nation's capital and we were living in the suburb called Prince George's County.

[3:32] It was striking to us after 9-11 took place that we found out that there was, that at least one of the 9-11 terrorists had learned to fly in our backyard.

We had an airport in Bowie, a little small airport. And it was reported that that is one place where at least one of the hijackers learned to fly.

It was a very striking thing to realize he probably flew over our house because our house backed up to the highway, then to the airport. So that was striking.

But the thing about that is that these 9-11 terrorists, these hijackers, believed what they thought was true. They believed Islam.

They believed that according to Islam, we were the great Satan and infidels. And therefore, we could easily be attacked if necessary.

[4:33] We were the evil. We were the aggressor. They looked at us. And those hijackers believed something else too. That if they died, if they sacrificed themselves, they would go to paradise.

But was it true? Is it true? What happens to truth if no one believes it?

It's still true. Thank you, sir. Truth is self-authenticating. It can still have effect even if no one believes. Just ask gravity.

You don't have to believe gravity. But step off a four-story building, five-story building, and gravity will believe in you. Truth is not affected by your perspective or your truth.

It exists outside of your influence. You may lose the ability to benefit from truth, but truth is still solid.

[5:44] What happens to a lie if no one believes it? It loses its power to influence. See, a lie must be believed in order to have power.

Truth has power whether you believe it or not. So truth is always more powerful than lies. Truth is more enduring. Don't lose confidence in truth.

And sadly, that's exactly what's happening. In our culture, around the world, and sometimes even in the church, people are losing confidence in truth.

Do you believe in truth? Where do you go for truth about your most important questions and decisions?

We go somewhere. Pilate thought he knew true power. Caesar. Pilate was afraid of Caesar.

[6:54] Caesar was the greatest leader of that era. All of those Caesars. They led the era. They led that part of the world. He, Pilate, thought he had true power because he was a representative of Rome, of Caesar.

But when he met Jesus, he met true power. He was in the presence of the kingdom of God and its king. Jesus revealed the power of his reign and rule by miraculous healings, control over nature, power over spiritual forces we call demons.

He demonstrated the power of the kingdom by demonstrating the power of life and death and the resurrection of Lazarus that John recorded for us not many pages back in the book.

And he will demonstrate even more of the power of the kingdom of God. Power that he has as the king in his own resurrection. Jesus' power gives life.

It gives eternal life. Jesus' power changes lives. And so beginning in this section in verse 33, three times Jesus begins to speak of my kingdom.

[8:10] My kingdom. My kingdom. And now he turns to truth. And now three times he begins to talk about truth. Last time we saw we focused more on the kingdom side.

Now we're moving over to the truth side. And to be honest, they really go together. For Jesus' kingdom is a kingdom of truth. And truth is a main theme in the gospel of John, which we've seen over our studies of it.

But this is striking. Right here. This is striking because now as he stands before Pilate, he's telling us that the reason he came was truth.

He never put it this way before. He's the king of truth. And now he stands on the eve of the cross to make it clear what he's about.

Pilate's question kind of governs this section, I believe. He asked a simple question, but he said it very cynically. Don't look at Pilate as a philosopher looking to Jesus.

[9:24] What is truth? No. Pilate is a cynic. Pilate. Yeah. He'd been inundated with Greco-Roman myths and philosophies.

He'd been inundated with the philosophies of the world, as it were. Right. And he had become cynical. Stuff didn't work.

And so when he utters those words, he utters them with a sneer. What is truth? What is truth?

My pastor, James Boyce, points this out in a very neat way. He says, the situation was grave. And the question welled up from Pilate's deep cynicism was the disillusioned and despairing cry of his age.

It is this that makes Pilate the preeminently modern man. He's us. He's the modern man. What is truth?

[10:33] Does it really exist? And now he's got the king of kings in court. He's on the stand, as it were.

And Jesus is going to school him just a little bit about this truth. But today we have a strange view of truth, don't we?

Whether it's historical truth, we say history is written by the victors. So does that mean that we only know history if the defeated write it?

Do we only know history if the poor and oppressed write it? We don't know. We're not even sure about history anymore. And certainly moral truth and religious truth, we don't know.

We don't believe it. It seems truth in these areas are to us unknowable. We just can't know. We're agnostic. I don't know.

[11:42] We end up speaking of my truth and your truth, which means truth is now relative. There's no absolute universal truth that applies to everyone, everywhere, at all times.

Relativism is the thinking. That means that truth depends entirely. This is very important. Truth depends entirely on your perspective, your culture, or your situation.

So what is true for me? Because I'm not you. May not be true for you. Because you're not me. Historically, morally, or personally, it may not be true because our situations are different.

You didn't. But here's the truth. There is a truth that is different, right? I mean, let's be honest. I grew up where I grew up. You grew up where you grew up. You and I didn't grow up in the same place. I grew up in West Philadelphia. I'm an African American man. Guess what? You're not. You're beautiful now. Don't get me wrong. Rachel's beautiful. But she's not one and she's not me.

[13:02] So there are things about me that are true and things about you that are different from me. Amen to that. But when we start talking about my truth and your truth, it gets really murky.

Because then we have to ask ourselves the question, then what is really true? What is reality?

That's what truth comes out to mean. What is real reality?

What is real reality if it's controlled by my perspective or your perspective? I'm confused already. And brothers and sisters, we can't shy away from what we call absolute truth. See, we can't play that game.

We can't fall into that my truth, your truth thing. Speak your truth. No, just tell me the truth. Amen. Absolute truths.

[14:13] We're talking about realities that are universally and objectively real, meaning not from your perspective. They're real, whatever you believe it or not. Completely independent of my opinions and your opinions.

My feelings, your feelings, independent of my beliefs and your beliefs. Independent of cultural context. It's just true across the board. And probably the most important of these would be moral and spiritual truths.

Realities. The group does not determine what's true. That's happening.

That's happening in America. The groups are determining what is reality. And Christians, we can't go with them on that.

You see, when you start letting truth become relative and dependent upon culture and experience and just your ideas versus, you know, just whatever we feel is right.

[15:22] When you go there, it's like driving a car with a muted GPS. And you're relying on the guy next to you who keeps lying to you and you keep saying yes.

He says, turn right. It's really wrong. Yes. Turn right. But the GPS is muted. You can find the way. It would tell you the truth. We're not listening.

Because the truth is you can't get there from here at that point. You see, many of us, in one sense, maybe, yeah, we're kind of like Pilate.

We don't really want actual truth. We want yes man truth. We want the kind of truths that validate what we say.

That's why we get online and listen to people who only think like us. The other people are the enemy.

[16:29] We want agreement only. But we can't listen to those voices, brothers and sisters. The voice of God speaks truth.

He only speaks truth because he knows reality. And we have to listen to his voice. Pilate wasn't listening. He was listening to his fears.

Which is why he condemned Jesus. Jesus is the king of truth. He came to testify, he says, to the truth. And Pilate is standing there representing all of us.

He's convinced. He's convinced. Now, remember, he wasn't really sure if the Jewish leaders would tell him the truth about Jesus. But now he says, okay, yeah, yeah. You say you got a kingdom, so you must be a king.

Okay, I got you. And Jesus says, well, let me tell you something. The reason I'm king, the reason I've come into the world is so that I can bear witness to testify to the truth. It's like saying I was born to play football.

[17:42] But Jesus said more than that. He didn't just, I mean, he speaks very strangely here. He says for this purpose.

He talked about his purpose for coming into the world. That's an odd way of talking, family. You know, no one talks like that. How do you have a purpose before you're born?

How do you purpose to come into the world? No baby purposes to come into the world. That baby knows nothing. But Jesus says he had a purpose for coming into the world.

That would mean he had to exist before he came into the world. Right, right. He's dropping some knowledge on Pilate. He's dropping some truth on him. Pilate's not listening, though.

Are we listening? He's more than just a human king. He's a divine being, preexistent, who came into the world to bear witness to the truth. Why?

[18:41] It seemed that truth needed a witness. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Truth is in trouble. So Jesus comes to make clear what the truth is. Why?

Because the world is filled with lies. Lies about God, who God is, about how to please and know this God. Lies about what it means to be human.

Are we animals? Are we machines? Are we gender morphing entities? Are we purposeless specks of molecules? Or are we created by an all-knowing, all-powerful, loving deity in his very image with dignity, purpose, meaning, worth, and glory?

What do you want to be? Now, that really doesn't matter what you want to be. Let's be honest. What are you? Family, we've been lied to so many times.

We've been lied to, and many of our neighbors are living in depression and anxiety without meaning and purpose and hopeless. And they're seeking the American dream, and it's just not enough.

[19:55] They're pursuing, our neighbors are pursuing happiness any way they can, and it's just not enough if they leave out the truth. Jesus, when speaking of the devil, describes him like this, John 8, 44.

He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth because there's no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he's a liar and the father of lies.

Then the same writer, John, says in 1 John 5, 19, the whole world lies in the power of the evil one. Are you listening?

If the whole world lies in the power of the evil one, and the evil one is the father of lies, where does the world lie? Where does it live?

It lives in a place of deception. The whole world, every nation, every tribe is filled with lies, including the United States of America.

[21:12] Jesus is on trial in court. Someone who was intimate with the truth needed to take to stand as an expert witness.

We needed an expert witness to talk to us about truth, and Jesus takes the stand. Listen, he's talking to us about truth, not a truth, but truth.

It's like he's standing in the world court of history, bearing witness, so that all the world, generation after generation, can understand something about truth.

He's standing there, looking each one of us in the face. Do you know the truth? The truth about the holy, loving, merciful God of all creation.

The truth about who Jesus is and what he came to do. The truth about humanity's fall into sin and need of saving. How can Jesus do this better than anyone else?

[22:18] How can Jesus, let's go back to their era. How can Jesus do this better than, as in a few hundred years before, Socrates or Plato or Aristotle? How, they're loving those guys.

How could, how could Jesus do it better? How could Jesus do this better than Muhammad? How could Jesus do this better than Joseph Smith? How could Jesus do this better than Charles Taze Russell, the founder of the jail witnesses?

How could Jesus do this better than Gautama Buddha? How could Jesus do this better than any other religious leader, any other philosopher, any other genius, if you would call them?

How could Jesus speak of truth better than any of them? Because he is the truth. He even said it himself in John 14, 6.

We studied this. When the disciples said, hey Lord, we don't know where you're going. And Jesus said, what? I told you, I am the way. I am the truth.

[23:27] I am the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. Now family, that's either true, it's reality, or it's not.

Jesus stands before Pilate, and Pilate doesn't recognize the fact that he's standing in front of truth incarnate. He's asking cynically, what is truth?

His wife has had a dream about Jesus, and they're functioning on dreams. Dreams. Dreams.

Dreams. They're functioning on man-made knowledge and understanding, and yet God has come. And stands before them. Stands before the Jewish leaders and before Pilate. And he says, I'm here to tell you the truth.

You know, when somebody knocks on your door and comes in your home, and they say to you, I'm here to tell you the truth. How do you feel about that right then? I don't know about you, but I get a little bit nervous.

[24 : 38] Because you never know. You just know something that is about to drop. They're about to set it off in there. They're about to tell you something about themselves that you don't want to hear. Something about one of your loved ones.

Maybe something you don't want to hear in relationship to you and them. It doesn't sound good. But that's exactly what we need. We don't need yes people.

We don't need people to tell us what we want to hear. Paul talks about that. That at one point, he says, I think in 2 Timothy, he says that at one point, and it was happening then, it's happening now. That Christians, within the church, people will gather teachers who scratch their itching ears. Who will tell them what they want to hear. That's not my job. Churches are huge because sometimes, not all the time, but sometimes, because there are preachers telling people what they want to hear.

[25 : 46] But is it true? We need someone to tell us the truth about ourselves. Not so they can manipulate us, but to free us and help us to apply the truth courageously, humbly, and sometimes self-sacrificially.

You know who that sounds like to me? Jesus. Jesus is the one who will look, he looks each one of us in the face. Especially when you open his word, he looks us in the face and he says, this is who I am and this is who you are.

The word of God reveals the truth about you. It's a mirror. One of the things it is. It's a mirror. And when you look in there, you see yourself.

Maybe that's why we don't always read it. I mean, you know, I look in the mirror every morning. And I go, oh, man.

Really? You know, you start, you take off the glasses. You know, and then some of y'all got the little light on the mirror. Ladies, you got that little makeup light thing where you get right up and magnifies.

[27 : 07] And y'all get to see every nook and cranny. I won't do that. I don't need to see that. Y'all brave. I don't know. But y'all beautiful, so y'all get away with it. But you know me, looking in the mirror isn't always fun.

Especially when you, never mind. The mirror reveals everything about you. In your face. And the closer you get to the mirror, listen, the clearer you see.

The more you can see. Word of God is that mirror. Jesus is speaking to us and he's revealing. He's showing us ourselves. And sometimes it's not pretty. But here's the good thing.

He's remaking us. Not make up. He's remaking. He's not putting powder on you. He's transforming you from the inside.

The more you look at his truth, the more he goes to work inside of you. That's why it's important that we come to his word often, frequently.

[28 : 11] Because Jesus says, everyone who's of the truth, listen to this, continually listens to my voice. That's the flow of the Greek tense there.

He's not just saying listens once in a while. Everyone who's of the truth, he says, or NIV, everyone on the side of truth, continually listens to my voice.

Continually listens to my voice. Because in his voice, you will definitely hear the truth. But look at the language he uses. This seems to suggest to me that there are people who want to know the truth and there are people who do not want to know the truth.

There are people who can't handle the truth. And Jesus shouts to the world today and says the same thing. Our world is looking for something firm to stand on. Our world is looking for something true and real.

Something that answers our deepest questions. Why are we here? The meaning of life. What does it mean to be human? Can we choose our sex? Is death the end?

[29 : 20] What happens when we die? Why is there so much evil in the world? What is the good life? Are there moral absolutes to guide us? Or does each person make it up for themselves?

Yes. He shouts to us to answer those deep questions. He stands before the whole world and says, I came to tell you the truth.

Listen to me. I love it when it went on the mouth of transfiguration. Remember Peter, James, and John. Jesus takes them with him up onto this mountain. And on that mountain, the Father speaks to him.

He, the voice of God, actually, God comes in a cloud of glory. And Jesus begins to glow. His native deity shines out of his pores.

He's glowing with Shekinah, with the glory of God. And the disciples are blown away. And what does it do? The Father speaks from in that cloud. And he says to the disciples, this is my beloved son.

[30 : 27] Listen to him. Family. Family. That's it. Listen to him. Who are we listening to?

I know I feel redundant. Forgive me. I do. And I know I've said things like this before. And some of you are bored, Steph. And I'm sorry. I just wish I had a different message. But I don't.

Who are you listening to? I mean, you're facing the deepest questions in life. What's my destiny? What should I do with my life? Who am I? You're asking those questions. We're all asking those questions. You know, should I move here?

Should I move there? Should I get this job? We're all asking questions. And some are small and some are huge. But we're all asking questions. And we're all looking for answers.

[31 : 37] Where do you go? Where are you going? Okay. I'll find.

Oh, Google. Hey, here we go. Here we go. Give me a minute. I'm pulling it up. What is the meaning of life?

The meaning of life is about finding personal or universal purpose. People approach this question differently looking at life through various things. Hold it. Hold that. Hold that thought, honey. Hold that thought. She said the meaning of life.

The personal or universal purpose behind our existence is personal. Brilliant.

You know, who knew, Rich? Elder, who knew? You find it out for yourself.

[32 : 36] I can't help you. AI can't help you. And if it does help you, run. And here's what's happening.

Here's what's happening. I'm going to finish this up real quick. Here's what's happening. The body of Christ, Christians in our country, some of us, some of us, I hope it's only a small portion, but I keep seeing pep holes and this gets scary.

Some Christians don't believe the truth we have in the Bible and in Jesus is adequate for moral, ethical, spiritual, emotional, or social ills.

The polls are out there. Check out the Barno polls, and you'll see what I'm talking about. Christians in this country, less and less, are believing in absolute truth.

That they can find in the scriptures. I know that's none of you. I'm just saying so you know who your neighbors are thinking. Amen. And see what happens. Then we, if we don't, once we find that in our minds, and we don't even know it very well, we say this is inadequate.

[33 : 48] So what do we do? Well, we got to supplement it with worldly wisdom. Now listen, I don't mean the world can't add some knowledge to us. You know, here's a good example.

You know, you actually work in psychiatry, so I like to use psychological stuff. You know, the Bible doesn't tell me what the signs of anorexia are.

It doesn't tell me what the signs are. Psychology is very helpful there. It really is very helpful. Okay, these are the signs of anorexia. Oh, okay. Now here's where we need God.

What's the cause? What's the root cause of that problem? If the issue, and some people, if the issue is control, if that's what this person is fighting for, is control.

Eating disorders, those are control. If that's what this person is fighting for, then how does the Bible speak to that heart issue of control?

[34 : 44] It does it in a way that nothing else does. Because it gets back to who you are. In the image of God.

It gets back to who God is. It gets back to submitting to God. It gets back to what that looks like. It gets back to who Jesus... See, see, see, you see, it can help me, but it can't fix me. It's right. Got to go deeper. We do it with politics. We do it with... We're so busy being cool. And some of us get so caught up in worldly wisdom about politics, all kinds of things. We get so caught up in learning from the world that we feel kind of smug about it because we're smart. See, we know. We understand what's happy, cool. We understand the culture, see. And you guys just know the Bible. You don't know nothing. And yet the Bible is the revealed truth of God. [35 : 44] Pointing to the truth of God, the Son of God. I've met a lot of smart Christians who are so full of worldly wisdom and worldly knowledge, which has its place.

But the foundation, the fear of the Lord, is the beginning of knowledge. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

If we don't fear the Lord, then our knowledge is flawed. If we don't fear the Lord, then our wisdom is flawed.

How smart it sounds. So brothers and sisters, listen, I'm down with studying culture and down with... But listen, you've got to listen and then go back here.

And let the truth who is Jesus ground you. The truth that he reveals ground you. There are answers to every question that the world puts out there.

[36 : 46] There are answers. The Bible has answers. But do we know? Are we bothering to dig deep to get the answers? I've met too many, so many young Christians, sometimes even older ones, who've allowed the way the world thinks to so cloud their vision that they walk away from this.

As if somehow they believe it's inadequate. And yet, nothing out there will answer the questions about why we're here, why we exist, why is there evil in the world, what happens when you die, why is there something instead of nothing?

Nothing answers those questions better than the world of the living God. Why? Why? Because God is truth.

But they rejected it. Pilate rejected it because he turned Jesus over. The Jewish leaders rejected it because they gave Jesus up. And when it came down to it, Pilate was feeling guilty.

He knew it was wrong. He says, hey, should I kill your king? Should I crucify your king? What did they say? Give us Barabbas. That's the ultimate rejection of truth.

[38 : 12] They said, give us Barabbas. And the text says he was a robber. Understand, he was an insurrectionist. He was a killer. He wasn't just a sneak thief. This guy was a brute.

He was a thug. And they wanted a thug rather than Jesus. Can you get your head around that? The one who had healed, they heard about his healing.

Some of them may have seen Lazarus raised from the dead. Bethany was not far from Jerusalem. They're there. Some of them would have heard about his miracles. Some of them would have seen the miracles.

And yet they stand there and the Jewish leaders say, come on, come on, come on. Say Barabbas.

Say Barabbas. We want Barabbas. Barabbas. Why Barabbas? He's our guy. He'll fight for us.

Barabbas is our kind of guy. He won't take no stuff from the Romans. That's why they're trying to kill him. We want Barabbas. Jesus. Talk about turn the other cheek. We don't believe. He crazy, by the way.

[39 : 06] He a blasphemer. He thinks he's a king. He thinks he's a messiah. We don't want Jesus. Get rid of him. He nuts. That's how they work the crowd up, in my opinion.

Because I can't figure it out any other way. How could they turn against Jesus and say, give us a thug. Give us a killer. How could they do it?

He was their kind of guy. Jesus was not their kind of guy. The world rejects truth. And as Christians, we, by the grace of God, because we rejected truth too.

By the grace of God, you've been brought into the kingdom. The king has revealed himself to you. He opened your heart. You were born again so that you could see the kingdom and enter the kingdom, seeing the king.

Your eyes of God have been opened. He's shown you what the truth is. You've been given the deposit of the truth. We can't keep quiet. And you got quiet.

[40 : 16] We can't keep quiet with the truth, saints. We can't hold it to ourselves and say we don't want to get involved. We're afraid.

[illegible]