

INTRODUCTION

When I was part of the Jesus movement in the 1970s one of my favorite singers was Andraé Crouch. He wrote many great worship songs. You may recognize the title of this message based on a song he wrote in 1972. I love the simple, but powerful lyrics: Jesus is the answer for the world today. Above Him, there's no other. Jesus is the way! The second verse speaks to us in a powerful way: I know you've got mountains, That you think you cannot climb, I know your skies are dark, You think the sun won't shine, But in case you don't know, That the word of God is true, Everything He's promised, He will do it for you.

Jesus is the answer for the world today; Above Him there's no other, Jesus is the way! Jesus is the answer for the world today; Above Him there's no other, Jesus is the way!"

When it comes to life's most important questions, Jesus not only HAS the answers, He IS the answer. I'm going to give you two messages for the price of one, but they both center around Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor. First, we'll look at the questions Pilate asked Jesus and then we'll conclude with Pilate's verdict.

It's interesting to note that this is the last recorded personal conversation that Jesus had with anyone before the cross. Pilate seems agitated because he has been asked to rule on what he considered to be a religious issue. Luke tells us that when He heard Jesus was from Galilee, he sent him to Herod Antipas who was in the city for Passover. This was the same Herod who had beheaded John the Baptist. Luke records that Herod asked Jesus questions and wanted to see a miracle. But Jesus refused to say a word. Luke records that Herod and the Jewish leaders mocked Him and dressed Him in a royal robe and sent Him back to Pilate.

John 18:33-40. Then Pilate went back into the headquarters, summoned Jesus, and said to him, "Are you the king of the Jews?" Jesus answered, "Are you asking this on your own, or have others told you about me?" "I'm not a Jew, am I?" Pilate replied. "Your own nation and the chief priests handed you over to me. What have you done?" "My kingdom is not of this world," said Jesus. "If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would fight, so that I wouldn't be handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here." "You are a king then?" Pilate asked.

"You say that I'm a king," Jesus replied. "I was born for this, and I have come into the world for this: to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice."

"What is truth?" said Pilate.

After he had said this, he went out to the Jews again and told them, "I find no grounds for charging him. You have a custom that I release one prisoner to you at the Passover. So, do you want me to release to you the king of the Jews?" They shouted back, "Not this man, but Barabbas!" Now Barabbas was a revolutionary.

During this conversation Pilate asked Jesus several questions. We're going to examine three of the questions. We'll spend a little time on the first two questions, and most of the time on the third question.

1. Are you the king of the Jews?

The answer? Yes and no. Jesus didn't deny being a king. He told Pilate that His kingdom was not of this world. For hundreds of years, the Jewish prophets had predicted a Messiah, a powerful King, would be sent to the nation of Israel. In Matthew 2 we read about magi from the East—probably from modern day Iraq who showed up at the palace of Herod the Great. They asked Herod, "Where is he who is born King of the Jews? We saw His star in the East and we have come to worship Him."

Herod the Great was a vicious ruler. He called himself a king, but he hadn't even been born Jewish. He had bribed the Roman government for his title. So you can imagine how upset he was by that question from those foreigners. He had his rabbis check, and they correctly pointed out that the prophet Micah had predicted 700 years earlier that a great king would be born in Bethlehem.

Herod send soldiers to kill all the boy babies in Bethlehem, but God had sent an angel to warn Joseph to flee with Mary and Jesus to Egypt. We all know that story. But was Jesus king of the Jews? Yes and No. No, He wasn't just King of the Jews, Yes, He is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. He spoke about the Kingdom of God dozens of times. My life verse is Matthew 6:33 where Jesus said, "Seek FIRST the Kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things will be added unto you." The only thing you need to have a kingdom is to have a King. And when you crown Jesus as the King and Ruler of your life, you are part of the Kingdom of God.

Over the next hours, the Romans mocked Jesus as a king. They put a crown of thorns on His head and gave him a stout stick as a regal scepter, then they used it to bash him in the head.

And remember, every criminal crucified had a sign above them listing their crimes. Murder. Treason. Thief. And even at the objection of the Jewish leaders, Pilate had a sign above the cross written in three languages: Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews.

2. What have you done?

The answer? Nothing that deserved punishment. Pilate assumed Jesus had committed some violent crime to cause the Jewish leaders to demand that He be executed. But Jesus was completely sinless. He was the only innocent man Pilate would ever meet.

On three occasions, Pilate publically declared Jesus was innocent of any crime and didn't deserve death. But the Jewish leaders pressured him to do it or they would report that he was not a friend of Caesar, so Pilate handed an innocent man over to be tortured and crucified.

But think about it, Jesus was absolutely sinless. The Bible says in Hebrews 4:15 that Jesus was tempted in every way we are tempted, yet He did not sin.

Have you ever really thought about that? When Jesus was a little boy He never sassed His mother or father. He was never a moody teenager who lied to Joseph when he asked Him where He'd been. He never cheated on a test at Synagogue school. For over thirty years, He kept the law of God perfectly.

He was like a spotless lamb without blemish. The Passover lambs that were being sacrificed had to be without blemish, and the moral character of our Passover Lamb, Jesus, was spotless and pure.

But that's what makes the Gospel the good news. Because all of us have sinned and fallen short of God's glory. Because He was absolutely innocent, He qualified as the Lamb of God to take away the sin of the world.

3. What is truth?

This is the main question we want to address. As we talk about truth, let's play a little movie trivia. I'll say a famous line and you can guess the actor or the movie. You don't have to shout it out, just say it to your neighbor.

"I'll be back." (Arnold Schwarzenegger in *The Terminator*)

"Here's looking at you, kid." (Humphrey Bogart in *Casablanca*).

"I'll make him an offer he can't refuse." (Marlon Brando in *The Godfather*)

"Go ahead, make my day." (Clint Eastwood in *Sudden Impact*).

"You can't handle the truth!" (Jack Nicholson in *A Few Good Men*).

I played that little trivia game to get you think about that last line, "You can't handle the truth." Because we live in a culture where people can't handle the truth. Actually, we live in a culture where absolute truth is rejected. But in John 18:37 Jesus told Pilate that He had come to testify to the truth. Jesus said, "I was born for this, and I have come into the world for this: to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice." (John 18:37)

Not long ago, the George Barna Research firm asked Americans about whether they believe in absolute truth. 66% of adults say there is no such thing as absolute truth and 91% of teenagers said that truth is whatever they feel to be truth. The removal of absolute truth is destroying our nation's moral foundation.

I had the privilege of knowing Ravi Zacharias and speaking at the same conferences. He just recently went to be with the Lord. He was a brilliant man and he was a champion for absolute truth. He wrote: "To make the statement, 'There is no absolute truth' is a self-defeating statement. It is positing an absolute while claiming that absolutes don't exist."

When our culture lives without absolute truth, we are headed toward chaos. The Book of Judges in the Bible tell us those times were evil because "Each man did what was right in his own eyes."

To answer the question, let me give you three sources of absolute truth.

(1) The Scripture is truth.

John uses the word "truth" 22 times in His gospel account—that's more than in Matthew, Mark, and Luke combined. This book that I hold in my hand and that I access on my computer contains enough truth to solve all the world's problems. In His prayer in John 17:17, Jesus prayed, "Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth."

For much of our nation's history, the Ten Commandments were considered to be a great moral code. I grew up in a time when the Ten Commandments were in every classroom in my school. Perhaps the reason there weren't mass shootings back in the 1960s and 1970s is because we grew up seeing the words: "Thou shall not kill."

But the Supreme Court voted to remove the Ten Commandments. And about ten years later these judges voted 7-2 that it was legal kill a baby in the mother's womb.

And this book is full of absolute truths. Let me give you an example. There is an absolute truth found in Galatians 6:7. The Bible says, "Don't be deceived, God is not mocked. For whatever a person sows he will also reap." That's not just true for people who believe the Bible, it is a universal spiritual law. Now, you can say to me, "Well that's your truth, it's not my truth."

It would like me telling you there is a law of gravity. "What goes up must come down." And someone says, "Well, that's your truth, it's not my truth." Then that person decides to test the law of gravity by jumping off a ten-story building. It will only take them a few seconds to believe that gravity is an absolute truth.

Years ago, some preaches would say something like this. "God said it. I believe it. And that settles it!" That's not exactly true. "God said it, and that settles it whether you believe it or not!"

(2) The Spirit is truth.

Another source of absolute truth is the Holy Spirit who lives in you to display the life of Jesus. In John 16 Jesus promised the disciples that after He ascended to Heaven He would not leave them as orphans. He had been with them, but Paraclete, the Holy Spirit would be in them. In John 16:13, Jesus said, "But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth...He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you."

One of the longest daytime soap operas was called The Guiding Light. Including radio, it ran for 72 years. During one period, the public transportation in NYC went on strike. So the studio

rented buses to pick up the actors and crew. On one of those runs the bus stopped and the driver didn't see anyone waiting to be picked up. But he saw a man at the corner looking uptown and then downtown. So the driver got out of the bus and walked up to him and said, "Are you looking for the Guiding Light?" The man's face turned sour and said, "Listen Buddy I'm tired you religious fanatics trying to convert everyone!"

We don't need an outer guiding light, because we have the inner guidance that the Holy Spirit gives. Jesus in us is light and life.

Have you ever wondered HOW the Spirit of Truth leads you to truth? There are at least two ways He guides us. First, as we regularly read and study God's Word, the Holy Spirit illuminates it. I have often had the experience in my quiet time of reading a passage of scripture I've read many times before, and then suddenly it's as if someone turned on the light. I see truth there I had never noticed.

Second, when I pray alone. I spend a lot of time listening. Prayer is not a monologue, it's a dialogue. And in these quiet times, I sometimes hear a soft prompting by the Holy Spirit. So the Spirit of God is truth. Finally,

(3) The Savior is truth.

Jesus is truth incarnate. When the Apostle John introduced us to Jesus in John, he wrote that Jesus was "full of grace and truth."

When Pilate asked, "What is truth?" Jesus could have said, "You're talking to truth right now." In John 14:6 Jesus made an audacious claim.

Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14:6)

Throughout history, many religious leaders have offered to lead people to the truth, or to teach people the truth, but only one man in history claimed to BE the Truth.

The first creature to reject absolute truth was the serpent in the Garden. He put a question mark where God had put a period. Satan said to Eve, "Did the Lord say you can't eat any of the fruit of the garden?" And that's what Satan is still doing today: He's putting a question mark where God put a period. So, if you believe these absolute truths, shout the word "Period!" when I point to you.

I believe the absolute truth that "God so loved the world that He gave His One-and-only Son, and whoever believes in him will not perish but will have everlasting life." Period. I believe the absolute truth that we should Love the Lord our God with all our heart, our, soul, and our strength. And we should love our neighbors as ourselves. Period.

I believe "Whosoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved." Period. I believe we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. Period. I believe that greater is he who is in me than he that is in the world. Period. Exclamation point. There is absolute truth, and His name is Jesus.

Those were Pilate's questions. Now, for a moment, let's talk about:

PILATE'S VERDICT: "I find no grounds for charging him."

Pilate tried unsuccessfully to release Jesus, but the Jewish leaders demanded blood. In Matthew's account, Pilate even washes his hands saying, "I am innocent of this man's blood."

So Pilate looks for a loophole to spare Jesus. He told the crowd it was customary to release a prisoner on Passover. Did they want him to release Jesus? But the mob screamed to release Barabbas instead. In John's passage we read that Barabbas was a revolutionary. Mark and Luke call him a murderer. In Peter's sermon in Acts 3 he says, "You denied the Holy One and asked to have a murderer released."

Barabbas was a bad dude. But he got the break of a life-time. An innocent man took his place on the cross.

I am Barabbas. You are Barabbas. We are all guilty sinners. And we deserve to receive God's judgment against sin. But like Barabbas, we have a substitute. Jesus died in our place.

750 years before the cross, the prophet Isaiah predicted what would happen to the Messiah: "But he was pierced because of our rebellion, crushed because of our iniquities; punishment for our peace was on him, and we are healed by his wounds. We all went astray like sheep; we all have turned to our own way; and the Lord has punished him for the iniquity of us all." (Isaiah 53:5-6)

Let's imagine you could time travel back to a few days after the crucifixion. You meet Barabbas in the narrow streets of Jerusalem. You say, "Barabbas, why are you alive and free?" His only answer could be, "A man named Jesus died in my place." And if you could be transported to Heaven you could walk up to anyone there and ask them, "Why are you here?" You'd get the same answer, "Jesus died in my place."

God willing, I will live many more years, but I've already chosen the song I want sung at my funeral. It's a song written by Gordon Jensen. The lyrics describe my testimony: I was guilty with nothing to say. They were coming to take me away. But then a voice from heaven was heard that said, "Let him go. Take me instead."

A crown of thorns, a spear deep in His side; And all the pain, it should have been mine. Those rusty nails were meant for me, But Christ took them, and He let me go free.

I should have been crucified. I should have suffered and died.
I should have hung on that cross in disgrace. But Jesus, God's Son, took my place.

Life is full of tough questions. Just remember, Jesus is the answer for the world today; Above Him there's no other, Jesus is the way!

OUTLINE

PILATE'S QUESTIONS:

1. Are you the king of the Jews?

2. What have you done?

3. What is truth?

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(1) The Scripture is truth.

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Jesus said, "But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth... He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you." *John 16:13-14*

(3) The Savior is truth.

Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." *John 14:6*

PILATE'S VERDICT: "I find no grounds for charging him."

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For the Joy...
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