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## **INTRODUCTION**

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### ***What is truth?***

Jesus has been arrested in the dark of the night and is being shuffled back and forth from one illegal trial to another. The Jewish leaders want Him put to death but by Roman law they are not allowed to do that. So in the early morning they bring Jesus to Pilot so he can condemn Jesus to death.

John 18:33-38 (NIV)

[33] Pilate then went back inside the palace, summoned Jesus and asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?"

[34] "Is that your own idea," Jesus asked, "or did others talk to you about me?"

[35] "Am I a Jew?" Pilate replied. "It was your people and your chief priests who handed you over to me. What is it you have done?"

[36] Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place."

[37] "You are a king, then!" said Pilate.

Jesus answered, "You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the **truth**. Everyone on the side of **truth** listens to me."

[38] "What is **truth**?" Pilate asked. With this he went out again to the Jews and said, "I find no basis for a charge against him."

Truth is often described with, or associated with different words that help some to understand what it means. For example words like, fidelity, constancy, sincerity, fact, actuality, 'a judgment, proposition, or idea accepted as true', propositions, fidelity to an original or a standard, in accordance with fact.

It could be said that a building is TRUE to the blueprints that were used to build it. That is if the blueprints were done correctly and no changes were made to the building during the construction phase. When Jesus was talking to Pilot during His trial, He spoke of the truth of the reality about who He really was, and who the Jewish leaders thought He was. They were so sure that Jesus was an imposter; they were so sure that He did not match up to the blueprint of the prophecies that described the Messiah. However Jesus was always pointing them to the blueprint. Jesus was the Messiah, and the New Testament authors always referred to the prophecies about Messiah, and how He matched them perfectly.

### ***What does the Word say?***

In our culture today we have a hard time discerning what the truth is. Mike Barres writes devotionals for Heartlight and in one of them he deals with truth. Listen to what he has to say.

Tolerance and love are great; however, these cannot be purchased at the expense of **truth** and character. We must be grounded and rooted in God's Word and seek after both His character and compassion. There are a lot of philosophies and opinions floating around about spiritual things.

The Bible, however, must be the anchor that holds us in this stormy sea. My opinions about sexuality, abortion, and morality are not really important. What really matters is what the One who made us all says about these things in His Word. This is true even if our values become unpopular in contemporary culture. God's **truth** is still the **truth**.

Have you ever had a friend or loved one tell you about someone selling them something that sounded too good to be **true**? That has happened to me several times. I have to say, "I hate to tell you this, but what they told you is not **true**." If we really love someone, we will tell them the **truth** if someone is going to cheat them out of what is theirs.

The same is **true** about spiritual **truth**. We need to help them see God's **truth** from the Word, even if they have been told something else.

In the very first psalm in the Bible, the psalmist reminds us of this great **truth**:  
*(Mike Barres, Heartlight Devotional, 2008)*

Psalms 1:1-6 (NIV)

[Ps 1:1] Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers.

[2] But his delight is in **the law of the LORD**, and on his law he meditates day and night.

[3] He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.

[4] Not so the wicked! They are like chaff that the wind blows away.

[5] Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.

[6] For the LORD watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.

It is the Word of God, the Bible, that holds the truth about how we came to be, how God interacts with us, and the stand we are to take on the issues of life that surround us.

The Psalmist understood the part truth played in the everyday life of an individual. We live by what we really believe, and we seek the truth about how we live our daily lives. We want confirmation for our actions, justification if you will. The Psalmist warns us that the council of the wicked, the way of sinners, and the seat of mockers leads to destruction. To describe truth in confirming the actions of our living, the Psalmist described it as something we take council in, walk by, or sit in. Verse one talks about the way people seek truth, it is to, ["walk in the council of"](#), ["stand in the way of"](#), or ["sit in the seat of"](#). Here is a warning about what we accept as the truth to live the actions of our lives by. Wow! Talk about the ancient words of God being applicable to how we live out our lives in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, this is it. All of the important issues of life, culture, society, and family are to be scrutinized here. We are to be careful about the source of life's attitudes and actions.

But the Psalmist does not leave us hanging with only a warning. Often we are told what is bad for us or what we should not do, but then are never told what we should do and why we should do it. The psalmist wants us to know that there is an absolute truth that we can live our lives by, and he names it in verse two. He calls it ["the law of the Lord"](#). But, not only does he tell us the source of truth for our lives, he tells us how to integrate it into our daily lives. Listen to his words in the second half of verse two, ["on his law he meditates day and night"](#). This was not a new idea for the Israelites. Just before they crossed the Jordan River to take possession of the Promised Land, Joshua had told them this same thing.

[Joshua 1:7-8 \(NIV\)](#)

[7] Be strong and very courageous. **Be careful** to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, **that you may be successful** wherever you go. [8] Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; **meditate** on it day and night, so that you may **be careful** to do everything written in it. **Then you will be prosperous and successful.**

But what does it mean to meditate on the law day and night? The psalms are a result of the meditations of David. He wrote most of the psalms, and he wrote them while he did his job, while he was carrying out the actions of living his life. It was something he was thinking about most of the time. He thought about and wrote down what the law of God meant in the details of living life. Paul expressed this same idea but with different words. He said that we are to pray without ceasing. He meant nothing less than what Joshua expressed to the children of Israel or what David wrote about when he said we are to meditate on the law of the Lord day and night. To meditate means to ponder. Synonyms for the English word ponder help us put it into a modern context; they include; consider, think about, think over, contemplate, deliberate, or to wonder about. Probably the best way, although not the only way, to do this is to read or listen to some of the Word of God early in the day so that it is fresh on our mind. Then think about it and ponder its meaning in the context of living life that day. With consistent practice it will become a habit for us and our relationship with God will never be the same.

That brings us back to the reality of our question, "What is truth"? Let's look at what the Word says about truth, especially as John presented it in his writings of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

In the Gospel of John he recorded Jesus saying the words, "I tell you the truth...", 29 times. Jesus emphasis of the truth calls for a challenge to His words. When someone says, "I tell you the truth", they are giving anyone who hears them the opportunity to challenge that truth. The religious leaders of Jesus day had every opportunity to look into the scriptures for the truth but they did not find anything to condemn Jesus on. Instead they paid false witnesses to bring judgment against Jesus. The Greek word for true is "A-leth-in-os", it means...

G228 True – **A-leth-in-os**: true, one who cannot lie, real, genuine. A-leth-in-os defines the relation of the concept to the corresponding thing. (Like a building is defined by it's blueprint.)

G225 Truth – **Aletheia**: true, truth, reality; the unveiled reality lying at the basis of and agreeing with an appearance; the manifested, the veritable essence of matter.

Let's take a closer look at Pilot's encounter with Jesus where he asks Jesus one of the most important questions, a question that all of us must consider. "What is truth?"

John 18:33-38 (NIV)

[33] Pilate then went back inside the palace, summoned Jesus and asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?"

Seeking the truth always starts with a question. Pilot had heard about the crowds that had welcomed Jesus just one week earlier as He entered Jerusalem. Any ruler or king would be alarmed about someone else claiming to be a king in his territory. I am sure Pilot had wondered about the proclamation the crowds had made about Jesus the day He rode into town on a donkey. So the question is before him, is this man really a king? Is He the king of the Jews or does He intend to be king of Rome? Is this a challenge to me? Is this a challenge to Caesar and Rome? If you could satisfy any question you have about what truth is, what question would you ask Jesus? What truth do you seek from Him today? Or do you have all the answers? And if you have all the answers have you asked all the right questions, or are you only asking the questions that will confirm the convictions you already have?

[34] "Is that your own idea," Jesus asked, "or did others talk to you about me?"

Jesus then asks Pilot a question? It is a question to help Pilot discover the source for his need to have an answer to this question. In other words Jesus wants Pilot to seek the answer to his question for the right reason. Jesus proposes two possibilities for the motive for Pilot's question.

The first possibility is personal. It is the possibility that Pilot wants to know for himself who Jesus really is and if He is a king. After all Pilot is loyal to Caesar and a ruler himself. It would be difficult for him to justify allowing someone in the territory he is in charge of, to be running around trying to be a king to the people he

is to rule over as Caesar's representative. His position and reputation as a ruler are at stake which would provide a strong motivation to find out who Jesus is. This is an important question in Jesus eyes also because Jesus knows that there is only one King and that one day that both Pilot and Caesar would have to acknowledge that fact. Was this the moment that Pilot might acknowledge the real King; the King of kings?

The second possibility is political. It is the possibility that Pilot wants an answer to the proclamation of the people who have been claiming that Jesus is a king. He does not want a riot in his territory and so he must get to the bottom of why the Jews are trying to have Jesus put to death. If Jesus is claiming to be the earthly King of the Jews it would justify Pilot condemning Him to death. This would satisfy the angry crowd and keep his position as the Roman ruler over the Jews secure.

Jesus wants Pilot to consider these two possibilities. Is Pilot asking the question for himself; perhaps to satisfy a personal quest? Does he really want to know who Jesus is for himself? Or is Pilot trying to satisfy the people? Each of us must consider these two possibilities as well. Do we want to know who Jesus is for personal reasons or do we want to know just for the sake of others. Our relationship with Christ must be personal. If we are in church for others we do not understand the truth of having a relationship with Jesus Christ.

[35] "Am I a Jew?" Pilate replied. "It was your people and your chief priests who handed you over to me. What is it you have done?"

Pilate says that his question about Jesus being a king is to satisfy the Jews who have brought Him before Pilot to be condemned and put to death. But Pilot's actions seem to suggest that he was bothered in his spirit about this Jesus. Even Pilot's wife warns him about Jesus. But to keep the peace Pilot will eventually turn Jesus over to the crowd to be crucified.

It is interesting that Pilot asks Jesus another question, "What is it you have done?" When the majority of the people have turned against you, it is sometimes an indication that you are probably in the wrong. However many times Jesus said that His followers would be few, they would be the minority in the crowds of people.

[36] Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place."

Jesus never had a problem with the oppressive rule of the Romans over the Jews. In fact many times in His ministry He let people know that they were to subject themselves to the government, although not in true religious matters. But Jesus wants Pilot to understand that He is a King but His kingdom is not of this world. This is a clear indication to Jesus followers that there are clear lines to be drawn between politics and religion.

[37] "You are a king, then!" said Pilate.

Jesus answered, "You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the **truth**. Everyone on the side

of **truth** listens to me.”

Then Pilot realizes that Jesus is claiming to be a king. Jesus confirms the fact but He lets Pilot know that His kingdom is not of this world, so He is no threat to Pilot or to Caesar and their earthly rule. But what will Pilot do with that information. Will he use it as the excuse to condemn Jesus to death so he can keep the people calm in his realm? It could be a valid political reason for turning Jesus over to the crowd to be crucified. What do we do with the information that confirms that Jesus is the King of kings? When Jesus confirmed to Pilot that He was a king He did it with the statement that His purpose as a king was to testify to the TRUTH. The TRUTH He speaks of here is the TRUTH about God’s plan of salvation. The incarnation is the TRUTH. God had become a man to take care of the sin problem that separates man from God. That brings us face to face with an important question? Is He the real King and Lord of our lives or is His kingship and lordship over us just something we talk about? The reality of truth is that if He is truly our King then we will serve Him as our King and Lord every day. What will we do with Jesus the King of kings? What will Pilot do with Jesus, the man he now knows to be the King of kings?

[38] “What is **truth**?” Pilate asked. With this he went out again to the Jews and said, “I find no basis for a charge against him.

Pilate questions the truth of Jesus’ admission that He is a king, “What is truth?” But he chooses not to use that information to condemn Jesus to death. Pilot declares Jesus innocent of the charges against Him. There is an acceptance of Jesus and a refusal to condemn Him at least in word. But Pilate’s actions tell us another story. We might feel bad for Pilot. We might feel like he had no choice in turning Jesus over to the crowd. Pilot believed Jesus, but only on the surface. Eventually he turned Jesus over to the crowd and condemned Him to death.

This is an important lesson about truth for all of us. We can say that something is true. We can say that we believe something to be true but our words are not the reality of truth or belief. The reality of truth and our belief in that truth, come only in the actions of our lives. When I grab the blueprints of a building and declare that I am going to build that building according to the plans I am only declaring with word the commitment to those blueprints. But when I build the building according to the blueprints then my actions show that I believe the blueprints to be true and accurate.

The blueprint for our lives is the Word of God and I must do more than say I believe them to be true. I must build my life according to the blueprint in the Word. God’s word is truth and I must meditate on that Word day and night.

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## **CONCLUSION**

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### ***Practical Application.***

I guess it comes down to what you and I are going to believe to be absolute truth in our lives. It is no different than the decision the religious leaders of Jesus day had to

face in light of His statements and actions that seemed to go against what they believed to be absolutely true.

Phil Ware, in one of his "What Would Jesus Do" devotionals for Heartlight, speaks to the ultimate proof of the truth of the Word of God.

Mark 11:27-28 (NIV)

[27] They arrived again in Jerusalem, and while Jesus was walking in the temple courts, the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders came to him.

[28] "By what authority are you doing these things?" they asked. "And who gave you authority to do this?"

The apparent religious leaders demanded Jesus, the true spiritual leader, to answer their questions about his authority! Before Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection, this was a natural thing to have happen. The Temple and all things religious were their domain. They were the respected authorities. They supposedly were motivated by the best interests of Israel and the preservation of their religious institutions. In light of their rejection of Jesus, the crucifixion of Jesus, and the resurrection of Jesus, their question about Jesus' authority becomes silly. How dare they challenge the one who has the power over life and death? How dare they doubt the religious authority of the one for whom God demonstrated his approval and love? So the real question for you and me today is this: "On which side of the cross and resurrection do I view Jesus?" Hopefully we view him on the side on which we not only see Jesus' authority, but we also have responded to that authority with appreciation, admiration, and obedience. *(What Would Jesus Do devotional by Phil Ware)*

What will you and I do with the truth? What will we do with the truth, not just in this moment, but what will we do with the truth as we live out the actions of our daily lives?

Let us pray...