

My truth or The Truth

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Date: 14 March 2023

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[0 : 00] So without any further ado, I'm going to invite Warren up. Warren, come on up. You've got your own mic. How do these work? You're lucky I've turned it on for you already.

Thank you. I know you know a lot more about mics than I do, so we're in expert hands. Wonderful. Now, Warren, you're a journalist. You've been a journalist in various mediums, broadcast journalist. You might call yourself these days, perhaps. Yes. And you're a Christian. Yeah. And basically, thanks so much for coming up tonight.

It's really great to have you. And I've got a series of questions here, and we'd just love to hear your take on these things. So first question.

He has had a little look at these, by the way. I'm not kiboshing him. Right, so Warren, tell us a bit about yourself. Yeah. Yeah. Okay, yeah, my name's Warren. I'm from Dudley in the West Midlands.

[1 : 00] People don't think that because of my accent, but it's true. I say A's rather than ours when I speak generally. And yes, I grew up in a Christian home.

I'm a journalist. I studied Russian and German history mainly at university, which proved to be useful later on, believe it or not.

And then after university, I began my career as a researcher in television. So that meant working on programmes, political ones, historical ones.

And I did things like working with Harry Enfield in Eastern Europe for a month, which was quite fun. Got to travel to the US. And then graduated to doing things like helping to pick out Jon Snow's socks and ties when I became a trainee at Channel 4 News.

Marvellous. Okay, so tell us a little bit more about your early career. Yeah, so after doing my postgraduate master's here in London in journalism, I became a Channel 4 News trainee, which meant learning the ropes in terms of writing scripts and putting stories together.

[2 : 14] When you're at journalism school as well, you learn the fundamentals of journalism in terms of putting a story together. What is a story? But after that, I kind of did Channel 4 News for a while, then moved to the BBC as a producer, became a video journalist and then a reporter at BBC London.

And I was very fortunate that I got to cover football. I covered the Champions League, travelled across Europe, got to see Arsenal a lot, meet players, managers, and it was really fun and exciting. And then I hit the big time when I moved to Channel 5 News. I know you're all big viewers here for Channel 5 News in the south of England. And I moved there and I became a presenter working on the bulletins on Channel 5, presenting those.

And then more recently, I now work at ITV on ITVX, which is a new platform. It's a bit like the iPlayer, but for ITV, and I work on that.

Brilliant. I know we've got some football fans in the room, so I'm sure there'll be a lot of people jealous about you covering football. Wonderful. Wonderful. Tell us more. Now, in your training, what did you do in your training for journalism?

[3 : 23] Well, I kind of mentioned a bit before about how it's important to know the fundamentals of journalism in terms of what is a story, how important something is when it comes to the values of a newsroom or the values of broadcast journalism, and what they are, the legalities, sorry, I should say, of what you can say and can't say when you're putting stories together on air.

So you learn all that kind of stuff. I think a bit later we'll talk about shared values of newsrooms, but you learn something really basic in terms of what a headline is and what's going to catch people's attention, why something is newsworthy, why it isn't newsworthy, why we decide to do certain stories and not other stories, understanding what your audience is.

So, for instance, if you work at Channel 4 News, your audience is going to be very different to Channel 5. And what I mean by that is that Channel 5, our viewers are predominantly in the north of England.

They're older. They perhaps, because the show's at 5pm rather than at 7 at Channel 4, we have more people in the south watching Channel 4 than in the north, because people in the north having their tea are fun.

We have more consumer stories on Channel 5 news compared to 4, where it's maybe more political, maybe more celeb stories on Channel 5. And, you know, that kind of thing you learn in terms of broadcast news.

[4 : 46] I work in broadcast rather than print journalism, so it's a bit different in terms of what stories there are, what the regulations are, what the legalities are, in terms of what you can and can't say. So that's the kind of things you learn.

Now, the BBC has been in the news a lot recently, and impartiality, and it's been hearing the headlines, obviously, Gary Lineker and so on.

Now, does the BBC have a problem with trust, do you think? So there's a stat I saw a few weeks back from Ofcom.

So Ofcom are the industry regulator for broadcast television in the UK. And there's a stat which says that in terms of trust, four years ago, we'll find out 2018, the trust levels for the BBC News bulletins is at 75%, and now it's at 55%.

So it's dropped by more than 20 points, or around 20 points in five years. Now, I don't think, personally, the quality of BBC News, and I don't work there, so I'm being impartial, I don't think the quality of BBC News has deteriorated by 20 percentage points in that period of time.

[5 : 59] I just think that what's happened is the proliferation of different news outlets, the volatility in terms of what's been going on in the world with the pandemic, with various elections, with referendums, has all fed into the idea that people are believing less and less what they're being told.

And because there are now more and more platforms where you can look and get what you want, supposedly, people are choosing not to believe what they're being told by the BBC. Now, I'm not saying the BBC's right about everything all the time, but I would say, in my opinion, it is still a very, very good product, and they do stick by the guidelines.

So, going to Gary Lineker, I just think the BBC have been a bit slow when it comes to adapting to the social media age, and I think because Gary Lineker's back doing his job, the BBC haven't apologised, he hasn't apologised, because they've clearly found, from their own guidelines at this stage, he didn't definitely do something wrong.

It seems their own guidelines weren't really fit for the social media age, and the BBC aren't quite sure how to deal with people like Gary Lineker now, who are social media influences in some ways. He's got, I think, 8 million followers on Twitter. And, in my view, I don't think people looking at Gary Lineker's Twitter feed look for impartial news and analysis. They see him as being a match of the day presenter, and if they are looking for that, then I think you shouldn't do that really, because, you know, you shouldn't.

[7 : 26] But I think the BBC has handled it, management is slow to react, and I just think they need to work out, really, what they're doing with their own guidelines, because there's clearly a difference between being a news broadcaster and being a personality or sports presenter.

That's very helpful. Thank you. Now, truth is our topic tonight. So, as a journalist, what do you think truth is? We're taught that truth is about the facts, and revealing what those facts are to people, our audiences, and being clear about the facts, and reporting them.

So, at a very basic level, as a journalist, as a broadcast journalist, it's my job to just get those facts out, and to do it in such a way which follows an ethical framework, which has been agreed by the newsroom where you're working.

Now, the newsrooms in the UK follow the guidelines of the Ofcom Broadcasting Code. If you really want to look, you can look at Section 5 of the Ofcom Broadcasting Code, which gives you all the things which you're not meant to be doing to ensure that you're impartial, you aren't biased, you give equal prominence politically to various different arguments.

So, when it comes to truth, for a journalist, it's about uncovering what those facts are, and presenting them in a way which is clear. But, and this is a big but, obviously, I'm a vessel, and the way that I present that information is going to be coloured by the way that I present it.

[9 : 06] So, my personality, my character, the way that I interact with people I'm interviewing, my choice of which facts to present, when it comes to a particular story, they're all going to influence what I tell you.

Now, of course, I'm only going to be bound by those editorial guidelines, but there's going to be a degree of personality which comes across by the fat and I person.

So, yes, I do tell the truth when I'm reporting. You can trust me. I do tell the truth when I'm reporting. But that truth is coloured by me, and it is the responsibility of editors and editorial teams to make sure that when we're presenting the news generally, we are doing so in a way which meets those guidelines.

Now, just to finish the point off, when it comes to those guidelines, you may watch a news bulletin, and you may go, that was so biased tonight.

I can't believe they didn't give that Labour politician a hard going, or that Conservative politician, or an SNP politician. But the guidelines work in such a way that it's not just about one bulletin.

[10 : 19] It's about the whole range of coverage. So it may well be that on one night, it's not possible, it's not possible to harangue a Tory MP or a Labour MP, but if you look at the totality of the coverage over a set period of time, it will be balanced.

That's the idea. And would you say in your industry that yours is a common view? Yeah, I'd say it is. I mean, even though we've got new people entering the industry like GB News, and some people say, oh, GB News, they're all fun.

I know some people like GB News. GB News are operating in a way where the Ofcom Broadcasting Code says that you have to provide a certain amount of clearly unbiased regulation meeting news content, this amount each day.

And what GB News is doing, quite cleverly, is sandwiching those periods of time with very opinionated content. So you could have a situation where you're watching a very straight, downline bulletin, and then next to it you'll see Nigel Farage doing a show.

Now, it's becoming, I would say, for GB News, it could be difficult for your viewers to understand that. And they may just take Nigel Farage's view as being, you know, unbiased news coverage.

[11 : 40] Or, you may, or maybe they are very sophisticated to know this. Or, third idea, we're moving more towards the US model where regulation ended, I think, in 1981.

I think when it ended regulation of, like, news broadcasts, of national news broadcasts, which allowed players like Fox to enter in eventually. And they have a very, very, very partisan news ecosystem that we don't have.

So facts themselves, the truth, that shouldn't be negotiable, shouldn't be up for grabs? No, no, no, no. That is the key thing which you're kind of taught at journalism school and also which you're taught when you're working at places like ITM or the BBC or Sky.

You know, the facts themselves are what you are there to convey and to give. It's not about you. Even though, obviously, depending on the kind of show you're doing, reporters may insert themselves into stories in different ways because they need to connect with the viewer for an entertainment purpose or a way of just being able to make the story more accessible.

But generally, it's the job of a television news broadcaster in the UK, two caveats, in the UK, to ensure that they are telling the facts in a way which is clear and obvious and unbiased and not and follows broadcast guidelines.

[12 : 56] Now, obviously, that breaks down sometimes. Yeah. Yeah, it does break down sometimes. But I would say generally in TV news, that's rare.

I keep saying TV news because obviously that's where I work and it's different to working in print journalism. Journalism, but it is rare that you get a breach and when it does happen, you know, it's taken seriously.

Thankfully, I've never made a breach. I'm pleased to say so far in my career. But when it does happen, newsrooms do take it seriously and understand how important it is that trust is maintained because if you haven't got trust, it's very difficult for people to believe that you are delivering the truth.

Now, moving on, we've been told you're a Christian, Warren. Now, tell us a bit about that. Two sources. Maybe how you became a Christian?

Yeah, so I was very fortunate that I was brought up in a Christian home in the Midlands. My parents and my grandparents were all Christians but I had a bit of an odd, well, it didn't seem odd at the

time but I went to two churches on a Sunday when I was growing up because my parents were married and were then didn't agree as to whether she'd go to church.

[14 : 26] So, my dad went to a church in the morning and my mum went to church in the evening. Well, she went, sorry, they both went twice and I would go with them either morning or evening and my dad's church was a flat Pentecostal church, mum's church was a white evangelical church, very different, different forms of expression.

I then went to a Catholic school and then at university I went to Anglican Church University and then in London I went to like a mega church for a while called Hillsong it's like a quite famous I guess I don't know it's a mega church isn't it?

Wonderful. And you put your trust in the Lord Jesus at some point along that journey. Yeah, well people always knew me as being a Christian and I would have said I was a Christian but actually it was, I found it very difficult to connect emotionally so I was going to these churches where people were expressing their Christianity in a way that seemed very emotional and I'm, well if you can tell I'm not a very emotional person and so because of that I used to think well I should be feeling something here and I didn't but it was only later on when I came to read the poem all for myself and I started going to the churches in London and eventually here at Grace Church where I got baptised in 2017 and made a public declaration.

That's wonderful to hear. Now being a Christian in the workplace how do you navigate your workplace? I think obviously being professional isn't about being a Christian but I'd say it's just knowing that your ultimate goal is to always honour God in everything that you do.

So for me that means being professional and that means acting in a way which is distinctive. So whether I act at work or excuse me excuse me the conversations that I have people are very clear or know that I am a Christian which has led to other conversations at work sometimes difficult conversations because sometimes it's difficult telling people that you're a Christian and so it should be.

[16 : 48] So yeah so just by being honouring God and all that I do letting people know and then acting in a way where I'm confident to share what I believe and why.

Wonderful now we need to keep moving along so I'm going to change back to the topic again so thanks for telling us about that. So the term my truth these days is bounded about a lot and it sounds amusing but it isn't what do you say to the idea of my truth?

I think the basis of it is you could just end the conversation by saying people just mean my opinion that's what they mean at a very broad level you could say that and they're kind of misspeaking or when I choose to look at it it's more to do with the fact that the people who are saying it feel as if they need control they need take control of a narrative or to rebalance power because they feel as if maybe in the past their views haven't been heard or their viewpoints haven't been valid and so by saying my truth and in a way kind of creating a new reality for themselves it means you've got to enter the world on their terms and so but by doing that I would say it's kind of dangerous because I think society societies work when there are shared values and if you are constantly unsure as to how to approach someone else's reality you're fearful of saying the wrong thing you can be accused of doing something or saying something which you don't intend to do or haven't actually done and so it's this situation where it's almost as if you're on quicksand and the goal posts are moving at the same time and you're not sure how to respond so I think the term has kind of evolved into I'm important it's about me approaching me how I want to be approached and actually the idea of having shared values is redundant it's about what's important to me and you better believe it okay so do you think that people in your world particularly think that the idea of the truth is now rather old fashioned and somehow rather quaint yeah yeah I think people do because sometimes the truth is very complicated and to be able to cling to something which is easily understandable by yourself and no one else is more comfortable but I think from a Christian point of view it's a great opportunity because as a Christian I believe in the truth I believe in the idea of the truth based on the fact of Jesus' resurrection and that idea now would seem a bit quaint potentially seems a bit quaint but yeah potentially and I just think it's a real opportunity for people to go to the world and say actually you know what there is really something very very simple something which is outside of yourself which you can look to which you can verify which there is evidence for and which you can be transformed by so I think that's a challenge for Christians now

I'm not sure I answered the question you said that's okay I think we'll be coming back to that topic really in the talk later so we'll revisit that another question for you so given this business about truth

is this leading to a loss of confidence in the news would you say and the idea of objectivity being achievable let's think of our country yeah I said I think I mentioned the fact earlier didn't I about trust going down in the BBC by more than 20 percentage points in the last four or five years that's definitely true there's now a new term called news avoiders maybe you know people like this people who choose not to watch the news anymore because it's too depressing it is too you know people feel down after they've seen it it's it's too challenging and people are switching off news bulletins in their droves and I think you've got some figures up your sleeve haven't you yeah I'm being around myself wasn't it something like let's see if I remember it

[21 : 31] I brought it here you brought it there correct yeah that's right he's got most of it up here Derek McGee 36% of under 35 since the news springs down their mood 17% say engaging with the news leads to arguments they rather avoid and 16% say anything with the news leads to engaging with the news leads to a sense of powerlessness thank you and that's from Ofcom if you want to check it's Ofcom's latest survey on news avoidance last year now we're coming to the end of our interview allotted time but we've got time for a few more fake news is quite a big thing what do you reckon about fake news real problem and I think public service broadcasters have got to do a lot in terms of education I went into my old school a while ago to speak to some students there about the news and they were

I think they were in year 9 and 10 and not one of them had watched the news the way before and fast forward me 15-20 years ago I'd watch the news every day my parents but because young people now have their phones they're on TikTok or whatever social media platform we choose to use they don't have that same level of news literacy and so and also because they can get whatever they want why would you choose to watch Boris Johnson or whoever the Prime Minister is now in the news because it doesn't really affect you if you're a young person it doesn't make any difference to your life whereas you can see your latest social media influencer and watch what you want and just engage in and also in terms of fake news specifically I think because of the rise of deep fakes that's where videos are created which can purport to be anything really this is going to be a real problem for governments and broadcasters going ahead because that can lead to real societal unrest it's already happening but I think it's something we've got to be really conscious about and worrying about thank you for that now coming back to your Christian mindset your outlook on life both you and I would say that we think that the Bible is a historical document and why do you trust the

Bible why do you think the Bible is true the gospel accounts are very good they're good reasons to trust it I'm the kind of mind I have my favorite books in the Bible are Luke and Romans I like those books a lot but that's not the reason to choose to believe them I listen to a really good podcast by the historian Tom Holland before Christmas he's a South London resident if you don't know him there's lots of books on history and antiquity and you know but he's not a Christian I would say I'm not sure what he thinks right now but he did two really good podcasts for Christmas where he looked at the historical accuracy or the arguments for the Christmas story and he kind of breaks it down and there's a quote which he used which I thought for a long time but hadn't voiced his eloquently to him is that there was no really serious historian who thinks that Jesus didn't exist who doesn't think that there's not enough historical evidence for him if someone tells you that it's all made up then you shouldn't believe them but of course there is then the difference between believing the history and choosing to believe that what Jesus said about himself was true and that's the challenge because for all the facts and all the evidence for Jesus existing there's of course a spiritual element to that yeah thank you so we'll be thinking about that more last question for you finally how does your Christian worldview address the issues of journalism today would you say Warren just to close on I'm not sure I think it's beyond saving no I think I think the Christian worldview is great because it offers certainty that is the main thing and the world is uncertain and people are struggling to understand why the world is the way it is but I think that the worldview which Christianity offers is the best at explaining why the world is the way it is and that we have the best kind of hope because of what Jesus did for all of us thank you very much in the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God he was in the beginning with God all things were made through him and without him was not anything made that was made in him was life and the life was the light of men the light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it there was a man sent from God whose name was

John he came as a witness to bear witness about the light that all might believe through him he was not the light but came to bear witness about the light the true light which enlightens everyone was coming into the world he was in the world and the world was made through him yet the world did not know him he came to his own and his own people did not receive him but to all who did receive him who believed in his name he gave the rights to become children of God who were born not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man but of God and the word became flesh and dwelt among us and we have seen his glory glory as of the only son from the father full of grace and truth John bore witness about him and cried out this was he of whom I said he who comes after me ranks before me because he was before me and from his fullness we have all received grace upon grace for the law was given through Moses grace and truth came through

[27 : 50] Jesus Christ no one has ever seen God the only God who is at the father's side he has made him known now I think it's fair to say as we were as Warren was talking that we have a truth crisis it seems on so many topics if we just pause the thing for a second we're becoming more and more polarised if we're being honest with ourselves in politics both sides don't they obviously believe that they have the truth and that the other side are at best ignorant but I suppose at worst they seek to just deceive and manipulate for their own ends I think nowhere have we seen this more kind of prominently than in the pro-life debate haven't we so really when we think about the pro-life pro-choice debate we're actually talking about a debate about truth both sides think they have the truth both sides think they're protecting the vulnerable on one side obviously they're saying that we're protecting the rights of women on the other protecting the rights of the unborn and it entirely depends doesn't it in that debate who has the truth which side has the truth truth is a powerful thing it isn't actually an argument about women or an argument about children it's an argument about who has the truth and more than this we've seen haven't we with

Warren that truth has become deeply personal this rhetoric of my truth has effectively I think become Harry and Meghan's catchphrase essentially which they've managed to somehow kind of work into a career this idea of my truth but this idea of felt truth it is really real to people it is really very real to many people and we know don't we that people will go to enormous lengths to express their truth whether that's online in forums expressing their truth changing their pronouns or even altering their appearance to better express what they feel about themselves their felt truth in other words our felt truth can be so strong that we might even think that it is more powerful than our biological truth but of course that immediately begs the question doesn't it how do we determine what is true I think that is the obvious question that that leaves us with and we've seen and we know that there are many topics that we disagree on and in a world of botched elections fake news and hundreds literally hundreds of religions all claiming opposite things to one another how do we even begin to answer that question what is truth and to say for the Christians in the room and for those of us looking in on the

Christian faith the Christian asks themselves regularly I would imagine because I do and I don't think I'm particularly abnormal in this we ask ourselves are we living a lie as a Christian are we living a lie as a Christian and of course that then begs the question doesn't it that for those of us who are perhaps atheists or agnostic or not sure in the room are we living a lie are we living a lie none of us want to spend our lives not living in the truth none of us want to reflect back at the end of a life lived and think gosh that was a lie all of us want to live in line with the truth but of course that begs the question how do we determine what that truth is we have a truth crisis well Christianity has and we're going to see just for the next 15 minutes or so Christianity has a radical and testable answer say that again it has a radical and testable answer to what truth is and the first point that we're going to see is that truth is a person that's the first claim of the

Christian gospel that truth is a person look down with me again please with your little booklets verses 1 to 4 sentence 1 to 4 we're going to read those again in the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God he was in the beginning with God all things were made through him and without him was not anything that was made in him was life and that life was the light of men so verse 1 we're introduced to the strange concept word or in the Greek logos and it's essentially a very big Greek term for ultimate truth and we see three things don't we three things about this ultimate truth we see that he was or it sorry was in the beginning it was in the beginning so it's eternal whatever this is number two that it was with God and number three that it was God so this it seems is some kind of as far as John is concerned eternal power thought at the centre of the universe and actually I think if we're honest with ourselves many of us probably think about God in

that way so I have a very dear friend of mine who I met through NCT class and she's very into yoga perhaps too into yoga I think it takes kind of five six times a week it's very impressive but she was telling me that often what happens in the kind of I asked I was interested what happens in yoga why are you going so many times it's fascinating because what happens at the end of each yoga class with her particular yogi is that they have a time of tapping into the one was the language that she used where they would kind of sit in a meditative state for about 30 to 35 minutes it's a long time I thought I'm paying for this by now anyway a long time you kind of tap into the one and it was a sense of and you kind of be guided through a meditation and she said that you would feel this great sense that you're part of this one being that transcends the whole universe which she's saying isn't she kind of what John 1 is saying that there's this big power at the centre of the universe that you can sort of tap into but obviously that isn't where John finishes the very next verse the first word of verse 2 is radical and shocking radical and shocking verse 2 he he now verse 2 basically seems kind of redundant doesn't it verse 2 he was in the beginning with

[34 : 04] God well we already knew that from verse 1 the word is eternal but John has twisted this to say that the word is not a person the word is not a force or oneness or abstract power but a person the word is a he and from this point on John only uses to catch kind of a phrase of the age his personal pronouns so verse 2 he was in the beginning with God verse 3 all things were made through him and without him was not anything that was made in him was life and the life was the light of men do you see it's over and over again he he him him and that is the central claim that all things including therefore I presume that must mean you and I in this room that all things were made not only through but for and in this person the Christian claim therefore the radical thing that we're seeing about the Christian claim is that at the centre of the universe there is a he he who is created and given life to everything and so immediately I hope we're starting to see the kind of implications of this that whatever our foundation of truth is whether it's our

Christian upbringing or just our general upbringing our attitude towards science whatever the case may be if this is true that at the centre of the universe there is a divine he well truth must begin and end with this person if he has made everything if he is the centre of the universe truth begins and ends with him truth is a person that was the first point the second point we're coming on to with three is that that person that person is Jesus Christ that person is Jesus Christ and we're jumping to the end verses 14 to 18 have a look with me and the word became flesh and dwelt among us and we have seen his glory glorious of the only son from the father full of grace and truth John bore witness about him and cried out this was he of whom I said he who comes after me ranks before me because he was before me and from his fullness we have all received grace upon grace for the law was given through Moses grace and truth came through Jesus

Christ no one has ever seen God the only God who is at the father's side he has made him known we saw didn't we that the first thing that we learnt in verse two is that he's a he but now we see in verse 14 that he became flesh verse 14 the word became flesh and dwelt among us now that is a radical claim but the next three words are even more radical we have seen we have seen now we're in danger I think potentially of missing the significance of what John is claiming we have seen in other words at the centre of the Christian claim this logos this word well he God himself has been seen in the flesh seen in a person seen by a we so this isn't an isolated claim that John is making he is saying that God himself in a person that person being

Jesus Christ well we have seen him that if you had been there 2000 or so years ago standing next to John you would have seen God in the flesh standing before you the Lord Jesus Christ and this this is so foundational for the Christian claim it is in fact probably the most foundational claim of Christianity many of us I think believe the only way to reach God or a higher power or whatever we believe is out there is through our feelings come back to my friend Hattie she feels in her yoga class that she's united to God the one as she would put it we feel as though something's out there don't we when we speak to our friends and we ask them about their religious experience they'll often use this language of feeling or perhaps they use the language of fate they feel that their life couldn't have turned out this way unless there's some kind of power some kind of thing that is organising the universe but do we see this evening that

Christianity is not making that claim not even close to making that claim no Christianity puts the question of God firmly in the history category and firmly out of the feeling category in other words Christianity wants you to apply the same process to Jesus that you would apply to Julius Caesar

World War II or what you had for lunch today in other words this is not a feelings question this is a historical question now that has some implications four of them and the first is this that it means that truth and Christianity the claim is objective not subjective it's objective not subjective which means it doesn't matter if we feel like Christianity isn't true or if we feel like Jesus isn't God that has no basis on whether or not that fact is true

[39 : 41] Jesus was either there in the flesh the word made manifest or he was not objective not subjective second implication therefore that follows on from that is that Christianity is testable testable as Warren was saying he is a I don't want to use the word cynical but he is perhaps a cynical chap he wants logical facts laid out for him and the Christian claim is that those facts are accessible you can know with certainty that the Lord Jesus Christ stood by the sea of Galilee and had sand between his toes and if you had been there you would have seen him 2000 years ago there is evidence not to do with our feelings we can go and see it third implication that follows from that is that Christianity is not a religion of blind faith often with my friends when I'm talking to them about the gospel of Jesus I often hear this and I wonder if you've ever said this or heard this yourself I wish

I could have your faith I wish I could have your faith and it leaves me thinking what faith are you talking about because the faith of the Christian is in the historical reality of the Lord Jesus Christ not a feeling that can't be tested not a feeling that I have no certainty over but the historical account of the Lord Jesus one of which you have right in your hands here today it would be wonderful if you took it away and read it as an account that would be a good thing to do but fourth I suppose perhaps most controversially the implication of this is that if this is true that the Lord Jesus Christ stepped into history as God himself then there is no such thing when it comes to religion as my truth or your truth and there is just the truth that Jesus Christ is God's if this is true then Jesus gets to say what is true and therefore I suppose all other religious beliefs atheists among them is not true that's the outrageous implication of this that Jesus

Christ the truth is a person that person is Jesus and we could have seen him that brings us on to our final and third point so we've seen haven't we that truth is a person point number one that person point number two is Jesus Christ and the third point for us this evening is that Jesus Christ demands a response Jesus Christ demands a response now this final point might I hope be obvious to some of us already if truth is a matter of history it is therefore a question of fact isn't it and so there is no sitting on the fence therefore when it comes to fact a fact is presented it's either true or it's false Jesus is either who he said he is God in flesh or he is not it doesn't therefore as we've said really matter what we feel about Jesus that doesn't impact the truth of this claim but John ups the stakes and argues that not only must we accept Jesus as God we also must accept his death and resurrection if God is going to accept us have a look at the centre of our passage starting at verse 9 the true light which enlightens everyone was coming into the world he was in the world and the world was made through him yet the world did not know him he came to his own and his own people did not receive him but to all who did receive him who believed in his name he gave the right to become children of

God who were born not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man but of God notice with me in these verses that there are only two responses to Jesus we either reject him or we accept him those are the only two responses that John gives us we either reject him or we accept him which presumably means therefore that sitting on the fence is rejection and there is no kind of sitting on the fence with Christianity and we either accept him and are given the right to become children of God or we reject him now this language about children is poetic language John is a very kind of poetical author but what John is referring to is the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus that's the climax of this eyewitness account which I really encourage you to read and take away and read for yourself where John says that the place that you see God most clearly is on Jesus' death and resurrection on the cross now why must we believe that to be accepted well we get a hint of that in verse 10 have a look with me he was in the world and the world was made through him yet the world did not know him now of course I want us to imagine for a moment that we would put ourselves in

Jesus' shoes imagine that this is true and that you are God some of us that might be quite easy for us to think some of us that might be quite difficult I'm sure that's not easy for us in this room don't worry and I want us to imagine that the world has been made by us that we have this beautiful world that we created people who populate the world who you love they're your children you've made

them and they're made in your image but you notice that they keep rejecting you that's what we see in verse 10 and it breaks your heart and so you decide to come to earth to do something about it supremely we see that the thing that Jesus did is died to take away the sins of the world that's all that we mean by sin by the way as Warren and Fiona were alluding to living in God's world that Jesus made rejecting him how might Jesus feel if this is true that he's made you that he loves you that he's died for you that you exist for him how might Jesus feel if we then live our whole life either being ambivalent towards him or rejecting him we are his own according to

[45 : 38] John he owns us and he demands a response now we see and it's a stunning offer that you'll see if you read the rest of John's account we don't have time to go into it in huge detail now please do ask me about it in the question time if you would like to but the outrageous claim of Christianity is not just that God has come in the human flesh it is that he loves you and that he has died for you that is the outrageous claim of Christianity so where are we to conclude at the centre of the universe there is truth there is that truth is a person and that person is Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ demands a response three implications for us as we close first that we've already said Christianity is testable it is a wonderful relief for the Christian to realise that their faith is on solid ground and that there is truth that there is fact that there is eyewitness testimony and I would encourage you please do ask in the question time and please do explore for yourself

Christianity is not afraid of questions Jesus who made us is certainly not afraid of questions second implication is that this is objective not subjective we've already mentioned haven't we that this has no relation to our feelings whatsoever Jesus either is who he said he is or he's not this is objective not subjective but the third and final implication can I say that this is incredibly good news all of us have values in this room that we hold very dear that our children are valuable and that there are things such as right and wrong and that there is things such as beauty that the world is worth protecting and Jesus gives us the foundation for every single one of those claims our children are valuable or Jesus made them our world is beautiful or Jesus made it and righteousness and justice is good because Jesus is just all the things that we as a western culture hold so very dear all find their foundation in the person of Jesus

Christ it is a scary place to be in a world where truth is subjective it is wonderfully good news to know that at the centre of the universe there is a God who loves you and who died for you