

JESUS CHRIST, WITNESS FOR THE TRUTH

John 18:28-40

Intro: It is not unusual to see bumper stickers that are silly, or even ridiculous, or those that indicate that the driver of the car has some political agenda for which he is campaigning. But every once in a while you see one that is really good and which is intended to get people to think. I have seen one particular bumper sticker which falls into this last category, and I have seen it a couple of times. I am not positive that I am quoting it correctly, but it goes something like this: “IF YOU DON’T BELIEVE THERE’S A HELL, YOU’D BETTER BE RIGHT.”

I attended a funeral a short time ago, and the “minister” who officiated was a lady. The gist of what she said was that everything with all of us is going to be just fine after we die, and that we are all going to be in heaven someday. She didn’t actually say there was no hell, but that is what she was really implying. That makes people who don’t know much, if anything, about the Scriptures, feel good. But is it true? Did she send people away from that service with the wrong idea about what happens to people when they die? There are people who live in a state of denial about any number of things. For example, just because they deny that there is a God, doesn’t mean that there is no God. There are a lot of preachers today who deny the Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, but that does not mean that He was not, or is not, the Son of God. Some deny that Jesus Christ rose physically from the grave, but just because they deny it, doesn’t mean that He just fainted on the Cross and was revived later, or that His disciples lied about what happened to Him and began to spread the idea that He was raised from the dead.

The issue is in so many things, What is true, and what is not true? That is important in daily living. When we are planning on buying anything, we want to know the truth. Honesty and integrity are becoming more the exception than the standards by which people do business today. But the place where the truth is extremely important, is in connection with God and life both now and hereafter. I don’t know how many young terrorists have given their lives believing that by killing the infidels they would be rewarded with paradise and seventy-two virgins to satisfy their physical lusts. But what actually has happened to them? Where are they now? I won’t wait to answer that question because I know that the minute those men died, they realized that they had made a most terrible mistake which could never be reversed. It is always extremely important that we know

the truth. And this brings me to my message for today.

My text is actually the thirty-seventh verse of our Scripture reading for the morning: John 18:37. Before I re-read it, let me briefly review what I have been doing this month leading up to Christmas when we remember the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the third message in this brief series in which I have been dealing with passages which speak of why the Father sent His Son into the world, or why the Lord Jesus said that he had come, or why He had been sent into the world.

In the first message, speaking from John, chapter 1, I brought out that the Lord Jesus came into the world as the full and final revelation of God. All through OT times God gradually revealed many, many things about Himself, His eternal existence, His holiness, His grace, His wrath, and many more of His divine attributes. But it was not until the Lord Jesus came that God's revelation of Himself was completed. Since Christ came there have been no new revelations of God. There is no need for more because He was able to say, "He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father" (John 14:9). So this was one major reason for the coming of Christ – to reveal the character of God.

In my second message I went to John 6, and especially verses 38 through 40 where the Lord said that He "came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me." And then He went on to say that it was the Father's will that He would lose none of those whom the Father had given to Him. And then He added that it was the Father's will that those who saw Him, the Son, and believed on Him, would have everlasting, and that He would raise them up at the last day.

Now the primary text of my third message, the third in this series, is in John 18:37. (Read.)

In John 18 and 19 we have the Apostle John's account of our Lord's trial before Pilate, the Roman governor. Pilate represented the most powerful government in the world at that time. It was the place where the leaders of the Jews were to make their final appeal for the crucifixion of our Lord. Pilate's word would be final.

But as many students of the passage have either asked or recognized, was our Lord on trial, or was it Pilate who was on trial. Pilate represented Caesar and all the power of Rome. But our Lord represented the Father,

and all the power of the Godhead. Pilate had undoubtedly heard about our Lord and His ministry, but had never seen Him before until He was brought before him by the leaders of the Jews. What an amazing opportunity it was for Pilate to stand in the presence of the Lord from heaven! What an opportunity for him to learn the truth from our Lord! Pilate could find nothing in what our Lord had said or done that would be a reason for putting Him to death. In fact, at least twice (John 18:38 and 19:4) he told the Jews that he could find no fault in Him. And yet Pilate saw nothing more in our Lord, nor was he interested in learning more. In fact, he showed contempt for the truth.

The world in which Pilate lived was a world which was just as confused about “the truth” as our world is. It would seem from Pilate’s remark (“What is truth?”) that Pilate was like many people today, convinced that there was no absolute truth, and that everyone had the right to determine for himself or herself as to what the truth is. So his heart was not open to receive the truth from the One Who had come to bear witness to the truth. He did not fall into that category of people whom our Lord described in the last statement of our text: “Everyone that is of the truth heareth My voice.” Pilate’s scornful remark about the truth, with no evidence following that he ever changed, should mean that he was not one of the elect who was chosen by God to hear the truth and be saved.

“The truth” that we are concerned about here is the truth of salvation. It is the message that Christ was sent to proclaim in the world, the message which He had been sent to seal by His own death on the Cross. Man, we know, is religious by nature. He is going to worship something. The Romans were taught to worship the Emperor. Jesus Christ came to bear witness to the truth, by what He taught, by the works that He did, and primarily by the death that He died.

His very coming into the world was a confirmation of the truth of Scripture as so many OT prophecies were fulfilled by His coming. One example is found in Isa. 7:14 where it is written, “Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call His Name Immanuel.” And another is the fact that our Lord was born in Bethlehem instead of Nazareth where Mary and Joseph lived. In Micah 5:2 we have these words:

2 But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.

And preeminently in His death, our Lord gave testimony of the truth of the Word of God, the Word of truth. The whole fifty-third chapter of Isaiah was fulfilled in the death of our Lord.

But our Lord also gave witness to the power of the truth of the Word when He was tempted by the Devil in the wilderness, or desert. In response to Satan's temptation, the Lord in each instance quoted from the book of Deuteronomy, and vanquished Satan by the power of the Word.

More can be said along both of these lines, but it is important to note that our Lord by His coming and in His life on earth gave testimony to the truth of the Word and to the power of the Word.

But let me give you three other examples from John's Gospel which show how the Lord bore witness to the truth, the truth of salvation, the truth of Scripture.

Please turn with me to John chapter 3.

In this chapter we have our Lord's first account with a very prominent and powerful Pharisee by the name of Nicodemus. He obviously was "of the truth." He was not like Pilate who ridiculed the whole idea of truth, but Nicodemus was a man who was not satisfied with what he knew, but he seemed sure that there was more about God that he did not know, but he wanted to know.

The Lord knew what Nicodemus had come, and so the Lord began to speak to him immediately about being born again, or, as the Greek is better translated, *born from above*. We can see from John 3:4 that Nicodemus did not understand even though he was "a master," or teacher, "of Israel." He obviously was one of the main instructors of the Jewish people in that day.

But we are talking about the Lord's witness to the truth. Follow me as I read beginning with verse 9 of John 3. (Read vv. 9-14.)

Our text says that the Lord came to bear witness to the truth, and here it is clear that it was to the truth of salvation which our Lord was to give His witness. If Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, did not understand this basic truth about salvation, what do you think the Jewish people understood about salvation? The Gospel had been buried under a hardened legalism

which never produced a single saint! The Jews of that day, like many Jews and Gentiles today, believed that salvation was a reward for works that they did, not as it really is a heavenly gift bestowed upon repentant sinners by the grace of God. Bible teaching was in total disarray when our Lord came to earth, and He came to revive the glorious truth of salvation by grace through faith in Himself, the Redeemer.

But let me give you another example of how the Lord bore witness to the truth. You will find this in the next chapter of John, chapter 4. This time the Lord was not talking with a Jew. Nor was He talking with a man. But He was talking to a Samaritan woman – a woman who had been married five times, and when the Lord spoke to her she was living with a man to whom she was not married. It sounds a little like our country, doesn't it?

I would call your attention to verse 4 here in John 4. (Read.) I have mentioned this word to you many times. “Must” often means, as it does here, a “necessity arising from the determinate will and counsel of God ... especially regarding the salvation of men” (Vine, III, p. 94). The disciples were not aware that our Lord was on a mission from heaven, but here in despised Samaria was a woman who, in the words of our text, was “of the truth.”

When the Lord revealed to her that He knew all about the life she had lived, this what convinced her that He must be the Messiah. See John 4:29 and what she said to the men of the city of Sychar. But after the Lord revealed what He knew about her, she turned the subject to worship, another subject about which the truth had been buried. She pointed out to the Lord that the Jews believed that God should be worshiped in one place, and the Samaritans had a different idea. Who was right? What would the Lord's answer be? He responded in the words found in verses 21 through 24 of John 4. (Read.)

Here again the Lord bore witness to the truth. The place of worship should not be our primary concern, but the condition of our hearts must come first. Here we are this morning in a building that was not built for worship, but for business. Can we worship God here? Certainly we can! And we have been doing it for years. That is, I hope we are really worshipping God here, not by any forms that we go through, “but in spirit and in truth.” Man is inclined to look on the outward forms, or the place, but God looks on the heart. Read Matt. 23 to see how the Lord denounced the scribes and Pharisees because they were living and teaching contrary

to the truth. The Lord came to turn people back to the truth of God, the truth of the Word of God.

Let me briefly give you one more example. The verse is John 7:7.
(Read.)

The Lord bore witness to the truth by pointing out the true nature of sin. And for this the world hated Him – the religious world of His day, and the social world, and the political world. You and I cannot be true to the Word of God without denouncing sin, and if we denounce sin, the world is going to hate us like it hated our Lord.

Look at our Lord's testimony concerning sin in John 3:18-21.

John the Baptist ultimately was beheaded because he told Herod that it was a sin for him to be married to Herodias who had been his brother Philip's wife. This is what got the apostles into trouble in the early days of the church. They refused to stop preaching the Gospel which has to do with salvation *from sin, its penalty and its power.*

Concl: I am going to read my text one more time as I close. Read John 18:37:

37 Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then?
Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.

Link this verse with two other verses in John's Gospel: John 14:6 and John 17:17. To bear witness to the truth we must be faithful in preaching Christ, and the only way to preach Christ is to preach the Word. Christ is the living Word; the Bible is both the written and living Word. It is only through the preaching of Christ as He is revealed in the Word that saints will be edified and sinners saved. This was our Lord's ministry, and it must continue to be our ministry. May the Lord enable us to be faithful.