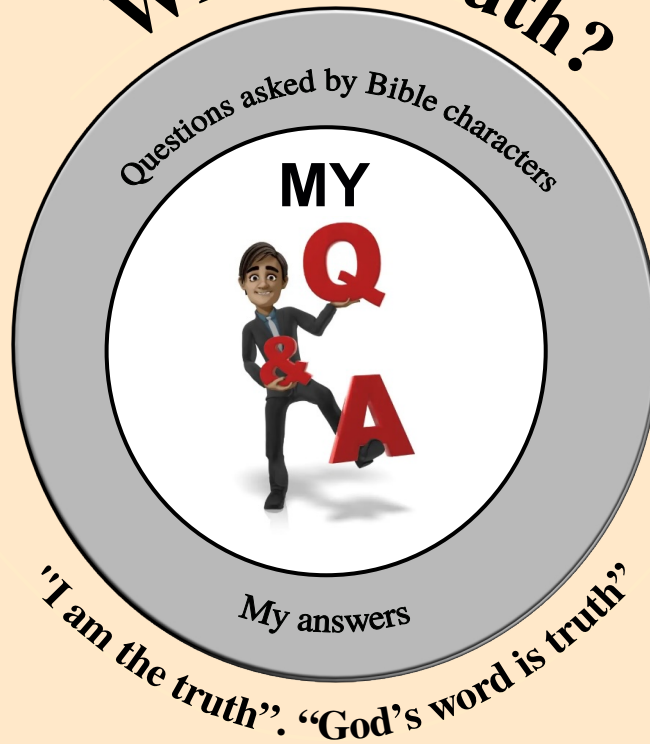




5



What is truth?



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Introduction

This Q&A paper investigates the question put by Pontius Pilate, the Roman Governor, to Jesus. It was:

“What is truth” (John 18:38).

This was in response to the startling claim made by the prisoner bound in front of him:

For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice (John 18:37).

Truth: relative or absolute?

Notice that Pilate, deliberately or casually, misquoted the Lord. Pilate said ‘truth’, but the Lord said ‘the truth’. The former is subjective; the latter is objective. The former is relative; the latter is absolute. The former has lots of definition wriggle room; the latter has none.

For example, in the non-biblical world, truth means something like ‘that which is in accordance with fact or reality’. But, in 2025 you can have your facts and reality, and I can have mine. You and I can believe diametrically opposed truths about a subject, and both of us can call them the truth. How illogical and crazy is that!!!

Origin of the Truth

Notice that Jesus said that He brought ‘the truth’ with Him when He was born into the world. So, ‘the truth’ is of heavenly origin. For Him, ‘the truth’ was a fixed body of preexistent knowledge, for God’s word is the truth’ (John 17:17). Accordingly, its boundaries were predetermined.

Meaning of the Truth

Which leads me to the word that John used for ‘truth’ (*aletheia*), and means ‘that which cannot be hidden, must be revealed, not concealed’ ([Abarim Publications](#)). As Shakespeare’s timeless idiom expresses it, **“truth will out,”** which is what Jesus Christ came into the world to do, as He confirmed to Pilate. As an aside, John has multiple times more references to *truth* than all of the other writers of the New Testament (NT). For him, *truth* is a signature word.

Truth is personal

Jesus said, ***“I am the truth”*** (John 18:38). And again: ***We want to tell you about the One who was from the beginning. We have seen Him with our own eyes, heard Him with our own ears, and touched Him with our own hands. This One is the manifestation of the life-giving Voice, and He showed us real life, eternal life. We have seen it all, and we can’t keep what we witnessed quiet—we have to share it with you*** (The Voice; 1 John 1:1-2).

So, *the truth*’ as a body of preexistent knowledge is embodied in Christ. He gave heaven’s truth concrete, human form.

Hearers of Truth

The Lord said that *everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice*. So, what does ‘belong to the truth’ mean? Most often it means the understanding and comprehension of information, which is where faith begins ([Abarim Publications](#)). Or as Paul says, “Faith is by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17, also Galatians 3:2-5). Such a person ‘belongs to the truth’ in the sense of truth being their spiritual source or origin (2 Corinthians 4:7).

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Truth Jesus spoke

So, John's gospel is bracketed by two references to truth. Firstly, at the start of His public ministry when the Lord came into the world *truth came with Him*, and He lived *full of truth*, said John (John 1:14-17). At the end of His public ministry is Pilate's question, '*what is truth?*' In between these two are many moments of Truth-Telling by the Word, the Son of God, which answer Pilate's question,

Here are three examples from Jesus testifying to heaven's truth about things to enter.

1. Entering the kingdom

I tell you the solemn **truth**, unless a person is born again, or from above, of water and the spirit (wind) he can neither see nor **enter the kingdom of God** (John 3:3, 5).

As an aside, that there 24 references to the 'solemn truth' in John's gospel ([Net Bible](#)). Next, notice the second part of the Lord's statement to Nicodemus, about the Kingdom of God. What is this? Well, God alone is the king. All the kingdoms of men will be gone. Every aspect of His kingdom is God-determined, derived from His nature, character and action. The Father alone gives it (Luke 12:32). It is as the Lord described it on one other occasion: *Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven* (Matthew 6:7-10).

Therefore, humans can't bring it about, or bring it in, or extend it. Indeed, humans can only seek, pray for, see, proclaim, receive, accept, enter into it.

The first part of the text above is about being born into a different family. Not the human family, no Nicodemus, not being a child of Abraham as you are gets you into God's kingdom, for what is born of flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 15:50).

Water and wind/spirit come from above (Isaiah 44:3-5), and are life-giving symbols of the Spirit of God in his work among people. How does this birth happen? *To all who **received Jesus**, the incarnate Word, those **who believe in his name**, God gives the right to become His children, which are not born by human parents or by human desire or a husband's decision, but by God* (John 1:12-13).

In sum, to receive Jesus, is to take possession of Him, to accept His message (Matthew 13:20). Indeed, as John said, to receive Jesus, is to believe in his name, and He gives birth into God's family, and this is your ticket into the Kingdom of God.

2. Entering life

*I tell you the solemn **truth**, the one who hears now my message and believes now the one who sent me **has now eternal life** and will not be condemned, but has already crossed over from death and **entered into life*** (John 5:24).

This is life eternal (now), that they might know you (now), the only true God, and Jesus Christ (John 17:3).

Here, eternal life is on the opposite spectrum to condemnation, which means a judgment. Specifically, it means an assessment or scrutiny (Matthew 12:20, John 5:30, 7:24) ([Abarim Publications](#)). On the contrary, the believer enters eternal life here and now, so death is behind us already, the grave shall have no power over us, and death will be as harmless to you and me as it was to Him. This helps to explain the apparent difficulty in the next text. *I tell you the solemn truth, if anyone obeys my teaching, he will in nowise, by no means see death* (John 8:51). This can't be physical death because believers die physically; the second death must be in view.



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2. Entering life continued

Also, *eternal life* is about knowing the only true God, and Jesus Christ (John 17:3). So, this text is less about its duration and more about its quality. Eternal life is thus relational, becoming more acquainted with the Father of the family.

3. Entering salvation and security

*I tell you the solemn **truth**, I am the door to the sheepfold. If anyone **enters** through me, he will be saved, and will come in and go out, and find pasture* (John 10:1-10).

In Israel, the background to this text, shepherds brought their flocks into a central sheepfold after their day's work, guarded by a gatekeeper. Next day, each shepherd called out his own sheep by name from the mingled flocks, as each sheep knew its own shepherd's voice, and would follow him alone.

'Sheepfold' is a word that describes any enclosed space, usually without a roof such as a sheepfold, the courtyard of the high priest, or the court outside the temple (Matthew 26:3, 26:58, 26:69, Mark 14:54, 14:66, 15:16, Luke 11:21, 22:55, John 10:1, 10:16, 18:15, Revelation 11:2), and used in the Greek version of the Hebrew Bible for the temple, and never associated with sheep.

But the reference by Jesus to sheep, sheepfold, and pasture, John tells us, was a figure of speech (John 10:6), a popular, and well-known expression. Jesus has just left the temple where the Jewish shepherds were about to stone Him. They are the bad shepherds, fleecing the flock, stealing their money, thieves and robbers, as in Ezekiel 34.

Soon the Lord will tell them that they and Jerusalem will be totally destroyed, and before this horrible judgment, He will lead his sheep, His own people, out of the temple courts, and out of Jerusalem to safety, and as the door to the true courtyard of God, He will bring His sheep into his Father's house, where there is wholeness, soundness, safety, wholeness and sustenance.

*I tell you the solemn **truth**, I am the door to the sheepfold. If anyone **enters** through me, he will be saved, and will come in and go out, and find pasture* (John 10:1-10).

'Save' is part of a cluster of words revolving around wholeness, soundness, and safety. The amazing word *pasture* denotes the act of dispensing, such as providing herd animals with their sustenance, as when Jesus fed the multitudes.

Conclusion

Our takeaways from this paper are to remember that:

1. Heaven's truth cannot be hidden, and Jesus is the truth, and God's word is truth.
2. Jesus Christ is the only entering point to God's kingdom, to life, to salvation, security, and satisfaction.
3. The ticket to enter through Jesus Christ is new birth by believing in Him and receiving Him.

References

Abarim Publications: <https://www.abarim-publications.com/DictionaryG/k/k-r-i-n-om.html>.

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