



Almont Vineyard Church

Week 11 Sermon Series: The Sandals of Jesus/The Truth

August 22, 2026

Opening Monologue

This week we continue our Summer Series titled: “The Sandals of Jesus.”

If you missed any sermons, here’s the link to our YouTube

Channel- <https://www.youtube.com/@almontvineyardchurch>. You can also find the sermon right here in this App.

This week I titled the sermon “What is Truth?”

Have you ever stood at a crossroads and said to yourself, “Which way do I go?”

That’s exactly where a lot of people are living right now. Not just geographically lost, but truth lost. Our world is seriously confused about what truth even is. In fact, it looks a lot like the Roman Empire did in the days of Pontius Pilate.

Before Jesus went to the cross, He was brought before Pilate. And in that moment Pilate asked a real and raw question that humanity is still asking and seeking today: “What is truth?”

In the Roman Empire, truth was whatever Rome wanted it to be.

Truth was whatever society thought was best.

Truth could be found in endless philosophical discussions and debates.

In my observation and opinion, the United States is right where the Roman Empire was just before its collapse. Right now, truth in America is whatever society thinks is best.

Some people, scientists, and medical doctors don’t even know if a man can become pregnant. “What is a woman?” has become a mind-blowing question that stumps professionals.

Hear me... the world is trying to suck you into that confusion.

But Jesus looked Pilate in the eye and said, “I came into the world to testify to the truth.”

The Greek word for “testify” means someone who has seen or experienced something and then declares it to others. Scholars put it this way: When Jesus says He came to testify to the truth, He’s claiming to be an eyewitness to the truth itself—speaking from intimate knowledge rather than hearsay or speculation.

Think about that for a moment.

Jesus was an eyewitness of the heavenly realm.

An eyewitness to creation. And so MUCH More!

In fact, Jesus brought a piece of heaven to earth when He was here.

And then He declared His testimony with these words: “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” John 14:6

This Sunday we're going to dive further into God's Word and pull out more truth—because the divine Word of God is truth, and that truth sets us free (John 8:32).

In Christ,
Rev. Pastor Brad

To Listen to this week's Sermon: "Week 11 Summer Series: The Sandals of Jesus/The Truth " Go to the Sermon tab here in our APP or use the links to our website or YouTube Channel where you can also listen to our Sermons:

Web: <https://www.almontvineyardchurch.org/media>

You Tube: <https://www.youtube.com/@almontvineyardchurch>

Key Sermon Text

John 18:33-38

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John%2018%3A33-38&version=NIV>

John 14:6

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John%2014%3A6&version=NIV>

Romans 1:18-25

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans%201%3A18-25&version=NIV>

Jeremiah 23:29

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Jeremiah%2023%3A29%20&version=NIV>

Hebrews 4:12

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hebrews%204%3A12%20&version=NIV>

2 Timothy 3:16-17

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2%20Timothy%203%3A16-17&version=NIV>

Commentary, Spiritual Applications, and Theological Reflections

What is Truth?

Jesus proclaimed in John 14:6, "I am the way and the truth and the life." He made this bold claim not long before He was arrested and brought before Pontius Pilate. You can read the full exchange in John 18:33-38.

The heart of the moment is found in Jesus' words: "I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me." (John 18:37b)

The Weight of the Word "Testify"

The Greek word for "testify" is martyreō (μαρτυρέω). It means to bear witness based on direct knowledge or personal experience. It comes from martys (μάρτυς)—a witness who has seen something and declares it.

When Jesus says He came to testify to the truth, He is not offering an opinion. He is claiming to be an eyewitness to truth itself. He speaks from intimate, firsthand knowledge.

In John's Gospel this language is repeated with force. Jesus says, "We speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen" (John 3:11). His testimony carries authority because it comes from direct experience, not secondhand information. When challenged about testifying concerning Himself, Jesus answers that His testimony is true "because I know where I came from and where I am going" (John 8:14).

This is the testimony of the One who stepped out of heaven and came to earth (John 1). Jesus has seen the truth from the beginning—if there is a beginning to time. He has seen the heavenly realm, and He expressed that realm on earth. That is why He taught us to pray, "Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

Through signs, wonders, and miracles, Jesus broke off pieces of heaven and brought them into our broken world. The blind received sight. The lame walked. The dead were raised. Storms were stilled. In every miracle we catch a glimpse of what heaven is truly like—a place where God's perfect will is fully done.

Truth That Enters a Life

When a person comes to the saving grace of Jesus Christ, truth itself enters their life and mind. Jesus said, "Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:32).

Only in Jesus Christ do we truly understand and see the truth. Christianity is not simply one of the better religious options available in the world. It is the only presentation of the truth that ultimately makes sense.

We have a Bible that covers approximately 6,000 years of history. It has been tested and has proven itself historically accurate—not only through archaeology, but through hundreds of prophecies and their precise fulfillments. We have a God who said He would die for humanity. Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ did exactly that—He died and rose again, just as the prophets said He would and just as He Himself declared.

There is no guesswork here.

There is no "I really hope this works out."

There is Jesus Christ and His holy Word—truth that has stood the test of time and continues to prove itself over and over again. It is a historical fact.

Jesus came to testify to the truth.

Everyone on the side of truth listens to Him.

Resource: 1-2

Evidence of the Truth

The Christian faith does not rest on private feelings or religious speculation. It rests on public events that took place in history. Two of the strongest pillars supporting that claim are the historical evidence for the resurrection of Jesus and the growing body of archaeological discoveries that confirm the reliability of the biblical record.

Historical Evidence for the Resurrection of Jesus

The death of Jesus by crucifixion under Pontius Pilate is one of the most widely accepted facts of ancient history. Multiple non-Christian sources from the first and second centuries confirm key details about His life, death, and the movement that followed Him.

- Thallus (mid-1st century, writing around AD 52) is one of the earliest non-Christian writers connected to the events surrounding Jesus. Though his original history is lost, the Christian chronographer Julius Africanus (c. AD 221) quotes him regarding the darkness that fell at the time of the crucifixion. Thallus tried to explain the darkness as a solar eclipse—an explanation Africanus noted was impossible at the time of the Passover full moon.
- Flavius Josephus, the Jewish historian (AD 37–c. 100), wrote in *Antiquities of the Jews* (around AD 93) that Jesus was a wise man who performed surprising deeds, was condemned to the cross by Pilate at the urging of the Jewish leaders, and that His followers reported He appeared to them alive again on the third day. In a separate, widely accepted passage, Josephus refers to “James, the brother of Jesus who was called Christ.”
- Mara bar Serapion, a Syrian Stoic, wrote a letter to his son sometime after AD 73. He compares the deaths of Socrates, Pythagoras, and “the wise king” of the Jews. He notes that after the Jews executed their wise king, their kingdom was abolished, yet the wise king lived on in the teachings he had given—language widely understood as a reference to Jesus.
- Tacitus, one of Rome’s greatest historians (c. AD 56–120), recorded in his *Annals* (written about AD 116) that “Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus.”
- Pliny the Younger, a Roman governor (c. AD 61–113), wrote to Emperor Trajan around AD 112 that Christians gathered regularly and sang hymns “to Christ as to a god.”
- Suetonius, another Roman historian (c. AD 69–122), refers to early disturbances in Rome connected with “Chrestus.”

Phlegon (early 2nd century) is cited by both Julius Africanus and Origen. He recorded a great darkness and earthquake during the reign of Tiberius. Origen also notes that Phlegon ascribed to Jesus a knowledge of future events and testified that the results matched His predictions.

- Lucian of Samosata, a Greek satirist (c. AD 115–200), wrote scornfully of Christians in *The Death of Peregrinus*. He refers to the man who was crucified in Palestine, the founder of the Christian movement, whom His followers continued to worship. Lucian notes their strong belief in immortality and their willingness to die for their faith.

These writers were not Christians. Several were openly hostile or dismissive of the movement. Yet they independently confirm that Jesus lived, was executed under Pontius Pilate, and that His followers continued to proclaim Him with deep conviction, even worshiping Him as divine.

Lee Strobel’s investigation in *The Case for Christ* highlights additional powerful evidence. Scholars have identified an early Christian creed preserved in 1 Corinthians 15:3-8 that dates to within a few years of the crucifixion itself. It states that Christ died for our sins, was buried, was raised on the third day, and appeared to Peter, the Twelve, more than five hundred people at one time, James, and others. The transformation of the disciples—from fear and hiding to bold, public proclamation even under threat of death—further supports their sincere belief that they had encountered the risen Jesus.

Taken together, the non-Christian testimony, the early creed, the empty tomb, and the changed lives of the first witnesses form a strong historical case that Jesus rose from the dead.

Archaeological Evidence Confirming Biblical Accuracy

Archaeology does not “prove” every spiritual claim of the Bible, but it repeatedly confirms that the people, places, and events described in Scripture fit the real world of ancient history.

Some of the most significant discoveries include:

- The Merneptah Stele (c. 1208 BC), discovered in 1896, contains the earliest extra-biblical reference to “Israel” as a people already living in Canaan.
- The Tel Dan Inscription (9th century BC), found in 1993–94, refers to the “House of David”—the earliest non-biblical mention of King David as the founder of a royal dynasty.
- The Dead Sea Scrolls, discovered beginning in 1947, include manuscripts of nearly every Old Testament book dating from the third century BC to the first century AD. They demonstrate the remarkable accuracy of the biblical text over more than a thousand years of transmission.
- The Pontius Pilate Inscription, uncovered in 1961 at Caesarea Maritima, names “Pontius Pilate, Prefect of Judea,” confirming the historical existence and official title of the Roman governor who sentenced Jesus.
- The Pool of Siloam, more fully excavated in recent decades, matches the location described in John 9 where Jesus healed the man born blind.
- Other finds, such as Hezekiah’s Tunnel and the Ketef Hinnom silver amulets (containing the priestly blessing of Numbers 6 and dating to the late seventh or early sixth century BC), continue to align with the biblical narrative.

From the oldest inscriptions to more recent excavations, the archaeological record consistently supports the historical framework of Scripture.

A Reflection on the Evidence

The resurrection of Jesus is not a legend that grew up centuries later. It is rooted in early testimony, confirmed by hostile and neutral historians, and proclaimed by people who were willing to die for what they had seen. The Bible itself is not a collection of myths disconnected from real history. Time and again, archaeology has shown that its people, places, and events belong to the actual world of the ancient Near East and the first-century Roman Empire.

These two lines of evidence—historical and archaeological—do not replace faith. They support it. They remind us that the God of the Bible has acted in real time and space. The same Jesus who was crucified under Pontius Pilate is the One the early witnesses declared to be risen. The same Scriptures that have been carefully preserved and repeatedly confirmed by the spade continue to speak with authority. The evidence points to a truth that stands outside of us and invites our response.

Sources: 3

10 Historical Finds by Dr. Jeremiah Johnston

Expanded from his research in The Jesus Discoveries

Here is a clear summary of each of the ten finds as presented in Dr. Jeremiah Johnston's work, along with the key evidence he highlights:

NOTE: For Deeper understanding of research and details. I suggest reading the book or watching one of his YouTube videos <https://youtu.be/rKMqY49py4w?is=enijwUNidw75e0-D>

1. The Shroud of Turin

Johnston presents the Shroud as the most studied archaeological artifact in the world. Key points he emphasizes include:

- The image is of a real crucified man whose wounds align closely with the Gospel passion accounts (scourge marks consistent with a Roman flagrum, puncture wounds on the scalp matching a crown of thorns, nail wounds through the wrists, a side wound between the ribs, and shoulder abrasions).
- Scientific testing (including the 1978 STURP investigation) concluded the image is not the product of an artist; there is no paint, dye, or pigment. The image exists only on the topmost fibers.
- High bilirubin levels in the bloodstains are consistent with severe trauma.
- Pollen evidence points to plants from the Jerusalem region that bloom in the spring.
- Johnston notes that the 1988 carbon-dating results (which dated the cloth to the Middle Ages) have been challenged due to possible contamination of the sample area. Newer research methods have suggested a much earlier date.

2. The Ancient World of "Healing Magic"

Johnston argues that Jesus' reputation as a healer and exorcist is confirmed by non-Christian sources.

- He highlights the so-called "Magician's Cup" (or "Jesus Cup"), recovered from the harbor of Alexandria and dated to the first century. The Greek inscription has been translated by some as invoking "Christ the magician" or "through Christ the chanter."
- References to Jesus appear in the Greek Magical Papyri and later Jewish Aramaic incantation bowls, where His name is invoked for power.
- Even hostile Jewish sources (such as the Tosefta and Talmud) accuse Jesus of practicing magic and leading Israel astray—charges that indirectly confirm He was widely known for performing extraordinary acts.

3. The James Ossuary

This limestone bone box, which surfaced on the antiquities market in 2002, bears the Aramaic inscription: "James, son of Joseph, brother of Jesus."

- Johnston notes that the practice of secondary burial in ossuaries was common among Jews in the first century.
- Epigrapher André Lemaire and others have argued that the inscription fits the style of the period before AD 70.
- If authentic in full, it would be the earliest archaeological artifact naming Jesus of Nazareth in connection with His family. Johnston connects it to the historical James who led the Jerusalem church and was executed in AD 62 (as recorded by Josephus).

4. The Early Skeptics, Detractors, and Apologists

Johnston examines early non-Christian and critical voices that still affirm basic facts about Jesus.

- Hostile sources (including later Talmudic traditions and pagan critics) acknowledge Jesus' existence, His execution, and the devotion of His followers.
- These early critics did not claim Jesus never lived; instead, they argued about the meaning of His life and death. Johnston uses this to show that the basic historical outline was not disputed even by opponents.

5. The Pontius Pilate Affirmations

Johnston highlights multiple archaeological confirmations of Pontius Pilate:

- The Pilate Stone discovered in 1961 at Caesarea Maritima, bearing a Latin inscription that names "Pontius Pilatus" as Prefect of Judea.
- A copper-alloy ring found at Herodium and re-examined in 2018 that bears the Greek name "Pilato."
- These finds confirm the existence and official title of the Roman governor who sentenced Jesus, matching the New Testament accounts.

6. The "King of the Jews" Inscription

Johnston focuses on the titulus—the placard placed above Jesus on the cross.

- The Gospels record that it read "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews" and was written in Hebrew, Latin, and Greek.
- Johnston treats this as the earliest written identification of Jesus and notes its historical plausibility under Roman practice. He also points to later artistic and numismatic representations (such as the gold solidus of Justinian II) that continue the tradition of depicting Christ with this title.

7. The Magdalen Papyrus

These three small fragments of the Gospel of Matthew (catalogued as P64) are housed at Magdalen College, Oxford.

- They contain portions of Matthew 26.
- While most scholars date them to the late second century, some earlier proposals suggested a first-century date. Johnston emphasizes that even the more conservative dating still places these among the earliest surviving New Testament fragments, showing that the Jesus tradition was written down and circulating while eyewitnesses were still alive.

8. The Palatine Graffito

Also known as the Alexamenos Graffito, this crude piece of graffiti was discovered on the Palatine Hill in Rome.

- It depicts a man worshiping a crucified figure with a donkey's head, with the Greek inscription roughly translating to "Alexamenos worships his god."
- Johnston notes that this is one of the earliest visual representations of crucifixion and shows that outsiders mocked Christians for worshiping a crucified man—indirectly confirming that the crucifixion and the worship of Jesus were already well known in the second century.

9. The Works of Josephus

Johnston draws on the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus (writing in the 90s AD).

- Josephus refers to Jesus as a wise man who performed surprising deeds, was crucified under Pilate, and whose followers continued after His death.
- He also mentions "James, the brother of Jesus who was called Christ."

- Johnston treats Josephus as a near-contemporary non-Christian source who independently confirms core elements of the Gospel story.

10. The Dead Sea Scrolls

Discovered beginning in 1947 near Qumran, the scrolls contain manuscripts of nearly every Old Testament book, dating from the third century BC to the first century AD.

- Johnston emphasizes that they demonstrate the remarkable accuracy of the Hebrew Scriptures that Jesus knew and fulfilled.
- They also illuminate the Jewish world of the first century—messianic expectation, purity concerns, and scriptural interpretation—providing crucial background for understanding Jesus’ ministry and claims.

These ten finds, according to Johnston, do not replace the New Testament witness. Instead, they place Jesus firmly in the real historical world of the first century and strengthen the case that the core claims about His life, death, and the movement that followed Him are grounded in verifiable history.

Sources: 4

Important

This is a Summary that just scratches the surface. Watch Dr Johnstons presentation on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/rKMQY49py4w?is=enjjwUNidw75e0-D>

Commentary on Main Passages

JESUS STANDS TRIAL BEFORE PILATE / 18:28–38

The same rooster that announced the third denial of Peter also welcomed the day that Jesus was to be crucified. John gives us none of the details of Jesus’ further questioning before Caiaphas, since the two parts of the preliminary “trial” were perfunctory and repetitious. The faces changed, but the false accusations remained the same.

Early morning found Jesus and his accusers at Pilate’s gate demanding an audience. Roman permission to crucify Jesus was an inconvenient requirement, but it did allow the leaders to shift any blame for murder on to the foreign occupiers. In short, the Jewish leaders were eliminating one enemy and framing another for the death.

Pilate did not welcome the manipulation. He quickly concluded that the charges against Jesus were groundless. But he was also clearly puzzled that Jesus refused to defend himself. The imperial representative of Rome found himself uncomfortably pressed between a rock and a hard place.

Jesus’ Trial and Crucifixion. Jesus was taken from trial before the Jewish Sanhedrin to trial before the Roman governor, Pilate, in Pilate’s palace. Then Pilate sent him to Herod (Luke 23:5–12), but after questioning Jesus, Herod returned Jesus to Pilate. Responding to threats from the mob, Pilate finally turned Jesus over to be crucified.

THE EARLIEST MANUSCRIPT

Here is an interesting historical fact about this section in John’s Gospel: the earliest extant manuscript of the New Testament is dated A.D. 110–125. This papyrus manuscript, containing John 18:31–33 on one side and 18:37–38 on the other, must have been one of the very earliest copies of John’s Gospel. This manuscript

testifies to the fact that the autograph of John's Gospel must have been written before the close of the first century.

18:28 Then the Jews led Jesus from Caiaphas to the palace of the Roman governor. This palace was also called the Praetorium, the headquarters of the governor of the province—in this case, Pilate.

By now it was early morning, and to avoid ceremonial uncleanness the Jews did not enter the palace; they wanted to be able to eat the Passover. If we understand the Last Supper to have been at the same time as the Passover meal (see introduction to chapter 13), then this refers to the week of Passover and/or the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which was also commonly called the Passover. By Jewish law, entering the house of a Gentile would cause a Jewish person to be ceremonially defiled. As a result, the Jew could not take part in worship at the temple or celebrate the feasts until he or she was restored to a state of "cleanness." Afraid of being defiled, these men stayed outside the house where they had taken Jesus for trial—it was not against the law to be in the courtyard or on a porch. They kept the ceremonial requirements of their religion while harboring murder and treachery in their hearts. Because the Jews were outside, Pilate had to come out to them.

Although Jesus' trial lasted less than 18 hours, he was taken to six different hearings.

18:29–31 So Pilate came out to them and asked, "What charges are you bringing against this man?" This Roman governor, Pilate, was in charge of Judea (the region where Jerusalem was located) from A.D. 26–36. Pilate was unpopular with the Jews because he had taken money from the temple treasuries to build an aqueduct. Pilate resided in Caesarea, but he came to Jerusalem during the major feasts in order to handle any riots or insurrections that might take place. Passover was a very important feast to the Jews as they remembered their freedom from bondage in Egypt. Such thoughts could bring their desire for freedom from Roman occupation to a fever pitch.

Indeed, rebellions were occurring all over the country—Barabbas, the man who would be released in place of Jesus, had been imprisoned because of his part in a rebellion.

So to go to Pilate, these Jewish leaders must have been really desperate to get rid of Jesus. Normally, the Jews would never turn one of their own people over to the hated Romans. Pilate must have known about their charges against Jesus, for he had to give permission to the Roman soldiers to participate in Jesus' arrest (18:3). If Jesus was going to start a riot or a coup, then it was best that he be brought into custody.

But Pilate realized that something wasn't normal about this case. He must have sensed the jealousy of the Jewish leaders who brought this popular teacher to him. Pilate certainly had seen or at least had heard about Jesus' glorious entry into Jerusalem only a few days earlier, so he understood the motives of these religious leaders. Therefore, Pilate demanded that they provide a bona fide legal charge against Jesus. The Jewish leaders answered as vaguely as possible: "If this man were not a criminal, we would not have handed him over to you." It was as if they were saying, "You already know the charges—your soldiers helped us arrest him. Now let's get on with this!"

But Pilate, uninterested in the constant squabbling among the Jews, was satisfied that this potential troublemaker was in custody. He had no reason to push the trial any farther, so he tried to dismiss them: "Take him yourselves and judge him by your own law."

But the Jewish leaders persisted and gained Pilate's attention by insinuating that they had already found reasons in their own law for Jesus' execution. According to Luke's Gospel, the Jewish leaders accused Jesus of three things, "And they began to accuse him, saying, 'We have found this man subverting our nation. He opposes payment of taxes to Caesar and claims to be Christ, a king'" (Luke 23:2, NIV). But the Jews needed Pilate to give Jesus a trial because the Jews were not permitted to put anyone to death. Being under Roman rule, the Jews were not permitted to carry out the kind of execution they were planning without the sanction of the Roman government. It seems that "spontaneous" executions like the stoning of Stephen or the woman taken in adultery were overlooked by the Romans. But in the eyes of the Jewish leaders, Jesus needed to be executed publicly. Thus, the Jews needed the Romans to execute Jesus for them.

18:32 This was to fulfill what Jesus had said when he indicated the kind of death he was to die. Jesus knew all along that his would be a Roman execution, for he had predicted that he would die on a cross. Capital punishment for the Jews was by stoning and for the Romans by crucifixion. Jesus had always foretold his death in terms of crucifixion, not stoning (Matthew 20:19).

IT HAD TO BE A CROSS

Jesus sacrificial death was an inevitable necessity for our salvation. But the very means of that death was designated by God in order to accomplish several detailed purposes of God. Among the reasons for the Crucifixion are the following:

- The Crucifixion preserved the accuracy of long-standing messianic prophecies, or typology—that none of Jesus' bones would be broken, whereas stoning broke bones (Exodus 12:46) and that piercing would occur (Zechariah 12:10).
 - The Crucifixion combined the Jews and Gentiles in a conspiracy of death. The responsibility and guilt for the death of Jesus was thereby placed upon the world (Acts 2:23; 4:27).
 - The Crucifixion actualized another Old Testament type, the serpent lifted on a pole as a sign of salvation (John 3:14).
 - The cross also represented God's commanded form of death for anyone who was under divine curse. He was to be hanged from a tree in judgment for his sin (Deuteronomy 21:23; Galatians 3:13).
- God used the cross of Jesus to work out every detail of his eternal plan to accomplish our salvation!

18:33–34 Pilate then went back inside the palace, summoned Jesus and asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?" Since Jesus' enemies had accused him of sedition against Rome (Luke 23:1–2), Pilate asked Jesus if he really claimed to be a king.

Jesus then asked Pilate, "Is that your own idea ... or did others talk to you about me?" If Pilate was asking this question in his role as the Roman governor, he would have been inquiring whether Jesus was setting up a rebel government. But the Jews were using the word king to mean their religious ruler, the Messiah. Israel was a captive nation, under the authority of the Roman Empire. A rival king might have threatened Rome; a Messiah could have been a purely religious leader.

18:35–36 "I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests have handed you over to me. What have you done?" Pilate's response indicates that his interrogation was motivated by the Jews. The impression is that he was merely performing his task.

Jesus explained: **“My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here.”** Pilate asked Jesus a straightforward question, and Jesus answered clearly. Jesus is a king, but one whose kingdom is not of this world. Therefore, Jesus’ followers would not be trying to take control by force. By his kingdom (*basileia*), Jesus was referring to all he had done and would do as God’s Son and all that is under his authority. When believers are born again, they become subjects of this kingdom—a spiritual kingdom. To the degree, then, that believers live out their obedience to Christ in whatever system, to that degree the kingdom of God becomes apparent in this world. Although the final victory has not been won, Jesus planted the flag of his kingdom in this world, and God began rescuing citizens from the kingdom of darkness and bringing them into the kingdom of Christ (see Colossians 1:12–13). The kingdom of God is wherever Christ’s rule is acknowledged by men and women.

NOT FROM THIS WORLD

Jesus’ claim to the throne and his reign are beyond the limitations of this world. The goals, principles, and methods of Christ’s kingdom come from heaven. They are not the invention of evolving people or even of prophets and wise men. The way the kingdom affects our lives demonstrates that it is not rooted in this world. For instance, citizens of the kingdom hold all of life in such high regard that they are ready to lay down their own lives in obedience to Christ for the sake of other lives. Jesus’ kingship requires, not a choice of options for action, but real obedience to a wise Savior-King.

18:37 Pilate tried to get his original question answered (see 18:33): “So you are a king?” . Some versions make this statement an exclamation (see NIV). In any case, the fact that John describes Jesus’ response as an “answer” indicates that Pilate was asking for further clarification.

“You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.” Jesus was the king of a different realm, who had come to earth to testify to the truth. Jesus did not enter the world for any political purpose; instead he came to testify to the truth. There seems to have been no question in Pilate’s mind that Jesus spoke the truth and was innocent of any crime. It also seems apparent that while recognizing the truth, Pilate chose to reject it. It is a tragedy when we fail to recognize the truth. It is a greater tragedy when we recognize the truth but fail to heed it.

YOU MUST DECIDE

Pilate made four attempts to deal with Jesus: (1) he tried to put the responsibility on someone else (18:31); (2) he tried to find a way of escape so he could release Jesus (18:39); (3) he tried to compromise with having Jesus flogged rather than handing him over to die (19:1–3); and (4) he tried a direct appeal to the sympathy of the accusers (19:15). Everyone has to decide what to do with Jesus. Whatever desire Pilate had to free Jesus was negated by his refusal to do so. Pilate let everyone else decide for him—and in the end, he lost.

PILATE HANDS JESUS OVER TO BE CRUCIFIED / 18:38–19:16

Pilate mused on the possibility of truly comprehending “truth” and then declared Jesus “not guilty.” He had no

basis for a charge against Jesus and certainly no evidence that required a death penalty. But it wouldn't be that easy.

18:38 Pilate asked him, “What is truth?” Pilate was cynical; he thought that all truth was relative—it could be whatever Rome wanted it to be. To many government officials, truth was whatever the majority of people agreed with or whatever helped advance their own personal power and political goals. When there is no basis for truth, there is no basis for moral right and wrong. Justice becomes whatever works or whatever helps those in power. In Jesus and his Word we have a standard for truth and for our moral behavior.

How ironic it is that Pilate should ask his question to the one who claimed to be the embodiment of truth. Jesus could have corrected him by saying, “You mean, ‘Who is truth?’” Pilate was never closer to the truth than he was that very moment!

With this he went out again to the Jews and said, “I find no basis for a charge against him.” At that point, Pilate had the power and authority to simply set Jesus free. But he lacked the courage to stand by this conviction in the face of opposition from these Jews and a possible ensuing riot. Problems like that could mean that Pilate would be removed from his position because of being unable to keep the peace. So Pilate tried first to pass Jesus off on Herod, who was ruler of Galilee, the region of Jesus' hometown (Luke 23:6–7). But Herod only mocked Jesus and then sent him back to Pilate.

Sources: 5

John 14:6–9

In one of the Gospel's distinctive “I am” statements, Jesus identifies himself as “the way and the truth and the life.” The three predicative nominatives (way, truth, life), linked by the simple conjunction “and” (kai), could be understood as three distinct but related predications. Yet the explanatory comment that follows—“No one comes to the Father but by me”—indicates that the three predicates are better taken together: Jesus is the way that leads to the Father precisely because he himself embodies the truth and the life that come from the Father (cf. 1:4–5, 17; 5:33; 11:25; 17:3). One may therefore render the claim, “I am the way that leads to truth and life.”

Thomas has asked about the destination and the route (“Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?”). Jesus answers a deeper question than the one posed. The destination is not a physical place but a person—the Father—and the way to that destination is another person, the Son. Jesus functions not merely as an example or road sign, but as the path and the bridge itself: the one who knows our experience and needs, who gives dependable direction, and who supplies the power and protection required for the journey.

The three titles work in concert. “The way” is primary; “truth” and “life” qualify what that way is. Truth here is not abstract philosophy but the true revelation of God that has come through Jesus—the faithful self-disclosure of the Father in the Son. Jesus' teaching contains no falsehood; he embodies the reality of all that God has promised. Life is the very life of God that the Son possesses and imparts.

This exclusive claim rests squarely on Johannine Christology. Because Jesus is the Word, and because he embodies truth, light, and life from the Father, he is also the way to the Father. He is not extrinsic to the

identity of God, not merely one prophet or agent among others who speak what is true. He is God's own Word embodied. God has made him equal and one with himself; the Father has chosen to be made one with the Son. Therefore to know Jesus is to know the Father who sent him, and no one comes to the Father except through him.

The language of "way" (*hodos*) resonates with the Psalms, where the "way" of God is spoken of repeatedly (Pss 1:6; 5:8; 18:30; 25:8–12; 27:11). The psalmist professes to hate every false way because God's word is "a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Ps 119:104–5). In John, Jesus is that Word—the light that illumines the true way to God and so gives life.

Jesus' further remark that "from now on" the disciples will know and see the Father (v. 7) signals the imminent actualization of the conditions necessary for fuller understanding: his resurrection and the gift of the Spirit. These new realities will alter the disciples' epistemological stance so that they recognize Jesus more completely as both the representative and the representation of the Father.

When Philip asks to be shown the Father (v. 8), Jesus replies that the one who has seen him has seen the Father (v. 9). This does not conflate the identities of Father and Son. Throughout the Gospel Jesus identifies himself as the Son, the representative of God who speaks the words and does the life-giving works of the Father. "The one who is sent is like the one who sent him." Yet more is involved: because the Father dwells in the Son and the Son in the Father, Jesus is also the representation of the Father. No one sees God directly except the Son (1:18; 5:37; 6:46), yet there remains a true, mediated vision of the Father through the Son. Because of their unity in work and their mutual indwelling—because they are one (10:30)—to see the Son is to see the Father.

Sources:6-7

Romans 1:18-25

GOD'S ANGER AT SIN / 1:18–32

The remainder of the first chapter paints a picture of the human predicament before a holy God. These verses, when they are read aloud, sound like a list of charges being read in court. All people everywhere deserve God's condemnation for their sin. They know they are not acknowledging their creator and are deliberately disobeying his standards. The consequences have been disastrous. Sin continues to increase. Before detailing God's way of salvation, Paul first sets out to convince people of their lost condition and their need for a Savior.

Paul's description of the case against humanity can be outlined in three steps: (1) Man demonstrated an aversion to faith in God alone. (2) This was followed almost immediately by a diversion from God's way of thinking. (3) This led to perversions in relations with God (idolatry) and in relations among people (immorality). The evidence against humanity requires the verdict of guilty as charged.

1:18 The wrath of God is revealed ... against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth. As God's righteousness was revealed (1:17), so was his wrath. The flip side of God's righteousness is his wrath against evil. Certain aspects of human character elicit God's wrath. It is the response of his holiness to all wickedness and rebellion.

Why is God angry with sin? Because people have substituted the truth about him with a fantasy of their own imagination (1:25). They have suppressed the truth God naturally reveals to everyone in order to believe anything that supports their own self centered life-styles. Ungodliness means lack of reverence for God, even rebellion against him; unrighteousness refers to unjust actions between people. As always, the human predicament has both a vertical and horizontal aspect. Once humans have abandoned God, it will not take long for the effects to be felt in their relationships with each other. The truth is the reality that there exists a God who deserves worship and obedience.

Attempts to suppress the truth recall our earliest ancestors' efforts to avoid discovery of their disobedience. When Adam and Eve were confronted with sin, they confirmed their rebellion by denying and excusing their wrongdoing. That tendency to cover up is still prevalent today. It takes the gospel, backed up by the effective working of God's Spirit to bring men and women to the place of confession and forgiveness.

God cannot tolerate sin because his nature is morally perfect. He cannot ignore or condone such willful rebellion. He wants to remove the sin and restore the sinner, but the sinner must not distort or reject the truth. But God's anger erupts against those who persist in sinning.

While we do not have many idol-worshipping religions in our neighborhoods, we do find those who suppress the truth about God. These people

- replace God with the worship of success, property, and wealth,
- demote God by elevating their own homespun philosophies, and
- ignore God by devoting themselves to family, leisure, and career—rejecting his claim on their lives.

1:19 What can be known about God is plain to them. Verses 19 and 20 give four characteristics of the truth as revealed in nature: (1) It is plain and clearly seen—it is visible. (2) It is understood—any wise person who sees the truth will also reflect on it and come to a conclusion about it. (3) It has been since the creation of the world—it is constant, ongoing, changeless. (4) It reveals God's eternal power and divine nature (NIV)—for an understanding of God's love and grace one must look into the Scriptures and at God's Son.

What we can know from creation about God has been revealed by God. The clues to God's existence and character have traditionally been called general revelation. Humans have never discovered God on their own. God could have kept humans in ignorance about himself. But he chose to reveal himself, generally in nature and specifically through the Scriptures and Jesus Christ. Because God has made certain facts about himself plain to them, people will someday have to give an account before God of why they chose to ignore his existence and his character.

But how could a loving God send anyone to hell, especially someone who has never heard the Good News of Jesus? In fact, says Paul, in the creation God has revealed himself plainly to all people. Also, everyone has an inner sense of what God requires, but they choose not to live up to it. Put another way, people's moral standards are always better than their behavior. If people suppress God's truth in order to live their own way, they have no excuse. They know the truth, and they will have to endure the consequences of ignoring it.

1:20 God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made. The paradox can't be missed—God's invisible qualities are clearly seen. How? God created the world with natural processes, with cause and effect. In the same way that observing a painting leads a person to conclude that there is an artist, so to observe the tremendous creation

is to conclude that there is a supreme Creator, one with eternal power and divinity. This is part of the truth that unsaved people are suppressing.

Psalms 19:1–4 says, “The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world” (NIV). One look at creation in all its splendor tells people that a mighty power made this world—but not just an abstract, impersonal force; rather, a personal God. Thus, creation shows both God’s eternal power and his divine nature. (Indeed, nature reveals a God of might, intelligence, intricate detail, order, beauty, and power; a God who controls powerful forces. God’s qualities are revealed through creation (Acts 14:17), although creation’s testimony has been distorted by the Fall. Adam’s sin resulted in a divine curse upon the whole natural order (Genesis 3:17–19), thorns and thistles were an immediate result, and natural disasters have been common from Adam’s day to ours. Nature itself is eagerly awaiting its own redemption from the effects of sin (8:19–21; Revelation 22:3).

They are without excuse. Does anyone have an excuse for not believing in God? The Bible answers an emphatic no. God has revealed his existence (or divine nature) in his creation. The fact that general revelation is not effective in convincing humans does not mean it is not true. The argument that design implies a designer is not an argument people can’t accept; it is an argument people refuse to accept. Every person, therefore, either recognizes or rejects God. Does anyone have an excuse for his or her actions? Again the Bible answers no. Each person knows enough about God to be careful of his or her conduct. Those who take the wrong path have chosen to do so. Don’t be fooled. When the day comes for God to judge our response to him, there will be no excuses. We must give our devotion and worship to him—today.

1:21 Although they knew God Their denial of their own awareness of God is what left people without excuse. When Paul says that men knew God he is not describing a knowledge that could save them but a knowledge that simply recognized God’s existence. He was describing an awareness of God, that, if not suppressed would be nurtured by God. The writer of Hebrews spoke of this basic knowledge in stating, “And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him” (Hebrews 11:6 NIV). But since human beings have, in fact, suppressed the truth about God, the following calamities ensued: (1) people could not glorify (worship) a God they didn’t believe existed; (2) people could not be or feel thankful to a nonexistent deity; (3) people’s thinking became pointless, for it lacked a starting point; and (4) the light of truth in people’s hearts went out.

They neither glorified him ... nor gave thanks. When people refuse to recognize God as Creator, they will also fail to glorify or thank him for his gifts—food, clothing, shelter, even life itself. When they neglect God, they open the door to evil. To omit what is good inevitably leads to committing what is evil. Ingratitude may seem like a small thing, but it begins the downward spiral into depravity. To forget to thank God for all he is and all he has done reveals a dangerous self-centeredness. This causes futile thinking and planning, darkness, pride, blindness, and finally total departure from God that bursts into a flood of sin.

Thinking became futile. When God is declared “absent” in human thought, humans lose much more than they bargained for. Truth and absolutes are quickly abandoned. Something or someone must be at the center of life, so humans make themselves central. Then everything they try is futile in giving satisfaction. Like Solomon they discover that everything is “meaningless! Meaningless! ... Utterly meaningless!” (Ecclesiastes 1:1–2 NIV). Living

for self or for some other idol is utterly futile (see Daniel 5:23ff.). When we abandon God, we lose our standard or reference point from which to work. When anything goes, everything is futile.

Foolish hearts were darkened. The heart is the seat of feeling, intelligence, and moral choice. Their hearts are foolish because they refuse to recognize God (see 1:22). Futile thinking is followed by futile living. Then both mind and heart become devoid of light. When confused thinking becomes a permanent mind-set, people are unable to turn to God.

DOWNWARD SPIRAL

Paul portrays the inevitable downward spiral into sin. First people reject God; next they make up their own ideas of what a god should be and do; then they fall into sin—sexual sin, greed, hatred, envy, murder, fighting, lying, bitterness, gossip. Finally they grow to hate God and encourage others to do so. God does not cause this steady progression toward evil. Rather, when people reject him, he allows them to live as they choose. God gives them up or commits them to experience the natural consequences of their sin. Once caught in the downward spiral, no one can pull himself or herself out. Sinners must trust Christ alone to put them on the path of escape.

1:22 Claiming to be wise, they became fools. Paul continues his description of the inevitable results of the denial of God by stating that even though thinking will become futile and hearts will be darkened, some people will still claim to be wise. Without answers based on the reality of God, people seek heroes among those who will boldly say there are no answers. Under such circumstances, it is seen as a sign of sophistication and intelligence to refuse to acknowledge God's existence. But by biblical definition, anyone saying he or she cannot believe there is a God, or refusing to believe in God, is admitting to being a fool. The psalmist expressed it: "The fool says in his heart, 'There is no God' " (Psalm 14:1 NIV). The evidence of God's existence is so plain and clear that to ignore it is totally foolish.

To some people, statements like these by Paul appear to be out of line because they appear to be intolerant of other religions and views. The objection is often voiced in a question: "Well, after all, the point is that people are naturally somewhat religious; so isn't the most important thing not what religion you follow, but that you follow some religion?" The fallacy behind the question is that it still assumes that man is at the center, not God. The emphasis is not on believing what is true but on believing. Paul was speaking in a world that was inundated with gods. He would have been horrified to think that anyone would understand him to be saying that a little religion is a good thing! To Paul, even a lot of religion was bad if it was not true.

Christianity does not try (though some have tried in its name) to legislate people into being Christians. But while Christians know they cannot force anyone to believe, they are, with Paul, unashamed to claim that Jesus Christ is the answer. We may not coerce, but we must try to convince!

1:23 Exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images. Whether they claim it or not, people are religious beings. By their very nature, they are bound to worship and serve something beyond themselves. It may be another idea of God, a person, a thing, or even some false notion that no God exists. Anyone who rejects the Creator will end up worshiping the creature. And how foolish that they turn their backs on the Creator in order to worship something created, something that can die, decay, and disappoint.

Images resembling a mortal human being. In other words, a human being may be worshiped instead of God. But God is immortal—incorruptible, imperishable; the images are mortal—liable to decay. Some of these

images not only looked like humans; they were humans. Such was the case in ancient Rome, where some of the Caesars were worshiped as gods. In our day, modern paganism subtly worships its human images—certain people and their power. Paul shows how the scale of images descends from man to birds and animals and reptiles. Whether the images were created by man out of wood, stone, or metal or are humans raised to the status of gods, they lacked the glory that belongs only to God. These manufactured gods might inspire fear or reverence, but they clearly do not deserve worship. And because they were created by humans, they owe their existence to humans. This places people in control of their own gods. Faced with God's glory, humans know who is in control. This God is not an invention of human thought or hands. He is the one who reveals himself to human beings in such a way that people realize they are, themselves, merely pale images of the majestic being that is God. He alone is to be worshiped.

How can intelligent people turn to idolatry? Idolatry begins when people reject what they know about God. Instead of looking to him as the Creator and sustainer of life, they see themselves as the center of the universe. They soon invent gods that are convenient projections of their own selfish plans and decrees. These gods may be wooden figures, or they may be things we desire—such as money, power, or comfort. They may even be misrepresentations of God himself—a result of making God in their image, instead of the reverse. The common denominator is this: Idolaters worship the things God made rather than God himself. It is a tendency that we must constantly watch for in ourselves.

IDOLATRY CHECK

Here are some questions to help you see if your attitudes are like idolatry.

- Who created you?
- Whom do you ultimately trust?
- To whom do you look for ultimate truth?
- To whom do you look for security and happiness?
- Who is in charge of your future?
- What do you think you can't live without?
- Who do you think you can't live without?
- What priority in your life is greater than God?
- What dream would you sacrifice everything to realize?
- Is God first place in your life?

1:24 God gave them over in the sinful desires. The point that God gave them over is repeated twice (1:26, 28). God left those who spurned him to their own desires. Without his guidance, they degenerated into ruinous moral practices. As Paul's thoughts unfold, he pictures God releasing people to sinful desires, "shameful lusts" (1:26) and "a depraved mind" (1:28). This rush into sinful patterns can be seen in societies as well as in individuals. When people and nations refuse to repent, sin takes over and draws people into a life where there is no sense of right and wrong. Without God's remedy, his righteousness, the end is destruction. Because Paul's purpose is to expound on the "righteousness from God" (1:17), he focuses on present, ongoing consequences of sin, rather than the ultimate results. Here and in the list to follow, Paul is essentially saying, "Look around! The evidences are everywhere that God, in his wrath, is allowing sinful nature to run its course. Humanity is in trouble!"

Sinful desires (epithumia) is not simply a term implying sexual desire. It is sometimes translated “lusts” (1:24 NRSV) and sometimes translated “coveting” (7:7). In the Greek Old Testament, epithumia is used in the tenth commandment, “You shall not covet your neighbor’s house. You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor” (Exodus 20:17 NIV). Sinful desires, then, cover a wide range of lusts. In verses 29–31 Paul continues to list the shocking consequences of human desire operating without godly control.

For the degrading of their bodies with one another. Any kind of sexual behavior that deviates from that originally designed by God devalues the God-given use of our bodies. God does not vindictively cast rebels into sin or stop giving love and instead dole out suffering and punishment. But if people persist in fleeing from God, he loves them enough to grant them their wish, though it is not his ultimate purpose. With the restraints removed, sometimes the consequences of rebellion will cause people to reconsider God.

WHEN GOD LETS GO

In an unexpected way, God proves his love by letting go. If nothing else, consequences prove to us that our choices matter. Like the wise parent, God persistently expresses his love, but not in such a way that obedience becomes a requirement he expects rather than response we freely make. We, like the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11–32), demand our freedom, take for granted all God has given us, and squander our inheritance of life, only to wonder why we feel such loneliness and despair. It may well be, as Jonathan Edwards preached, that it is a terrible thing to be sinners in the hands of an angry God. But it is even more terrifying to find ourselves sinners whom God has reluctantly given over to our own pursuits. Our awareness of sin is a golden opportunity for repentance.

Here Paul introduces the subject of sexual impurity. He returns to it in verses 26 and 27. The context indicates that he is referring in part to cultic prostitution and the fertility cults that made use of temple prostitutes in their rites. Throughout history, paganism has shown a remarkable capacity for substituting the pursuit of sexual pleasure for the pursuit of holiness. Rejection of God is often accompanied by deification of sex or reproduction. Paul, writing from Corinth, the home of the temple of Aphrodite, was surrounded by evidences of the horrible evil of such belief (see also 1 Corinthians 6:9–10; 2 Corinthians 12:21). Because people ignored their innate awareness of godly restraints, personal desire became the standard of behavior. Paul did not hesitate to point out the devastating effects of sin on the most personal aspects of human life. Without God’s righteousness, wrong rules.

WHY IS SEXUAL SIN SO POWERFUL?

The Bible frequently urges believers to avoid sexual sin. Did God, the creator of sex, decide he had made a mistake? Definitely not! God invented sex as a pleasurable part of the unique relationship between women and men, who are made in his image. Like most gifts, sex has proper and improper uses. What was created to be an expression of fidelity, intimacy, comfort, and sheer pleasure can also be the expression of selfishness, betrayal, deception, and manipulation. In its rightful place sex builds self-worth and deepens intimacy. Used wrongfully, it destroys people and relationships, undermining trust and acceptance. Sex is a wonderful gift to be shared by those for whom God designed it.

Because sex is such a powerful and essential part of what it means to be human, it must be treated with great respect. Sexual desires are of such importance that the Bible gives them special attention and counsels more

careful restraint and selfcontrol than with any other desire. One of the clearest indicators of a society or person in rebellion against God is the rejection of God's guidelines for the use of sex.

1:25 Exchanged the truth about God for a lie. Just as people exchanged the glory of God for lackluster images (1:23), they also traded what can be known about God for a deliberate distortion. This lie is the belief that something or someone is to be worshiped in place of the one true God. This is what will ultimately lead to the end of the world—people will follow and worship the man of lawlessness who will lead them to destruction (2 Thessalonians 2:3–12).

People tend to believe lies that reinforce their own selfish personal beliefs. Today more than ever we need to be careful about the input we allow to form our beliefs. With TV, music, movies, and the rest of the media often presenting sinful life-styles and unwholesome values, we find ourselves constantly bombarded by attitudes and beliefs totally opposed to the Bible. Be careful about what you allow to form your opinions. The Bible is the only standard of truth. Evaluate all other opinions in light of its teachings.

Worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator. These people have completely turned their back on God and replaced him with other objects. And what they have decided about God will decide their character and lifestyle. Some people are extremely devoted to their self-made gods. It was to very religious people that Jesus said, "You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire" (John 8:44 NIV).

Who is forever praised. Amen. Although many may refuse to acknowledge God's existence, that doesn't change the truth of his existence and the fact that he will indeed be forever praised. God's worthiness to be praised is not affected by human beings' rebellion or their poor choices. God will be praised forever, though there are many who, by their deliberate exchange of truth for lies, will not be present to participate.

Sources: 8

The Power of God's Word

God's Word is not ordinary speech. It is not merely a collection of ancient religious writings or helpful moral advice. Scripture carries divine life, authority, and power that no human word can match. Across the Old and New Testaments, God repeatedly describes His Word in vivid, forceful images—fire, hammer, and sword—so that we will never treat it lightly.

In Jeremiah 23:29, the Lord asks, "Is not my word like fire... and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces?" David Guzik points out that this statement comes in the middle of a strong rebuke against false prophets. Those prophets spoke smooth dreams from their own hearts, promising peace when there was no peace. In contrast, God sets His true Word apart as something entirely different. Fire does more than give light—it penetrates, purifies, and consumes what is worthless. A hammer does more than make noise—it shatters what seems unbreakable. God's Word does both. It burns away deception and self-deception. It breaks through the hardest resistance of the human heart. The Life Application perspective adds that this is not abstract theology; it is deeply practical. When the Word of God is faithfully spoken and received, it confronts our excuses, softens our stubbornness, and leaves us changed.

Hebrews 4:12 takes the imagery further: "For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and

attitudes of the heart.” Guzik emphasizes that Scripture is not a dead letter sitting on a shelf. It is alive. It is active. It does not wait for us to apply it; it comes after us. Like a surgical blade, it is precise and penetrating. It reaches places no human counselor can touch. It divides what we try to keep hidden and exposes the true motives of the heart—not to shame us, but to bring us into the light. The Life Application insight stresses the personal impact: the Word does not merely inform the mind; it confronts the will and transforms the inner life. Many people can read the Bible and remain unchanged because they treat it as information. But when we approach it as the living Word of the living God, it begins to do surgery on the soul.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 explains both the source and the purpose of this power: “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.” Guzik highlights the crucial phrase “God-breathed.” The Scriptures do not merely contain inspiring ideas; they originate from God Himself. He breathed them out. Because of this divine origin, the Word is profitable in four essential ways. It teaches us what is true about God, ourselves, and the world. It rebukes us when we are wrong. It corrects us when we are off course. And it trains us in righteousness so that right living becomes our new pattern. The ultimate goal is completeness—believers who are thoroughly equipped for every good work God calls them to do. The Life Application emphasis is clear: the Bible is not given so that we can win arguments or collect knowledge. It is given so that we can be changed and then used by God in the real world.

Taken together, these three passages paint a consistent and powerful picture.

God’s Word is living—it has life in itself.

It is powerful—it can break the hardest heart.

It is penetrating—it reaches the deepest places of the soul.

It is purposeful—it equips God’s people for every good work.

This is why we can trust it, submit to it, and build our lives upon it. The same Word that created the universe continues to shape hearts, expose sin, bring healing, and prepare men and women for the work of God. When we open the Scriptures, we are not simply reading ancient text. We are encountering the living voice of God—fire that refines, a hammer that breaks, and a sword that heals by cutting away what does not belong.

Sources:9

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Sermon Notes:

Good Morning and Happy Sunday to Everyone... Welcome to everyone joining us online...

Another week bit the dust... A professor once said to me... Weeks come and go like telephone poles...

Really quick... Tagging off the announcements we have a baptism coming up (people have been waiting).

You can sign up for the baptism and classes on our AVC Connections... (Fall Discipleship Classes)

YouTube, App, Facebook/Website

I'm not sure if you remember this or not... Before the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ he was brought before Pontius Pilate...

I want to read you a portion of a profound conversation they had...

John 18:33-38

Pilate went back inside the palace, summoned Jesus and asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?"

"Is that your own idea," Jesus asked, "or did others talk to you about me?" "Am I a Jew?" Pilate replied. "It was your people and your chief priests who handed you over to me. What is it you have done?"

Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place." "You are a king, then!" said Pilate.

Jesus answered, "You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me." "What is truth?" Pilate asked.

With this he went out again to the Jews and said, "I find no basis for a charge against him."

Pilate asked a real and raw question humanity is still asking and seeking today...

What is Truth?

In the Roman Empire truth was whatever Rome wanted it to be...

Truth could be found in endless philosophical discussion and debates...

Truth was whatever society thought was best.

In my observation and opinion, the USA is right where the Roman Empire was before its collapse...

Right now... Truth in America is whatever society thinks is best...

Listen... Some people, scientists and medical doctors don't even know if a man can become pregnant...

What is a woman... Seems to be a mind-blowing question that stumps professionals as well...

Our world... Like the Roman Empire is seriously confused about truth...

Hear me... This world is trying to suck you into its confusion...

Jesus told Pilate— "I came into the world to testify to the truth."

The Greek word for testify means—someone who has seen or experienced something and declares it to others...

Multiple scholars collaborated about the phrase “testify to the truth” and said this (a remarkable reflection): “When Jesus says he came to testify to the truth, he’s claiming to be an eyewitness to truth itself, speaking from intimate knowledge rather than hearsay or speculation.” (LOGOS Bible)

Think about this for a moment—Jesus was an eyewitness of the heavenly realm, an eyewitness to creation... In fact, Jesus brought a piece of heaven to earth when he was here...

As Jesus declared in his testimony by saying: I am the Way, the Truth and the Life... John 14:6

So what happened to the truth... Why did the Roman Empire collapse and why will this whole world implode soon before Christ returns?

The truth in God’s Word tells us what happened to truth... listen

Read Romans 1:18-25 (In Bible)

Christians wake up if you have fallen asleep at the wheel...

Don’t allow you or your families to experience a spirit of confusion...

Hear me... The Bible is the only divine book in the whole world that carries the eyewitness truth to life.

Here are some quick truths about God’s Word and Jesus:

1. The Old Testament contains 300 specific prophecies about the Messiah coming... Jesus fulfilled the prophecies in precise detail:

- Born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2, Mt. 2:1-6)
- Born of a virgin (Isa. 7:14, Mt. 1:22-23)
- Crucified for our sin (Isa. 53, Gospel Accounts)
- Raised from the dead (Psalm 16:10, Acts 2:22-32)

No other person in history has fulfilled these prophecies other than Jesus Christ.

2. Jesus’ signs, wonders, and miracles reveal the Kingdom of God

- Jesus didn’t just talk about heaven—he demonstrated what heaven’s rule looks like
 - The blind were healed, the lame walked, the dead were raised to life, even storms obeyed Jesus
- Christ’s miracles show us that heaven is a place of total restoration, healing and life everlasting.

3. Jesus stands alone above every other world religion

- It’s a historical fact that Jesus was crucified, was buried and rose from the dead on the 3rd day. (Multiple non-Christian historians reveal this)
- Jesus appeared alive to more than 500 people who were eyewitnesses of this fact

What is Truth? The Word of God is Truth.

I will close with this: PP Jeremiah 23:29

“Is not my word like fire,” declares the LORD, “and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces?”

Hebrews 4:12

For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

2 Timothy 3:16-17

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Remember... Not one of the Lord's promises has ever failed...

Jesus is the Way, Truth, & Life... Do you know Him?

Stand with me / Closing Prayer

Devotional Questions:

For personal reflection and Bible study following the sermon "What is Truth?"

- 1. Read John 18:33-38.** What stands out to you about the way Jesus answers Pilate? How does Jesus' statement "I came into the world to testify to the truth" challenge the way our culture currently defines truth?
- 2. Jesus said, "Everyone on the side of truth listens to me" (John 18:37).** What does it look like in your daily life to be "on the side of truth"? Are there areas where you sense God inviting you to listen more carefully to Him?
- 3. Look up Jeremiah 23:29.** In what ways have you experienced God's Word acting like a fire or a hammer in your own life—either refining you or breaking through resistance?
- 4. Read Hebrews 4:12 slowly.** What does it mean that the Word of God is "living and active"? How does this verse encourage you to approach Scripture differently this week?
- 5. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 says all Scripture is God-breathed and useful.** Which of the four purposes listed (teaching, rebuking, correcting, training in righteousness) do you most need right now? Why?
- 6. The sermon highlighted that Jesus fulfilled more than 300 Old Testament prophecies.** Choose one (for example, Micah 5:2 or Isaiah 53) and read both the prophecy and its New Testament fulfillment. What does this do for your confidence in God's Word?
- 7. Jesus' miracles revealed what the Kingdom of God looks like.** Read one miracle story (such as Mark 5:1-20 or John 9). How does this miracle give you a glimpse of heaven's restoration, and how does it strengthen your trust in Jesus as the Truth?
- 8. Pilate asked "What is truth?" and then walked away.** In what ways are you tempted to ask deep questions of God but then move on without waiting for His answer? What would it look like to stay and listen?
- 9. Reflect on the statement that Jesus stands alone above every other world religion because of His death and resurrection.** Read 1 Corinthians 15:3-8. How do the eyewitness accounts in this passage strengthen your faith that Jesus is the Truth?
- 10. Close by reading John 14:6 and John 8:31-32.** Jesus claims to be the truth and promises that knowing the truth will set us free. Where do you need the freedom that only Jesus and His Word can bring right now? Write a short prayer asking Him to speak truth into that area of your life.