

Truth on Trial — John 18:28–40

Big Idea: When the world attacks Truth with lies, power, and evil, Jesus stands unshaken, speaks unashamed, and substitutes Himself for the guilty.

I. Truth's Response to Worthless Accusations

(John 18:28–32)

Key Word: κατηγορέω (katēgoreō) – to accuse publicly, to bring charges.

The religious leaders bring accusations but avoid entering the Praetorium to remain “clean.” Their concern is ceremonial purity, not moral integrity.

Discussion:

1. Why does Jesus not defend Himself against every charge?

2. What does silence communicate about trust in God?

3. When does defending yourself reveal fear rather than faith?

Application:

Where are you tempted to react defensively?

What would “restful restraint” look like in your situation?

II. Truth's Response to Worldly Authority

(John 18:33–38a)

Key Words:

ἐξουσία (**exousia**) – delegated authority

βασιλεία (**basileia**) – kingdom, rule, reign

ἀλήθεια (**alētheia**) – truth, ultimate reality

Jesus does not deny being a king. He clarifies the source of His kingdom. “My kingdom is not of this world.”

Not derived from it. Not sustained by it. Not dependent upon it.

Discussion:

1. How does understanding exousia change the way we view political power?

2. What does it mean that Christ's basileia is “not of this world”?

3. Why does Pilate ask, “What is truth?” What does that reveal about his heart?

Application:

Has politics shaped your tone more than the Gospel?

Are you more animated by elections or evangelism?

III. Truth's Response to Wicked Preference

(John 18:38b–40)

Key Word:

ληστής (lēstēs) – violent rebel, insurrectionist.

Barabbas represents the kind of savior people often prefer — forceful, immediate, militant. Jesus represents surrender, substitution, redemption.

The crowd chooses power over purity.

Discussion:

1. Why would the crowd prefer Barabbas?

2. What does this reveal about human nature?

3. How does this moment foreshadow substitutionary atonement?

Theological Anchor:

Substitution is central to the Gospel. The innocent condemned so the guilty go free.

Cross-Reference for Spiritual Warfare

“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this darkness, against evil, spiritual forces in the heavens.” — Ephesians 6:12 (CSB)

Reflection Questions:

- Are you fighting the wrong enemy?
- Is your battle spiritual — or merely political?
- Are you standing in truth with grace and firmness?