

"What Is Truth?"

Pontius Pilate asked the question, "What is truth?" Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." And today we're going to consider Pilate's question, and see what the Scriptures say about truth.

Welcome to In SEARCH of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. Proverbs 23:23 says, "Buy the truth, and do not sell it, Get wisdom and instruction and understanding." You know, it costs to know the truth. We have to search for it and struggle to learn it; but once we know the truth, we must never let it go. Without the truth, we can't have confidence in anything; we're left in darkness without any answers; but with the truth, we can have confidence and hope. Thanks for taking time with us today. We want to be a part of your life each week.

People in our culture often say phrases like "your truth" and "my truth." They think, "what's true for you is true for you, but it's not necessarily true for me." And they've stopped believing in absolute truth but they think that all truth is relative. They believe there's no settled truth in religion but believe that all ideas are equally true and valid, even if they contradict one another. They often define what is true by what we think or feel; they believe people can manufacture their own truth. They assume the truth is subjective rather than objective, and they determine the truth by their opinions. People use these kinds of ideas to dismiss any view that they don't like or to keep them from facing up to what God has to say about some belief, some practice, or some moral view that they hold.

Do truth and morality exist, or is everything simply someone's opinion? Can we know the truth? If we're left only with opinions, we truly are in the dark. An opinion is merely a guess in the absence of evidence. But if the inspired word of God is true, and we have evidence it is, then we cannot ignore it. Truth arises out of facts. And the resurrection of Jesus declares that He is truly the Son of God. So let's listen to Him.

Now, we offer this study free on determining the truth. If you'd like a printed copy of our study and live in the United States, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or you can call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also have materials free on our website at www.searchtv.org.

The Edmond church will now worship in song, we'll read from John 18:33 to 38, and explore the truth.

Our reading today is from the gospel according to John, chapter 18, verses 33 to 38. And here Jesus is having a conversation with Pilate, just before He is sentenced to die. "Therefore Pilate entered again into the Praetorium, and summoned Jesus and said to Him, 'Are You the King of the Jews?' And Jesus answered, 'Are you saying this on your own initiative, or did others tell you about Me?' Pilate answered, 'I'm not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests delivered You to me; what have You done?' Jesus answered, 'My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm.' Therefore Pilate said to Him, 'So You are a king?' And Jesus answered, 'You say correctly that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth. And everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.' Pilate said to Him, 'What is truth?' And when he had said this, he went out again to the Jews and said to them, 'I find no guilt in Him.' " Yes, Jesus was certainly innocent, and Jesus teaches us the truth.

Let's pray together. "Oh Father, we are thankful that through Your Son Jesus that we can know the truth and the truth can set us free. Father, help us to be devoted to that truth which He taught, and to be those who will hear the truth. This is our prayer in the name of Jesus, Amen."

Pilate asked the question, "What is truth?" Well, truth refers to the actual state of matters and verifiable facts. Truth also refers to propositions and principles that describe the way things really are! When you believe a true statement, you can rely on it. When you believe a false statement, you'll be misled and perhaps suffer false hope. When you have no basis for determining what is true and what is false, you become confused and easily fooled.

We serve a holy and righteous God. Titus 1 and verse 2 speaks of the God "who cannot lie" or "who never lies." He tells the truth when He speaks. In a prayer to the Father, David said in Psalm 86:15, "But You, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, Slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness and truth." Psalm 119:142 says, "Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, And Your law is truth." Verse 160 repeats the concept: "The sum of Your word is truth, And every one of Your righteous ordinances is everlasting."

The Lord today speaks to us through His Son, Jesus Christ. And we can trust Jesus Christ to tell us the truth. John 1:14 says, "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth." Now the same Jesus who was full of grace was also full of truth! You can trust Him! And if you follow Jesus Christ, you'll never be led astray.

The apostle Paul was amazed that Christians could desert Jesus for a different gospel. He made it clear: "I'm amazed that you're so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! As we've said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!" (Galatians 1:6- to 9). Now a false doctrine disturbs the unity of the church. And a person who teaches a different gospel, no matter who he or she is, will be accursed.

Now Jesus knew people and knew how easily people could be deceived by traditions and popular ideas that appealed to their desires. And so Jesus said in John 3:19 to 21, "This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought (or worked) in God." The teaching of the Lord Jesus provides for us a basis to distinguish truth from error and right from wrong.

Now the truth matters, because it distinguishes the real disciples of Jesus from those who merely think they are His disciples. The Lord Jesus said to those Jews who had believed in Him, in John 8:31 and 32, "If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." Now when people get away from the words of Jesus, they cease to be true disciples. Now some Christians are so concerned about what people think and say, they lose sight of what the Lord has said. They believe the popular lie rather than listen to the eternal truth.

Jesus had to deal with some Jews who were deceived by their human traditions and would not listen to Him. And so He explains in John 8:43 to 45, "Why do you not understand what I am saying? It's because you cannot hear My word. (And then He says) You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the

truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he who is a liar and the father of lies. (Jesus said) but because I speak the truth, you don't believe Me." It was a real surprise to Jesus that they would hold to a lie rather than the truth.

Now, Jesus was not shy about asserting His authority. He said in John 14 and verse 6, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; and no one (no one) comes to the Father but through Me." Now there is only one way to heaven, and that way is through Jesus Christ. After His resurrection from the dead, the Lord Jesus said in Matthew 28 verse 18, that "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth." Now all authority means He has more authority than anyone else does. He has more authority than any human religious leader, more authority than any human creed, and more authority than any human council does. He is the ultimate and supreme authority, and no one, no one, no one, can overrule Him. The Lord said in John 12 and verse 48 that "He who rejects Me and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day."

Now God's word spoken through Jesus cannot be changed or rewritten to suit our culture. Psalm 119:89 says, "Forever, O LORD, Your word is settled in heaven." The Lord Jesus Himself said in Matthew 24:35, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away." Do you remember the words of Jesus? How He told Pilate in John 18:37, "For this I have been born, and for this I've come into the world, to testify to the truth. And everyone who is of the truth hears My voice." Now if you want a basis to determine what is spiritually true and what is false, listen to Jesus Christ. If you wish to know what morals matter, listen to Jesus. And everyone who is of the truth will hear His voice, that is the voice of Jesus Christ. Don't miss His voice. Don't presume that you can challenge His authority and still please Him.

Now preachers can say whatever they please about morals or what to do to be saved, but they can't change the words that Jesus spoke. Councils and conferences can write papers and declare their rules on a host of topics, but the Lord alone will have the final say on the last day. Jesus is the one and only Lord, and He has already spoken the truth on all things spiritual and moral. You can reject what the Lord says yeah, but your rejection will not keep you from being judged by His words! You may think you can judge the teaching of Christ, but in the end His teaching will judge you.

Some folks are not willing to pay the price to buy the truth. They listen to other people and accept whatever they say rather than searching the Scriptures for themselves. Now some religious leaders want you to come to them for answers rather than going to the Bible, to God, for yourselves. Acts 17 and verse 11 speaks of the noble Bereans: "Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures (the Bible) daily to see whether these things were so." Don't simply listen to what some preacher's opinions are, examine the Scriptures to see whether he is speaking the truth.

Now when you study the Scriptures, study all that they say about any topic. Many hang onto one verse says and what that verse says and fail to pay attention to the rest of the Scriptures that speak about that topic. Paul warned in 2 Timothy 2 and verse 15, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth." Now we're "saved by grace through faith" (Ephesians 2 and verse 8), but Christ is the source of eternal salvation "to all those who obey Him" (Hebrews 5, verses 8 and 9). We shouldn't unfairly judge others (Matthew 7 and verse 1), but we should judge with righteous judgment (John 7 and verse 24). We must learn to separate the old covenant from the new covenant, realizing that we're not under the Law of Moses but serve the Lord Jesus Christ.

When we study the Bible we need to know who is speaking and to whom he's speaking. And the Bible is actually a library of sixty-six books. We need to know the social and historical background of each book. Some parts of Scripture are narratives, some are laws, some are poetry, and some are prophecy. And it's helpful to know about each kind of literature. We need to know the occasion for each writing, and what the author intended to communicate to his readers.

Properly understanding Scripture means hearing what the author is saying rather than trying to read into the text of Scripture something that was never there. It's important to know the context, the surrounding material, of each passage. Some select a passage out of its context and then teach things that mislead. Sometimes people speak of baptism as a sprinkling of water, but the word translated as baptism refers to an immersion in water. Jesus was baptized in the Jordan River (Mark 1, verse 9); and John baptized at Aenon, because there was much water there (John 3:23). When Philip baptized the Eunch in Acts 8, they went down into the water and came up out of the water. Paul speaks of baptism in Romans 6 and Colossians 2 as being "buried with Christ." Well, this is the biblical concept, burial with Christ, baptism and immersion. Now, hundreds of years later people started sprinkling and calling it baptism. And they did this for centuries, and people were fooled into thinking that their sprinkling was a baptism; but it was not an immersion, and it was not what He wanted them to do. Rather, it was an innovation, something new and different from what God said.

When a religious leader makes a compromising statement about morals or teaches some doctrine that disagrees with the truth found in Scripture, you need to examine fully what the Scriptures actually say. One leader recently said you can go to heaven, even if you don't believe in God; but the Scriptures say in Hebrews 11 and verse 6, "And without faith it's impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He's a rewarder of those who seek Him." Another leader said, well you don't have to believe Jesus is the Son of God; but the Lord Jesus said in John 3 and verse 18, "Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am He, you will die in your sins That's John 8 and verse 24)." Now truth matters! You can't believe anything that you please and remain right with God.

The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 7 verses 21 to 23, that "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. And many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, didn't we prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you who practice lawlessness.'" Now here were religious leaders who called Jesus, "Lord, Lord" but did not teach the will of God. They were lawless, they were involved in religious efforts but never were accepted by the Lord. They were "lawless," and they taught their own doctrines, and practiced their own ways. They didn't listen to the Lord they failed to practice the truth.

Hebrews 2 verses 1 to 3 says, "For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away from it. For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty, how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?" Are you listening to the Lord? Do you know and love the truth?

Let's pray together. "Oh Father, help us to be devoted to the truth, devoted to You and to Your Word, and to follow it always. This is our prayer in the name of Jesus, Amen!"

The Lord Jesus said to the apostles in John 16 verses 12 and 13, "I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will

disclose to you what is to come.” Now the Holy Spirit inspired the apostles to give us God’s word in the New Testament. We can trust the New Testament is true, because we have the Lord’s promise.

We need the word of God. The Lord Jesus said, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God’” (Matthew 4 and verse 4). Now if the word of God is necessary for life, shouldn’t we listen and obey? The Lord Jesus said in Luke 6:46, “Why do you call Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say?” Jesus will not be your Savior, unless He is also your Lord. Will you do what He says?

To be a Christian is more than merely saying that you believe. It is a commitment to love the Lord with all your heart and all your soul. Yes, you must believe He is the Christ, the Son of God and be willing to confess Him before others. It’s a commitment to deny yourself, and to take up your cross daily, and to follow the Lord. You must be willing to turn from your sins and live for the Lord. You must also be willing to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins (Acts 2 and verse 38). Now when you’re baptized, the Lord washes away your sins, makes you His child, and adds you to His church. Won’t you obey Him today?

Well, we hope that today’s study about the truth makes you think. If you live in the United States and want a free printed copy of this message, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, call the Search office toll-free at 1-800-321-8633. Now you can download these lessons or a newsletter online at our website: www.searchtv.org. There’s also a schedule of our programs and a map with the location of churches in your area. Now you can watch SEARCH anytime on YouTube! We hope that you’ll go to YouTube, find it, we’re located at “SearchTVMinistry,” and why not subscribe to our channel. We also offer free Bible Correspondence courses. Now don’t worry, we’re not here asking for money. We’re here to help you get to heaven.

But we ask that you do focus your heart on God, and do it today by worshiping at church. Everybody needs a church family. And there’s probably a church of Christ in your area. And if you’re looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we’ll be happy to help you find one. We’ll be back next week, Lord willing. So, as we always say, God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord’s Way.