

OUR ***TRUTH*** DILEMMA

Our truth dilemma is this ... we humans, who are all born into this world as liars, will at some point come face to face with Jesus who not only declares himself to be the truth but also states that his purpose in being born and coming into this world was to give solemn witness to the truth.

So the truth about the truth is this ... Jesus is the truth and Jesus is the solemn witness to the truth. Our truth dilemma is solved only when we listen to Jesus.



Dilemma — a situation in which a difficult choice has to be made between two or more alternatives; a problem offering two possibilities, neither of which is unambiguously acceptable or preferable.

1. The Jews' Dilemma: How to crucify Jesus while still being perceived as doers of the truth, 18:28-32.

- (John 18:28–32 ESV) Then they led Jesus from the house of Caiaphas to the governor's headquarters. It was early morning. They themselves did not enter the governor's headquarters, so that they would not be defiled, but could eat the Passover. 29 So Pilate went outside to them and said, "What accusation do you bring against this man?" 30 They answered him, "If this man were not doing evil, we would not have delivered him over to you." 31 Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves and judge him by your own law." The Jews said to him, "It is not lawful for us to put anyone to death." 32 This was to fulfill the word that Jesus had spoken to show by what kind of death he was going to die.

A. They tried Jesus in the early morning to "make it legal" since the previous trial was at night and violated their law.

- (Mark 15:1a ESV) And as soon as it was morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council.

B. They took specific actions so as not to be defiled.

C. They were evasive regarding the accusation in order to serve their purpose before Pilate.

- (Matthew 26:65–66 ESV) Then the high priest tore his robes and said, "He has uttered blasphemy. What further witnesses do we need? You have now heard his blasphemy. 66 What is your judgment?" They answered, "He deserves death."

D. They lied in regard to the accusation.

- (Luke 23:1–2 ESV) Then the whole company of them arose and brought him before Pilate. 2 And they began to accuse him, saying, "We found this man misleading our nation and forbidding us to give tribute to Caesar, and saying that he himself is Christ, a king."

E. Their hateful, devil-inspired intent was not merely to kill Jesus but that he would be crucified on the cross and be portrayed as a curse.

- (Deuteronomy 21:23a ESV) ... his body shall not remain all night on the tree,

but you shall bury him the same day, for a hanged man is cursed by God.

- (Galatians 3:13 ESV) Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree."
- (Acts 5:27–30 ESV) And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest questioned them, 28 saying, "We strictly charged you not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and you intend to bring this man's blood upon us." 29 But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men. 30 The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree."

2. Pilate's Dilemma: How to control the story and make truth work in his best interests, 18:33-38a.

- (John 18:33–38a ESV) So Pilate entered his headquarters again and called Jesus and said to him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" 34 Jesus answered, "Do you say this of your own accord, or did others say it to you about me?" 35 Pilate answered, "Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered you over to me. What have you done?" 36 Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. 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." 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." 38 Pilate said to him, "What is truth?"

A. Pilate, ever self-protective, tries to sort out the political ramifications of Jesus' status as king.

B. Jesus makes it clear that the nature of his kingdom is spiritual and not primarily of this world system.

C. Now Pilate seems to have understood that Jesus is a king and asks him directly again.

D. Jesus does not answer directly but states that his purpose for being born and for coming into the world is to be a witness for the truth.

Bear witness ... μαρτυρέω [martureo] ... to be a witness, to bear witness, i.e. to affirm that one has seen or heard or experienced something; to solemnly assert something, offering firsthand authentication of the fact; often concerning grave or important matters.

E. And the truth is that Jesus is a King.

Excursus #1: Analyzing Pilate's approach to truth with the intent of helping us analyze our approach to truth.

- I. Pilate had as his audience Jesus the Christ, the Son of God, who is the truth.
- II. But Pilate distances himself from the reality of Jesus (who is the truth) standing before him by reverting to the hypothetical – “*What is truth.*”
- III. Pilate's fatal error in trying to solve his dilemma was thinking that by some method of human rationalization he could make a right decision regarding the truth.

He weighed his decision on whether or not to follow the truth on what he perceived to be the advantages or disadvantages of receiving and obeying the truth— what will I gain, what will I lose.

- IV. He ultimately decided that giving Jesus over to the Jews was what worked best for him.

Excursus #2: Analyzing our approach to truth in view of Pilate's example and other scriptural principles.

- I. We are finite, fallen, frail humans who were born into this world as liars.
- II. We need to pay close attention to the clear teaching of Scripture or we will not grasp the magnitude of the role of truth in the very fabric of God's universe—both in his created realm and in the spiritual, eternal realm.
 - (John 14:6 ESV) Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”
 - (John 18:37b ESV) 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.
 - (Romans 1:18–20 ESV) For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. 19 For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. 20 For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal

power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.

- III. We must understand that when we reject truth that we are rejecting Jesus and the essence of who he is and the nature of the kingdom of God and his righteousness.

Essence ... the intrinsic nature or indispensable quality of something, especially something abstract, that determines its character.

- A. Lying is always wrong because it is contrary to the truthful nature of God and his universe.
- B. Lying in any and every form is choosing to affirm a reality that ultimately rejects Jesus—who he is, what he stands for.
- C. Lying is always contrary to the truth.
- D. Lying runs contrary to the essential nature of God's universe ... no exceptions ... not Rahab (Joshua 2:4-5), not the Hebrew midwives (Exodus 1:15-21), not Corrie ten Boom, not you and not me.
- IV. It is important to understand that the person who does not listen to Jesus does not know Jesus.
 - (John 10:27 ESV) My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.
 - (John 10:16a ESV) And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice.
 - (John 5:25 ESV) Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live.
 - (John 10:3–4 ESV) To him the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. 4 When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice.
- V. We must be prepared to be treated like Jesus who is our teacher and master when we listen to him and speak his truth and follow him.
 - (Matthew 10:24–25 ESV) A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. 25 It is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household.

VI. We must not allow the fear of people to put us in "decision mode" as opposed to simple obedience.

- (Proverbs 29:25 NLT) **Fearing people is a dangerous trap, but trusting the Lord means safety.**
- (Matthew 10:26–28 ESV) **So have no fear of them**, for nothing is covered that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. 27 What I tell you in the dark, say in the light, and what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops. 28 **And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul.** Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

A. Everything will one day be revealed.

B. We must proclaim every truth God speaks to us.

C. We must not suppress the truth by omission because we fear people.

VII. We must fully embrace and properly display the truth we are given.

- (Mark 4:21–25 NLT) Then Jesus asked them, **"Would anyone light a lamp and then put it under a basket or under a bed? Of course not! A lamp is placed on a stand, where its light will shine.** 22 For everything that is hidden will eventually be brought into the open, and every secret will be brought to light. 23 **Anyone with ears to hear should listen and understand.**" 24 Then he added, **"Pay close attention to what you hear.** The closer you listen, the more understanding you will be given—and you will receive even more. 25 **To those who listen to my teaching, more understanding will be given. But for those who are not listening, even what little understanding they have will be taken away from them."**

A. We must never lower the truth to a subordinate position—in effect removing it from its stand and limiting the scope of its light-giving influence.

B. The person tempted to do this is now warned that he will one day be exposed.

C. We are able to avoid lowering God's truth to a subordinate position by paying close attention so that if we have ears to hear we will hear.

D. The person who does not pay close attention to the truth will lose the truth he or she has.

3. Pilate never solved his truth dilemma and gave in to those demanding the death of Jesus, 18:38b–40.

- (John 18:38b–40 ESV) After he had said this, he went back outside to the Jews and told them, **"I find no guilt in him.** 39 But you have a custom that I should release one man for you at the Passover. **So do you want me to release to you the King of the Jews?"** 40 They cried out again, "Not this man, but Barabbas!" Now Barabbas was a robber.

A. He knew the truth in this matter.

B. His guilt was in not doing the truth.

C. He tried to free himself from blame.

D. He continued loving darkness rather than light.

CONCLUSION: Strive to believe God ... to solve your truth dilemma ... and to win your fight for truth ...

- (Luke 13:23–24 ESV) And someone said to him, **"Lord, will those who are saved be few?"** And he said to them, 24 **"Strive to enter through the narrow door. For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able."**

Strive ... ἀγωνίζομαι [agonizomai] ... to enter a contest; to contend with adversaries; to fight, to exert much effort or energy.

A. Striving here is the fight in our mind and heart to believe God and turn away from our own truth.

B. It is the battle over who to believe — God or ourselves or other humans.

C. To win we must believe God and not the liars.

D. To win we must listen to Jesus who is the truth and who came into our world to witness to the truth.

- (Hebrews 1:1–2a ESV) Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, **but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son.**

E. Only those who hear the voice of Jesus and believe in him win this fierce battle and find the path of life.

F. And only as Jesus followers who keep hearing him and keep keeping his word do we bring glory to God.