

John 18:28-40

4th November 2018 Hill and Arcadia am

Witness to the truth

With the current commissions of inquiry into state capture and the decline of Sars ability to collect revenue, have you wondered whether there such a thing as a **single correct version** of what actually happened or is it all just a matter of opinion?

This not only applies in the political arena but **in every sphere of life**. Multiple opinions are being expressed on almost every issue under the sun.

You and I constantly have **to make decisions** about what is right and what is wrong and to make decisions about what to believe or who to believe...

- Can the believers of different cultures graciously **forgive and love** one another?
- **Is abortion** merely a matter of “woman’s health” or is it the “murder of an unborn child”?
- **Is marriage** open for redefinition? Why should you or why shouldn’t you see same sex couples as a new norm?
- **Is living together** before marriage a good idea to test each other out?
- **Is sex** really reserved for marriage or is it just a biological impulse to be satisfied at whim with anyone anywhere?
- Can people really get to **know God**?
- Is there only **one right religion** or are there many acceptable pathways to God and the eternal wellbeing?
- Can you know definite **purpose and meaning** in life or is life merely an accumulation of random events?

And then as you make your decisions and reach some kind of conclusion on these questions; **does it really matter** that someone else reaches a different conclusion?

Or is it even possible to know anything for sure in the light of what author **George Orwell** stated: *“The very concept of objective truth is fading out of the world. Lies will pass into history”*.

Are we destined to live in a world where **confusion reigns**? Are we destined to navigate through life in a world where the most powerful person, party or nation determines right from wrong or truth from error?

I want to answer that question by listening in on **the conversation** between Pilate and Jesus in *John 18*.

Read John 18:28-40

Jesus appearing before Pilate in the “governors’ headquarters” (v28) puts Him under scrutiny for what His accusers describe as Him “doing evil” (v30).

His accusers have it **in their minds** that Jesus deserves death for what He has done (*Matthew 26:66* “What is your judgment?” They answered, “He deserves death.”).

Their agenda to do away with Jesus comes in a context where **their own conduct is** somewhat questionable.

John tells of these accusers **not entering** the governor’s headquarters so that *they would not be defiled, but could eat the Passover* (18:28).

On the surface of things, they say they are committed **to do what is right**, and yet their actions show something very different.

Matthew 26:59 Now the chief priests and the whole Council were seeking false testimony against Jesus that they might put him to death,

Something is **horribly wrong**. They have a conscience about being defiled before eating the Passover.

And yet they are busy with doing **the wickedest act** that mortal man ever did by intentionally and deviously conspiring against their own Messiah.

Is that **any different** from what we see, observe and suffer with today?

1 We people are easily deceived

Deception and double standards are clearly evident in recent revelations about **certain Catholic priests**. These men had publically dedicated themselves to a life time of celibacy but were found to be sexually abusing children in private.

This devious behaviour is also currently visible in Port Elizabeth in the current case against **Nigerian pastor**, Timothy Omotoso; here is a man leading crowds of people in the worship of God and yet at the same time allegedly coaching young girls to be sexually exploited and abused by him.

It is clear that not only is he **deceived** but also deceiving thousands of other people.

How often this can be true for **any one of us**; we openly promote holiness and righteousness and orthodoxy and yet so often we can be so blind to our own flaws and failings and error.

I say that because deception is **not just prevalent** in the things we consider to be the “big things”. Deception can occur at every level of life.

Like the Pharisees we too can so often make **selective use** our consciences; picking and choosing what we like to promote or giving attention to and disregarding what does not suit us.

- We can so easily **express our disgust** at the abuse of women and children or denounce the rot of corruption in political circles but accommodate our secret or private sins of lust and slander.
- We can so easily celebrate **the blessing of forgiveness** but justify holding grudges against people who hurt us.
- Some doctrines are **more appealing** to us than others. Forgiveness and grace finds far more acceptance than the wrath of God and hell.

All these inconsistencies are but symptoms of **spiritual disease** and a heart secretly dissatisfied.

It must leave and lead us to see that **we cannot trust ourselves or others** in matters of life and conscience.

Like the religious leaders back then **we too need** something or someone other than ourselves to lead us in what is right and wrong and what is meaningful and meaningless.

2 We people need help

Is there **any hope** or do we just blunder along meaninglessly as either victims or perpetrators of each other's deception?

There is a **way forward** apart from having to depend on ourselves...

Pilate's interrogation of Jesus... *v33 Are you King of the Jews...* shows us that Pilate is **examining Jesus** as an alleged enemy of Caesar and of the Jews.

Pilate needed to consider whether Jesus was really in the throes of leading a rebellion, opposing **the authority and rights** of the Emperor?

The Scriptures reveal that **Pilate knew** that was not so ... *Matthew 27:18 For he knew that it was out of envy that they had delivered him up.*

But like many politicians **he plays along anyway** and therefore the direct question from Pilate to Jesus... *v33 Are you King of the Jews?*

John 18:36 Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world.

Jesus confirms that He **has not come** to set up a kingdom which would interfere with the Roman government. *He had no intention of setting up a temporal power, to be supported by armies and maintained by taxes (Ryle).*

The **dominion He exercised** was over the hearts of people. And the only weapons that His subjects employed were spiritual weapons.

Jesus did not come **to overthrow** the Romans... *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 the world."*

Pilate cynically goes on taunting Jesus about being a king. Jesus responds by **establishing and clarifying** one of the most important matters all of humanity needs to grasp...

John 18:37 Then Pilate said to him, "So you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world--to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice."

Jesus provides clarity answering the question...

Are we destined to live in a world where **confusion reigns** or to navigate life in a world where the most powerful person or party or nation determines right from wrong or truth from error?

In a world where we people are **in serious need** because of; multiple and diverse opinions abound, confusion and ignorance permeate societies, lies and deception are the order of the day, and where selective use of consciences is common practice, Jesus came *to bear witness to the truth*.

3 Jesus reveals the solution

On a visit to the **Cango caves** the tour guide switched all the lights off. The place was in utter darkness. It was impossible to know the way out. All of us tourists needed help. We needed light if we had any hope of getting out of there.

Since we were a crowd of people there were **many opinions** as to where the exit was.

Even if the person with the most comforting voice or a person with the most compelling argument made us feel safe; it would still be possible to follow their opinion and step over the edge down into a triple story hole with sharp pointed rocks at the bottom.

But then **the lights** were switched on. Similarly in a world where darkness and deception abounds Jesus came to switch the lights on.

He did not come to win a kingdom with a sword and to gather followers by force. He came armed with no other weapon but "truth".

The first implication from this mission statement by Jesus to Pilate...

3.1 Truth exists

There is such a thing as objective truth. There is **truth that exists** outside of your and my mind. It is truth that we don't or cannot create or even modify or control. It is something we discover.

Contrary to present day thinking and practice Jesus confirms the reality of Absolute truth.

You will have discovered that if you claim amongst your colleagues or class mates that there is absolute truth – one truth that everyone should follow; you will very likely be considered **misguided and immoral**.

Some people will accuse you of being misguided because they say **there is no God** to give absoluteness to truth. Or, they say that if there is a God there is no way of knowing what he thinks anyway.

Some people will say **you are immoral** if you insist that there is absolute truth. They see you as immoral because if you are someone who claims that there is absolute truth, you are intolerant and prejudiced about what others think.

As a result relativism has replaced absolute truth. Today truth is seen as **Piper**: "*the rotten root of bigotry, intolerance and prejudice, whereas relativism is seen as the wholesome mother of cultural respect, tolerance and peace*".

To put it simply; if you allow me to take care of my health by removing this undesirable fetus, then I see you respect me and you are a kind tolerant person.

But if you stand on the truth that the fetus is a human being and abortion is tantamount to murder then you are an intolerant narrow minded unkind insensitive fool.

3.2 Truth has been revealed

Jesus came **to bear witness** to the truth. John testifies to this in *John 1:14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

Jesus had earlier **established** that He is the way to God, because He is the truth of God and the life of God.

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

Don Carson: "*Jesus is the truth, because He embodies the supreme revelation of God – he himself 'narrates' God...*

John 1:18 No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.

He (Jesus) says and does exclusively what the Father has given Him to do and say”.

Jesus repeatedly puts the words He speaks in **the unique category** of being God’s words...

John 14:10 Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works.

John 14:24 Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father’s who sent me.

He came **to bear witness** to fallen man the truth about God, the world, sin, judgment, about the need and provision of a Redeemer, about the nature of holiness, about forgiveness and reconciliation, about the glory of heaven and also the horrors of hell...

His witness to the truth, that is, who He is and what He taught and accomplished in what is called “good news” **we have preserved** for us in Scripture.

There is no need **to stumble around** in this life confused or uncertain or ignorant or feeling hopeless and helpless. Jesus came to bear witness to the truth.

Conclusion

I couldn’t imagine anyone with me in the **Cango caves** would continue to keep their eyes tightly shut and keep stumbling around in the dark after the lights have been switched on.

Sadly, many people down through the ages **along with Pilate** have done something even more foolish by adamantly keeping their eyes shut to the light and their ears shut to the truth.

Like Pilate **cynically** saying and believing... v38 “*What is truth?*”

Pilate **turned his back** on knowing the truth. **Andrew Patterson:** “*Six years after this, a complaint was made against him for the way he dealt with a group of Samaritans. He was recalled to Rome, and then exiled to Gaul, where he committed suicide*”.

Let me remind you of **the divine purpose** of the gospel of *John 20:31* *but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*

It is **a wonderful reality** that Jesus came to bear witness to the truth. But it is a scary thing that some people adamantly keep their ears blocked.

I close with **a warning** from the writer to the Hebrews...

Speaking of **the grave danger of neglecting** the great gift of salvation; the writer to the Hebrews urges...

Hebrews 2:1 Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. ... 3 how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard, 4 while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.

What will you do with the truth? Jesus says that *John 18:37 ...Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice. Are you of the truth?*