

# ***THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST***

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

## **THE TRUTH ABOUT THE TRUTH**

### **Introduction by narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:**

*THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST.* Spreading the soul-saving message of Jesus. And now, Ben Bailey.

“What is truth?” (Jn. 18:38). Welcome to our study in the series of lessons about the truth. In these lessons we will be examining certain biblical and/or moral subjects to see what God has to say about them. The most important topic with which we can begin is the truth about truth itself. We live in a world where truth is not all that important any more. What one person feels is “truth” may not be the truth for another person. There is much relativism and subjectivity today. We need to understand that truth is the most important possession that any civilization can have. The writer of the Book of Proverbs said this concerning truth: “Buy the truth and sell it not” (Prov. 23:23). No matter what truth costs us, it is extremely important. Think about it in common terms that we use today. Consider, for example, how truth relates to math. What would we do without certain mathematical truths? How could we know that  $2 + 2 = 4$ ? How would we know what is right and wrong in society? In fact, how could we **know** anything at all if there is no truth? How could we know that we are even here, or that life is real—if there is no truth by which to live in this world?

Thus, let us examine Pilate’s question as found in John 18:38. Pilate (probably with a sinister motive behind his question) asked, “What is truth?” We are going to answer that question by examining from the Scriptures four things that we can know are definitely true. First, God Himself is truth. In 2 Chronicles 15:3 the people cried out to “the true God.” In 1 Thessalonians 1:9, people turned from idols to serve “the living and true God.” Thus, God Himself represents that which is true and right, and that which is not a lie. Second, Jesus Christ is truth. In Ephesians 4:21 we are told that the truth is “in Christ.” In John 14:6 Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.” Third, the Holy Spirit is truth. In 1 John 5:6 we are told that “the Spirit is truth.” Thus, everything the Spirit has given us would naturally be true, which leads to our fourth subject of truth—the Word of God. Jesus said in John 17:17, “Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.” What is truth? In Psalm 119:160 the psalmist said, “The entirety of Your word is truth, and every one of Your righteous judgments endures forever.” God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit (as the Godhead) represent truth. And because they are true, then the Word that emanated from the Godhead (inspired by the Holy Spirit, and spoken by Jesus) is likewise true. Thus, when we talk about truth, we are talking about these types of things.

But how would we define truth today? What are some characteristics of truth? First, we might say that truth is right or upright. In Psalm 19:8 we read, “The statutes of the Lord are right.” In Psalm 119:128 the psalmist said, “All Your precepts concerning all things I consider to be right.” So, when we speak of truth, we are talking about that which is righteous, that which is right, and that which is above the normal standard. We are talking about that which is just and fair. In Revelation 15:3 God is spoken of as a just and true God. So, truth is right, just, fair, and trustworthy. Part of truth is that you can trust it. In Proverbs 3:5-6 we read, “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.” In Job 13:15 Job said, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him.” Because God is trustworthy, Job was going to trust Him.

A second characteristic of truth is that it is not just right, just, and trustworthy, but it also, by its very nature, is perfect and complete. James 1:25 tells us that we now have “the perfect law of liberty.” These are some characteristics that define truth for us. Today, we need to see the need for truth in our relativistic society. There is so much modern-day relativism. People are a lot like Pilate as they ask, “What is truth?” There was a time during Israel’s day when the people were like this. From Jeremiah 7:28 we learn that truth “perished” from that nation. Jeremiah wrote, “So you shall say to them, ‘This is a nation that does not obey the voice of the Lord their God nor receive correction. Truth has perished and has been cut off from their mouth.’” A relativistic society says that truth is subjective. But this is false, and we can know that it is false by using reason. There are certain universal standards that are true and undeniable in every realm of life. In math, anywhere you go in the world two plus two will always equal four. It will never be five or three. It will always be four because that is a universal truth. In science, there are universal truths that cannot be changed. Consider, too, the laws of our government. There are laws that are true, and that cannot be denied. Why is it then that in math, science, and law we understand that there are truths to be found? Yet at times we seem to “remove our brains” and say that in religion there is no truth? God Himself does not change. In Malachi 3:6 the Bible says, “I am the Lord, I do not change.” God does not change. He is constant, and always remains the same. In Hebrews 13:8 we are told that Jesus is “the same yesterday, today, and forever.” Because God is the same, we must understand that His Word is the universal standard for religious truth. This is so important. As we talk about truth and its relationship to matters of religion, we must understand that God’s Word is the universal standard in all matters related to religion and truth. In John 7:17 Jesus taught “If anyone wants to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority.” We can know today that what Jesus said, and what the Scriptures teach, came from God.

As we discuss the Word of God as being our universal standard of truth, we need to remember the words of John 12:48. When we stand before God on the Judgment Day, what truth will judge not just us, but all men? Jesus said, “He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day.” Here we see that truth is what eventually will judge all people. So what do we learn about truth? Truth does not change for a person. Rather, a person must change for truth. We do not change the truth. Instead, we must change our lives so that we can live by the truth of God’s will. Truth is important because of our inability to direct our own lives. We cannot get ourselves to Heaven. The writer of the Book of Proverbs said, “There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death” (Prov. 16:25). Jeremiah said, “The way of man is not in himself; it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps” (Jer. 10:23). We cannot get ourselves to Heaven. Thus, we need to seek the old paths, where the good way is, and there “we shall find rest for our souls” (Jer. 6:16).

Truth is important because it gives us the fundamental answers to life’s greatest questions. The truth of God’s Word tells us how we got here. We are not the result of an explosion billions of years ago from which man arose. That is not how we got here. We are not the end result of a lowly amoeba climbing up an evolutionary ladder. The Bible tells us that we are the creation of God Himself. We are the pinnacle of all that He made. Genesis 1:1 says, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” Genesis 1:26 says, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness.” Thus, God breathed into man the breath of life, and man became a living being (Gen. 2:7). The psalmist declared, “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork” (Ps. 19:1). We are here because God spoke, and it happened!

The Bible also tells us why we are here. It gives us the truth on the fundamental question, “Why are we here?” We are here to glorify God and to prepare our souls for eternity. In Isaiah 43:7 God said, “Everyone who is called by My name, whom I have created for My glory; I have formed him, yes, I have made him.” We are here to fear God and to keep His commandments, which is the whole duty of man (Eccl. 12:13). Our lives are not “all about us.” Nor are they about how many pleasures we can fulfill in this life. Instead, our lives are to be about us glorifying God and preparing our souls for eternity.

Finally, the Bible tells us the truth about where we are going. Not only do we learn how we got here and why we are here, but we also learn where we are going after this life. There are two options. In Matthew 25:46 Jesus said that the evil “will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.” We must understand that after this life, there is a place known as eternity. There is a Heaven and a Hell. If we live correctly, we can go to Heaven. But if we do not, then we will go to Hell.

I also would suggest that the truth is important because it is what sets us free from sin. In John 8, Jesus spoke about the truth and our need to live it in our lives so that we can be free from sin. John 8:32 records, “And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” How important it is for us to know the truth of God’s Word. What can set us free from bondage to Satan? Romans 6:17 says, “But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered.” Obedience to the will of God is what sets us free from bondage to Satan. Do you remember how the Israelites were in bondage to Pharaoh in Exodus 3 and 4? God’s people were not being given the things they needed to make bricks. Pharaoh was a hard taskmaster, and the people were being persecuted. They were in bondage to Pharaoh. But God, through the hand of Moses, set the people free. That is reminiscent of the type of bondage that we receive from Satan—and the type of bondage from which Jesus Christ sets us free. The truth is important because it sets us free from sin, which has had a stranglehold on man from the beginning. Romans 3:23 tells us that “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” Romans 6:23 tells us that “the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” We can be free from sin through obedience to the Gospel. We are made free in order to obey Jesus Christ. Galatians 5:1,13 tells us that we have freedom in Christ—freedom to do His will. So, truth is important because it sets us free from sin.

Truth also is important because of the abundance of error that is being taught today. The devil was a liar “from the beginning,” and many of his kinfolk are still around today, trying to cause others to believe a lie. Listen to what Jesus said in John 8:44.

“You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.”

Like the people in Isaiah 30:10 who said “Speak to us smooth things, and prophesy deceits,” there are a lot of people today who are doing exactly that. The devil is the father of lies. There is an abundance of religious error being taught today. And the truth is of supreme importance when it comes to defeating that error! There is error being taught on such things as salvation. There are so many people who will offer you a host of different ways by which to be saved. If you want to be saved, you must “say so many ‘Hail Marys.’” If you want to be saved, “just believe in Jesus.” If you want to be saved, “Do this...” or “Do that....” But we must set aside all of this type of false doctrine and ask, “What do the Scriptures say?” (Rom. 4:3). The Scriptures are very clear regarding salvation. Acts 18:8 has been called “the Gospel in a nutshell” (“many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized”).

There is so much error being taught today concerning worship. We are told that we can worship God any way we want. As long as it makes us feel good, then it will be all right with God. But worship is not about us. John 4:24 teaches us that we must worship God “in spirit and in truth.”

Truth also is so very relevant to our society today. Truth is relevant to the modern-day moral problems that exist. For example, the Bible has much to say about the subject of abortion. Do you know what the truth of God’s Word is regarding abortion? Look in Exodus 22:21ff. The context is that if two men are fighting, and one of the men causes a pregnant woman to lose her child and the child dies, the idea of “an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, and a life for a life” comes into play. If a man took the life of an unborn child, then that man’s life also was to be forfeited. Why? It was “life for life.” Exodus 22:21ff. clearly teaches that an unborn child’s life is just as important and just as valuable as a grown man’s life. Thus, the Scriptures teach that abortion is not something that God condones. It is not “a woman’s choice.” The “choice” in the woman’s activities resulted in a pregnancy. People must be ready to stand by the consequences of their actions.

The Bible has a lot to say about divorce. We live in a society where divorce is rampant. There are so many people who marry and divorce so quickly. We need to understand, however, that God hates divorce (Mal. 2:16). God created one man and one woman—Adam and Eve—to live together forever. They were the model for marriage. In Genesis 2:24 we read, “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.” The only exception to that is found in Matthew 19:9 (“And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery”). Only the innocent party may remarry. So, God has much to say about the subject of divorce.

The truth also is relevant to problems that people encounter today—whether it be psychological, social, or emotional. The Scriptures have a way to deal with those types of things. For example, in regard to worrying or being anxious, the Bible has much to say. Philippians 4:6 says, “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God, and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” What can we do to overcome the problems of worry and anxiety, which have sent many people on a roller coaster of self-guilt? We can pray to God and ask Him for His help. So many of our problems can be dealt with by the Scriptures. In 1 Peter 5:7 we are told, “Cast all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.” We need not worry, but instead should place our trust in God. We are not to be anxious, but instead must realize that God cares for us and will bless us.

What about discouragement? There are so many people who get discouraged in this life. Did you know that the truth of God’s Word has the answers to discouragement? In Luke 18:1, Jesus said, “Men always ought to pray and not lose heart.” When we get discouraged, what should we do? We should turn to God in prayer. We should let our requests be known to Him and ask Him for His help. Then, we can be assured that God will help us during such times. The Bible also helps us deal with grief. When we lose a loved one, what a horrible thing that is for us. How do we deal with problems like that? We need to understand that it is natural to grieve (1 Thess. 4:13). But we also need to understand that Christians are not to grieve as others who have no hope. Yes, we will weep. In John 11:35 Jesus wept at the grave of Lazarus. But our sorrow is not eternal. Rather, it is temporary. We must understand that if those who have died were faithful Christians, they have gone to a better place.

The Bible also is relevant to physical problems. The truth of God's Word, if it were to be obeyed, would solve so many physical problems today. For example, all of the problems that are caused due to such things as smoking (and the lung cancer it causes), and other things of that nature, could be prevented if people would simply obey the Word of God. If we would simply listen to and obey the truth of God's Word, then we would not have nearly as many problems with which to deal as we do. If we would understand that doing certain things to our bodies is harmful, then we would not do such things. If we understood the teaching of 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, which shows us that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, and that we are bought at a price and therefore are not our own, then we would glorify God in our bodies. If we saw ourselves as temples of God, and if we were being good stewards of our bodies, we would never ingest things that we knew would harm us. And think about how much good that would do for our bodies. The Bible also could prevent many sexual problems. The Bible is relevant to diseases such as AIDS (and others). How could those things be prevented? The writer of the Book of Hebrews said, "Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge" (Heb. 13:4). Were we simply to keep marriage honorable, and keep sexual relationships reserved solely for a husband and wife who were trying to live righteous lives and remain holy before God, these problems would cease to exist.

But the Bible is relevant most of all to man's spiritual problems. Can the truth deal with all of these other problems? Yes. But the truth of God's Word is most relevant to our sin problem. In Genesis 3 and 4, Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, and as a result they were cast out of the garden. They had a hard life because sin had come into their lives. They realized that they were naked. And from that point on, man, because of his own sin, has been lost. But God's Word has the answer to such spiritual problems. In Acts 2, the people had crucified Christ. Peter preached to them in verse 36, "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." They were looking for the Messiah (the Holy One). Yet they learned that they had just crucified Him! So in verse 36 they cried out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" They wanted to know what they needed to do to overcome their sin problem. The answer was clear: "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (vs. 37). That is the truth about how to deal with sin. That is what God said about how to overcome such a spiritual problem in our lives.

Suppose, however, that a person is a Christian, yet finds himself in sin. The truth has the answer to that problem as well. In Acts 8, Simon sinned. He was told he was lost, and that his money would perish with him. But he also was given hope. He was told to "repent and pray." He asked the disciples to pray for him. And from that, we know that he had repented, and thus was forgiven. The same is true for us today. If we will repent and get right with God, then the truth can do us so much good spiritually.

Thus, I would like to ask you: Are you free from sin through the truth? Have you really lived your life according to the will of God? Jesus said in John 8:32, "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." Are you a Christian? If not, why not become one today? Becoming a Christian is very simple. The Bible makes it very plain and easy. You must believe that Jesus is the Son of God. In John 8:24, Jesus said, "If you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins." In Acts 8, as the Ethiopian nobleman was traveling down the road, with Philip teaching him the Gospel, they came to a place where the nobleman could be baptized. He asked, "Here is water; what hinders me from being baptized?" Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may" (vs. 37). So, one must be convicted that Jesus is the Son of God. Then a person must be willing to repent. Repentance is probably one of

the hardest steps in the plan of salvation. True repentance means that a person turns from sin and turns to God. We stop doing wrong, and begin doing what is right. Acts 3:19 says, "Repent and turn again." That is the idea. In Luke 13:5 Jesus said, "Unless you repent you will all likewise perish." A person also must be willing to confess the name of Jesus before men. In Matthew 10:32-33 Jesus said, "Whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven." Thus, a person must be willing to say that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. A person must then be baptized into Christ for the remission of sins. In Ephesians 1:3 we are told that all spiritual blessings are "in Christ." In 2 Timothy 2:10-11 we are told that salvation is "in Christ." Thus, we need to ask the question, "How does a person get into Christ, where all spiritual blessings and salvation are to be found?" Galatians 3:27 says, "As many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ." In Romans 6:1-4 we are told that we are baptized "into Christ" (i.e., into His death, burial, and resurrection). So as person must be baptized into Christ for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). Once a person has become a child of God, it is essential to live according to the truth. Every day a person must ask, "Is this what God wants me to do? Am I living in such a way that my life is acceptable to Jesus Christ? Would the way that I am living right now bring glory to God?" Today, I can honestly tell you that living the Christian life—living your life by the truth—is the most blessed way you could ever live. May God bless you as you live your life by the truth of God's Word.

**Narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:**

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## STUDY QUESTIONS FOR “THE TRUTH ABOUT THE TRUTH”

1. In John 18:38, what important question did Pilate ask?
2. What admonition did the writer of the Book of Proverbs offer in Proverbs 23:23?
3. To what type of God did the people of Israel cry out in 2 Chronicles 15:3?
4. In 1 Thessalonians 1:9 the people turned from worshiping idols to worshiping whom?
5. According to Psalm 119:160, how much of God’s Word is “truth”?
6. Ephesians 4:21 speaks of a certain depository of truth. Who or what is that depository?
7. According to 1 John 5:6, who is “truth”?
8. What two characteristics does Revelation 15:3 attribute to God?
9. What does Psalm 19:8 teach us about the statutes of God?
10. In Proverbs 3:5-6, what are we instructed to do?
11. According to Job 13:15, we are able to place something in God. What is that “something”?
12. In Jeremiah 7:28, what sad statement is made about truth?
13. According to Jeremiah 10:23, what is not in man?
14. What important message for humankind is found in Proverbs 16:25?
15. According to John 12:48, what repository of truth will judge us in the last day?
16. What important message for humankind is found in Isaiah 43:7?
17. Truth is important because it sets men free from something. According to Romans 6:17, what is that “something”?
18. According to John 8:44, there is one place where truth is not to be found. Where is it?
19. Acts 18:8 has been called “the Gospel in a nutshell.” What does Acts 18:8 teach that a person must do to be saved?
20. John 4:24 tells us that we must worship God in spirit. But that same verse also tells us that something else must be involved in our worship of God. What is it?
21. According to John 14:6, what is Jesus Christ?
22. What does John 8:32 tell us that the truth can do for us?