

***“The Christ Who Divides”***

March 23, 2014

Text: John 7:40-44

**Whenever Jesus is truly/accurately presented to mankind,**

**He causes a division—He is the Christ Who Divides.**

As long as human nature is corrupt/sinful, and Jesus is the holy Son of God, He will always divide people into 2 (& only 2) groups=> those who are with Him,  
& those who are against Him.

That, He said, was the very reason for which He came to earth=>

*“Do you suppose that I came to grant peace on earth? I tell you, no, but rather **division**; / for from now on five members in one household will be divided, three against two and two against three” (Lk 12:51-52).*

Jesus came to earth to call out His own flock from the rest of the human race by dividing/splitting them off.

**Jesus divides people in several different ways=>**

1<sup>st</sup>, He did (& still does) divide people interpersonally, father against son, and son against father (Lk 12:53).

We also saw that in Jn 7:12=> *“There was much grumbling among the crowds concerning Him; some were saying, ‘He is a good man’; others were saying, ‘No, on the contrary, He leads the people astray.’”*

Even the Pharisees became divided over X, some saying=>

*“This man is not from God, because He does not keep the Sabbath”; others saying=> “How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?” (9:16).*

The crux of these divisions was the words X spoke, & the claims He made for Himself, as we see in Jn 10=>

*“A **division** occurred again among the Jews because of these **words**” (10:19).*

What words? Verse 18 (Jesus)=> *“No one has taken it [life] away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again.”*

No mere human being could rightfully claim that kind of power over his own life/death.

Jesus was saying that He was superhuman.

That’s what divided those who heard it,

some agreeing w/ Him, others disagreeing.

2<sup>nd</sup>, Jesus did (& still does) divide people spiritually.

X Himself said (3:36)=> *“He who **believes** in the **Son** has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life”* (they’ll be separated from those w/ life, spiritually).

Every man/woman has either eternal-life or eternal-death, & if it’s death, God’s wrath abides on him/her.

Again, Jesus is the cause of this division into the 2 separate groups of people=>

\*Those who believe in Him have received eternal life.

\*Those who don’t, remain in eternal death spiritually.

3<sup>rd</sup>, Jesus divides people in terms of their essential nature,

because God changes the nature of those who believe in X.

When a person believes in Jesus, the H.S. begins to transform/sanctify him, gradually conforming him to X's nature/image, which is pleasing both to God, & to other Xns.

II Cor 2=> *"We are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing; / to the one an aroma from death to death, to the other an aroma from life to life"* (2:15-16).

We are a fragrance of X to God because of our new nature in X Jesus.

When one Xn encounters another Xn, he senses in him the moral/spiritual qualities he loves about his Savior.

But when a nonbeliever encounters that Xn, he's confronted w/ the nature of Jesus, which he finds an offensive stench of death, because he's living his life in rebellion against X.

4<sup>th</sup>, the division Jesus creates between Xns/non-Xns is eternal.

Mt 25 says that someday, X will sit on His eternal throne & all the nations will be gathered before Him.

Then *"He will **separate** [or divide] them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; and He will put the **sheep** on His **right**, and the **goats** on the **left**"* (32-33).

To those on His right (His believing followers) He will say,

*"Come [w/ Me], you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world"* (Mt 25:34).

To those on His left (nonbelievers) He will say (25:41)=>

*“Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil & his angels.”*

The division which had always existed between those saved by faith, & the unsaved, will become complete/fixed/eternal.

Jesus X is the great divider of people, but each person determines on which side of that great divide he chooses to be forever, by deciding he will believe in Jesus, or deciding he won't.

X Himself said=> *“He who is not with Me is against Me; & he who does not gather with Me, scatters”*  
(Lk 11:23).

**Today's text is a fascinating illustration of how this great divide between believers/nonbelievers actually develops.**

### Overview

It starts w/ a simple difference in opinions, which escalates and intensifies to become a division in relationships, & that in turn develops into either determined hostility against X, or committed love, for X.

### **\* Difference in Opinions**

[John 7:40]=> *“Some of the people therefore, when they heard these words, were saying, ‘This certainly is the Prophet.’”*

*“These words”* that Jesus spoke may have included everything He has said in this chapter;

But they certainly included what He said in last week's text=>

*“If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me & drink. / He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, ‘From his innermost*

*being will flow rivers of living water'” (7:37-38).*

This was the climax of everything Jesus had taught since

He first arrived at the feast, earlier that week.

These are tender/gracious words, to which some responded by declaring their belief, that Jesus was the great prophet like Moses, promised in Deut 18:15.

On several other occasions, Jewish people said they

considered Jesus a prophet, or even a great prophet.

But these folks went even farther, saying He was that great prophet Moses had said would come someday.

And the wording here means they were repeatedly

declaring that to be their view.

Whether/not these people thought this Moses-like prophet of

Deut 18 would also be the Messiah, isn't clear.

Acts 3:20-22 says that X's disciples preached He was both.

But there were a variety of opinions about this Prophet

among the Jewish people in general, many expecting

Messiah & the-Prophet to be 2 different people.

**Other Jews, having overcome their fear of stating publically that they believed Jesus was the Messiah, just went ahead & declared that they thought He was.**

John had said, that earlier in the week, *“No one was speaking openly of Him for fear of the Jews” (7:13).*

But apparently, religious feelings had reached such a fever pitch, due to the water ceremony, & Jesus' invitation to receive from Him the water of life, that people were setting aside their fears, & openly declaring their private opinions about Him.

Thus we hear the surprisingly forthright statement of some, who had come to the conclusion Jesus must be not only the Prophet, but the Messiah.

[Verse 41a]=> "*Others were saying, 'This is the Christ.'*"

I.e., they had a slightly different, more elevated opinion of Jesus.

**Keep in mind that many people expected the Christ to be a political figure, who would rid them of what they considered Roman oppression.**

As we've seen throughout the last 2 chapters, the Jewish people in general had little interest in a Messiah who would simply deliver them from their sins—the sins they loved.

So before we mistakenly assume these people proclaiming Jesus to be the Christ, had come to believe in Him as their Savior, we must remember what most of them meant by "*the X.*" It wasn't the X as we know Him=> the Jesus the Christ. He would simply be an heroic political leader.

**How should we react to people like this who have a misconception, or just a partially correct conception, of Jesus?**

Should we disdain them for not being real, orthodox, committed  
Xns?

No, we should be thankful that they've made it as far as  
they have toward the whole truth, and do our part to  
help them come all the way into the full truth.

Thank the Lord for whatever Light they sincerely believe.

Tell them that, if they'll live up to that Light, earnestly  
desiring the truth, Jesus has promised=> *"If anyone is  
willing to do His [God's] will, he will know of the  
teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak  
from Myself"* (Jn 7:17).

Quietly/lovingly point such a person to the Son of God,  
until he finds Jesus as his Savior—his all-in-all=> the  
Lord, Jesus, Christ.

Of far greater concern is the "believer" who understands the idea  
intellectually of Jesus, as one's Savior/Lord, but who coolly  
goes his own way, not allowing his "faith" to impact his  
heart/life at all.

He disobeys X's commands w/o thought, and makes no  
effort to gain instruction in His Word.

There are many such unredeemed people, who don't deny  
the Scriptures, but believe in them;

Who don't deny the deity of X, or His atonement of  
sin, but believe in those doctrines too.

But they've never really sought a relationship w/ X, as their own Savior, or submitted to Him as their Lord, or trusted in Him for their salvation.

Pray/weep for those who agree, but who don't really know X.

**Now we see where the real difference of opinion was beginning to take shape in our text.**

[Verse 41b]=> *“Still others were saying, ‘Surely the Christ is not going to come from Galilee, is He?’”*

**The 2<sup>nd</sup> group's openly declaring that they considered Jesus the Messiah, triggered a reaction from this 3<sup>rd</sup> group.**

They hadn't objected when the 1<sup>st</sup> group merely acclaimed Jesus as the Prophet-like-Moses, but the 2<sup>nd</sup> group's claiming that He was Messiah was too much for them—it set them off. Now there was real/heated disagreement among the 3 various factions.

**The 3<sup>rd</sup> group (the naysayers) first argued that Jesus couldn't be the X, based on the fact that He came from Galilee.**

By that, they meant that He had been born in Galilee, which is what they assumed.

In part, this objection was the result of their own arrogant provincialism.

They were prob. from Judea, and considered Galilee an unsophisticated region, whose commitment to pure Judaism was questionable, due to the fact that so many Gentiles lived among them.

Later in this chapter, the Pharisees will say (7:52)=>

*“Search & see that no prophet arises out of Galilee.”*

That wasn't actually true, but it reflected their prejudiced p.o.v.

They just couldn't imagine that the Messiah would stoop to associating Himself w/ the backwoods Jews of Galilee.

**But this group had a 2<sup>nd</sup>, more substantial, objection to the thought that Messiah could have come from Galilee=> OT Scripture (specifically, Mic 5:2) prophesied that He'd come from Bethlehem.**

And just as importantly, that He would be a descendant of David.

[Verse 42] (Group 3)=> *“Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the descendants of David, and from Bethlehem, the village where David was?”*

**It never seems to have occurred to these people that Jesus actually could have been born in Bethlehem, or that He was indeed a descendant of David.**

Nor does it seem to have ever occurred to them to ask Jesus about it, Himself.

They were content w/ their false assumption that He was born in Nazareth of Galilee—the place where He had grown up.

And, being from Nazareth, he couldn't be related to David. And here we see another example of "Johannine irony"—the droll irony that we see so often in John's Gospel=> He states their mistaken view, w/o exposing its foolishness, knowing his readers are fully aware that Jesus was a descendant of David, born in Bethlehem, just as Mic 5:2 had prophesied the Messiah would be. They had prob. read Matthew and Luke's genealogies of X which were included in those Gospels specifically to disprove the kind of ignorant argument that Jesus wasn't the Messiah.

Secure/content in their smug unbelief, these ignorant nonbelievers had no interest in the truth—that Jesus met both of their qualifications for Messiahship=> birth in Bethlehem and descendance from David. Actually the self-imposed ignorance of such scoffers isn't funny. It is a tragedy, by which they lock themselves out of the truth that could otherwise save their souls.

**\* Division in Relationships**

**At this point, people dug in their heels, so that a difference in opinions escalated to a division in relationships.**

People took sides, looked at each other, & thought, "You're not on my side, so I don't want to be your friend, any longer." And w/ that, they came to a parting of the ways.

This is the unfortunate but familiar pattern, we've all seen  
such controversies follow, time/time again.

Difference of opinion can sometimes be good/healthy, but this  
kind of reaction short-circuits the benefits it can bring.

When people are thinking, there will be difference of  
opinion, which means they've gotten deeply into the  
issues (which is good).

When the issues they're contemplating are weighty, those  
opinions can become strong convictions.

That's far better than apathy, which bears the musty smell  
of intellectual stagnation/death.

[Verse 43]=> "*So a **division** occurred in the crowd because of  
Him.*"

**It's amazing how the name of Jesus tends to cause division.**

He was a such a gentle Man—never a rabble-rouser.

He came proclaiming peace/justice/righteousness, and  
giving God's most wonderful gifts to mankind.

He healed people, gave them life, and improved their lives.

He was generally a quiet/unobtrusive man & only did good.

Matthew quoted Isaiah's OT prophecy, applying it to Jesus=>

*"He will not quarrel, nor cry out; Nor will anyone hear His  
voice in the streets. / A battered reed He will not break off,  
And a smoldering wick He will not put out, Until He leads  
justice to victory. / And in His name the Gentiles will  
Hope"* (Mt 12:19-21).

Nothing about Jesus would cause anyone to expect Him to  
become the object of hatred/controversy/division.

And yet, He constantly was, as people hated Him &  
set themselves against Him, w/ demonic bitterness.  
There was a Satanic, spiritual dynamic, driving this opposition,  
which would otherwise be inexplicable.  
Satan has opposed God & His Son from the very  
beginning.

**As long as we proclaim the true, crucified X of the Bible,  
Satan will always continue to oppose both Him/us.**  
When other Christs are proclaimed, that's not the case.  
But Jesus, the true X, invariably brings opposition/division.

Paul said of the Corinthians that they had listened to false  
teachers who proclaimed "*another Jesus whom we have  
not preached*" and had taught "*a different gospel*"  
(2 Cor 11:4).

There are many false caricatures of Christ presented in  
churches today, that are not true, but don't cause such  
churches to divide, because no one even pays much  
attention to them.

When that happens w/i a church, Satan & his world may let-up  
on their opposition, because the truth about X has now been  
nullified there, no longer being taught w/i that church.

They have compromised the truth, like the church at  
Pergamum in Rev 2:16, to whom Jesus wrote/said=>  
*"Repent; or else I am coming to you quickly, & I will  
make war against them [the false teachers] with the  
sword of My mouth."*

**X taught His disciples to expect the world's hatred, as they taught the truth about Him.**

Jn 15:19 (Jesus)=> *“If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you.”*

The separation X has created between us and the world, by making us unlike the world, is the very thing which divides us from them, by causing them to hate us.

Jesus Himself explained that this world's hatred of Him & His followers is built right into the adversarial relationship between us & Satan's world.

So how are we to handle it?

Not by getting angry at those people of the world, for not loving our Savior as we do.

Anger/hatred are their tools/tactics—not ours.

Rather, Jesus taught us (Mt 5:44) to=> *“Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.”*

Love is the greatest force in the world.

You can love a person to X, but you can't bully him to X, nor can you scold a person into salvation.

Keep loving him, until the love in your heart reaches him, & gets through to him.

**There is a profound/fundamental division between the Xn & the non-Xn, which is why we cannot use their tactics.**

1<sup>st</sup>, the Xn's love for Jesus makes him different from non-Xns.

For him, X isn't simply an historical figure whom he reads about, but never thinks about.

He loves his Lord & finds comfort in communion w/ the living X.

By contrast, the unbeliever finds no delight in X, but seeks comfort in the world, because he is of the world.

That leaves no common ground spiritually between the Xn/non-Xn.

2<sup>nd</sup>, the Xn's implicit trust in X makes him altogether different from every non-Xn—who trusts in himself, & is proud of it.

We put no confidence in ourselves for our ultimate salvation.

When we look in the mirror for our own righteousness, what we find is filthy rags that we don't even try to sort out, into good-works/bad-works.

We know all too well, they're all just filthy rags.

We simply continue to cling to the merits of X on the cross, as our only hope of salvation.

Non-Xns never think of doing that, which continues to divide them/us.

3<sup>rd</sup>, the Xn seeks to become more/more like his Lord, but the non-Xn has no such desire—which further divides them. As young men, they may seem very much alike.

But as the believer's life grows around biblical knowledge and in love for the Lord, the ungodly man's life develops around the foolishness of this world, & the desires of his sin nature.

Eventually, X becomes the first man's all-in-all, while the other man comes to completely despise X, and becomes his own all-in-all (an end in himself).

The 1<sup>st</sup> man's life grows toward peaceful X-likeness, while the 2<sup>nd</sup> man's life slides toward ever-deepening hopelessness.

What is the cause of all these differences? Jesus X, as verse 43 says=> *“A division occurred in the crowd **because of Him.**”*

It is a division which makes 2 such people so unlike, there is no possibility of real fellowship between them.

As Paul asked in 2 Cor 6:15=> *“What has a believer in common w/ an unbeliever?”*

Spiritually speaking—absolutely nothing!

\* **Determined Hostility**

[Verse 44]=> *“Some of them wanted to **seize** Him, but no one laid hands on Him.”*

**For the 3<sup>rd</sup> time in this chapter, people desired to seize Jesus, but were unsuccessful in doing so.**

Verse 30 explained why—*“Because His hour had not yet come.”*

God had a prescribed an hour when X was to be arrested & sent to the cross—an hour that was still 6 months away.

Here in verse 44, people wanted to seize Jesus, but no one laid a hand on Him, being restrained from doing so by the Spirit of God.

**In Jn 15, X warned believers to expect the same treatment=>**

*“If they **persecuted Me**, they will also persecute **you**; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also. / But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know the One who sent Me” (15:20f).*

The people of this world are inclined to seize/persecute Xns

because the world doesn't know God, who sent Jesus.

That is a difference that unavoidably divides us from them.

**Right after Jesus' crucifixion, we find His disciples hiding in the Upper Room, doors/windows locked/bolted.**

They had quickly learned this lesson about the determined opposition of Satan's world, & they expected the authorities to arrest them next.

But after Jesus appeared to them there, they unlocked the doors and came out of that room, to to tell the world about Him.

They discovered that, while He is the great cause of division between Xns/non-Xns, He is also the great cause of unity between believers.

In their love for Jesus, they came to love one another.

They realized in the Upper Room that the world really did hate them.

But they had Jesus, and they had one another, and that was enough.

Nothing welds people together like their mutual love of X.

In Jesus, believers from nationalities that have hated each other in the past, are blended together and become one in X.

He even breaks down the middle wall of partition between Jews/Gentiles, a/w/a every other artificial barrier that separates/divides people from one another.

So Paul can write triumphantly in Gal 3:28=>

*“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all **one** in Christ Jesus.”*

Whenever Jesus transforms people’s hearts, they cease to be like the rest of the world, but are spiritually fused into oneness w/ other believers—no matter where they’ve come from.

We can all say to each other, what Paul said to the

Ephesians=> *“You are no longer strangers & aliens, but you are **fellow citizens** with the saints, and are of God’s household”* (Eph 2:19).

If you/I are both believers, we enjoy a oneness in X that neither the world, the devil, nor anything else, can divide/destroy.

We share in common all the most important things in life=>

- \* You are washed in X’s blood—so am I.
- \* Your soul is resting in Jesus—so is mine.

\* You are saved by God's grace, not your own  
righteousness—the same is true of me.

And in heaven, we will forever joyfully celebrate all the facets of  
our oneness in our Savior=> “one body, one Spirit, called  
in one hope of our calling; / one Lord, one faith, one  
baptism, / one God & Father of all, who is over all, and  
through all, and in all—Amen” (Eph 4:4-6). Amen!

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### **Jesus divides people in several different ways=>**

- \*1. He did (and still does) divide people [26   interpersonally].  
Lk 12:51-52; Jn 7:12; 9:16; 10:19, 18
- \*2. Jesus did (and still does) divide people [22   spiritually].  
Jn 3:36
- \*3. Jesus divides people in terms of their essential [14   nature].  
II Cor 2:15-16
- \*4. The division Jesus creates between Christians and non-Christians is  
[16   eternal].  
Mt 25:32-33, 34, 41; Lk 11:23

**Today’s text is a fascinating illustration of how this great divide between believers and nonbelievers actually develops...**

### **\* Difference in Opinions**

**[John 7:40]**

Jn 7:37-38

- 5. “*Come to Me and drink*” are tender, gracious words to which some responded by declaring their belief that Jesus was the great [16   prophet] like Moses.  
Deut 18:15; Acts 3:20-22
- 6. Other Jews, having overcome their fear of stating publically that Jesus was the [16   Messiah], declared they thought He was.

Jn 7:13

**[Verse 41a]**

- 7. How should *we* react to people who have a partially correct conception of Jesus? Be thankful that they have made it as far as they have, and do our part to help them come into the [10   full] truth.

Jn 7:17

**[Verse 41b]**

8. The third group (naysayers) argued that Jesus couldn't be the Christ, based on the fact that He came from [16 Galilee].

Jn 7:52

**[Verse 42]**

9. Here "Johannine irony" states their mistaken view knowing his readers are fully aware that Jesus was a descendant of [12 David] born in Bethlehem.

Mic 5:2

**\* Division in Relationships**

**[Verse 43]**

10. It is amazing how the name of Jesus tends to cause division—He was a such a [14 gentle] Man.

Mt 12:19-21

11. As long as we proclaim the true, crucified Christ of the Bible, Satan will always continue to [14 oppose] both Him and us.

II Cor 11:4; Rev 2:16; Jn 15:19; Mt 5:44

12. There is a profound and fundamental division between the Christian and the non-Christian, which is why we [14 cannot] use their tactics.

13. What is the cause of all these differences? [12 Jesus].

Jn 7:43; II Cor 6:14

**\* Determined Hostility**

**[Verse 44]**

Jn 7:30; 15:20-21

14. Jesus' disciples discovered that, while He is the great cause of division between Christians and non-Christians, He is also the great cause of [12 unity] between believers.

Gal 3:28; Eph 2:19

15. If you and I are both believers, we share in common all the most [20 important] things in life.

Eph 4:4-6