



**John 7:40-43**  
**Christ the Divider**

40 Therefore many from the crowd, when they heard this saying, said, "Truly this is the Prophet."

41 Others said, "This is the Christ." But some said, "Will the Christ come out of Galilee?"

42 "Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the seed of David and from the town of Bethlehem, where David was?"

43 So there was a division among the people because of Him.

Poor Eric, first he had to put up "No Trespassing" as a sermon title on the Marquee and then this week I horrified him with "Christ the Divider." I suppose at this point he's probably worrying that next week's sermon title will be "Nuke the Whales".

But the reason I chose the title "Christ the Divider" wasn't for shock value, it was because the Word of God tells us that whenever Christ preached, or whenever Christ IS preached, it creates divides men. They are ultimately divided over the answer to that most critical of questions, "Who do you believe Jesus is?" or as Jesus Himself posed the question in Matt. 16:15 "*who do you say that I am?*"

*That is question that every single one of you is going to have to confront and answer.* Obviously, it is a question that men are divided over. John records no less than three instances of a "division" among the Jews over this question, this is one of them. After Jesus finished preaching and made his final appeal for men to believe in Him on the last day of the feast of the tabernacles, we read that the people in the crowd were divided in their opinions of Him. John tells us they were divided into three main camps:

**1) The first group thought Jesus is "the prophet."** Not simply A prophet, but **THE** prophet. This was the great prophet that Moses had prophesied would one day arise in Israel. Turn if you would to **Deut. 18:15-18**

*Deut. 18:15 " The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear,*

*16 "according to all you desired of the LORD your God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, 'Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God, nor let me see this great fire anymore, lest I die.'*

*17 "And the LORD said to me: 'What they have spoken is good.*

*18 'I will raise up for them a Prophet like you from among their brethren, and will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him.*

Now there had been many prophets whom God had sent to speak his word to Israel, but NONE like Moses in his stature, his leadership, and his authority.

The interesting thing is, this group is both *right* and *wrong*. They were right in that Jesus is indeed the prophet Moses spoke of in Deut. 18:15, Peter made that clear, in his speech in Acts 3:19-22 ***"Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord,***

***20 "and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before,***

***21 "whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.***

***22 "For Moses truly said to the fathers, 'The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear in all things, whatever He says to you.***

***23 'And it shall be that every soul who will not hear that Prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.'***

The problem is that most of the people here thought that the Messiah and the Prophet would be two different people. They didn't think that the prophet would be the SON OF GOD.

2) **The Second Group though that Jesus is the "Christ."** Now Christ as you know is the Greek word for Messiah – meaning God's anointed one. Israel's redeemer, their long-awaited hope. Now many of them no doubt thought that Jesus was not the Son of God, just a particularly anointed man, a new and better version of King David a political Savior who would deliver them from the Romans, not a heavenly Savior who would deliver them from Sin.

3) **The Third Group were those who were did not believe that Jesus was the Christ and were coming up with reasons not to believe in him.** They heard his Galilean accent and some of them may even have heard that his family came from Nazareth and they said "Aha, we know that Micah 5:2 says that the Christ will come from Bethlehem and we know that Psalm 89:3-4 and 2 Samuel 7 say that he will be the descendent of David" this guy is from Galilee not Bethlehem. Now they knew the scriptures, but they knew nothing about Jesus. Jesus was a descendent of David through his mother Mary and he was indeed born in... Bethlehem.

So what is the right answer? Which group was right? Well the Bible doesn't leave you hanging about that. Jesus Himself answered the question:

***Matt. 16:13 When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, "Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?"***

***14 So they said, "Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets."***

***15 He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?"***

***16 Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."***

***17 Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.***

John even says that is the whole reason he wrote His gospel, so that you might know who Jesus really is:

***John 20:30 And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book;***

***31 but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.***

Now you know that many people today say, well why is it important who people think Jesus is. You think he's the Christ, they think He's the prophet, I think he's was just a wise man. Why does it matter?

People who phrase the question that way, presuppose that both the question and the answer are supremely unimportant. To them it's the equivalent of "You say that we have to eat at Wendy's, and I say McDonalds, and He says Burger King" who cares? Or "You say Spiderman is the best, but I say it's the Incredible Hulk and He says Batman" who cares? When actually the question is more along the lines of "You say you need Antibiotics to be cured of Pneumonia, but I say Cyanide, and he says Arsenic" what's the difference? ***The difference is that only one answer is correct and the other two will kill you.*** Regardless of what men think. The last part of John 20:31 is why the answer to the question of who is Jesus is so important, you see it tells you that it is only by believing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of god, that we can have life.

That you see that is the true nature of the division. It is a division not only between those who believe and those who don't, it is a division between life and death, blessings and cursings, wheat and chaff, heaven and hell. Because you see it is on the basis of our belief that our eternal destiny is decided.

On the last day, the day of Judgment, Jesus will once again be the Great Divider:

***Matt. 25:31 " When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory.***

***32 "All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats.***

***33 "And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left.***

***34 "Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:***

...

***41 "Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels:***

That division will be on the basis of whether you believed in Him and followed Him as one of His sheep, or you did not, and were therefore a goat. There will only be two categories on that day.

Let me leave you with three applications:

1) **First**, Christians do not lose heart or despair when the gospel and that question of who do you think Jesus is? brings division into your life. Jesus warned it would be so, he warned that this question would divide even husbands and wives, parents and children. And because of that, and because of those divisions between friends and relatives, you may sometimes be tempted to compromise in order to heal the division. And you will be tempted in both the workplace and the home, but don't give in. Listen to the words of your master:

***Matthew 10:32 " Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven.***

***33 "But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven.***

***34 " Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword.***

***35 "For I have come to 'set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law';***

***36 "and 'a man's enemies will be those of his own household.'***

***37 "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.***

***38 "And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.***

***39 "He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it.***

**2) When it comes to that Division, when you are tempted to panic or despair over the unbelief of loved ones, remember that God is in control and He has done all things well.** The basis on which that division is made is belief, but why do men ultimately believe or disbelieve?

The answer is not a question of being smart or even sometimes knowing the content of scripture. I've known people who were very familiar with what the Bible says, but did not believe a word of it. Some of them actually misuse scripture to provide reasons NOT to believe as we saw here. The answer is God's work in men's hearts based on his eternal choice – remember what he said to Peter when he confessed ***"17 Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven."*** You didn't figure this out, my father revealed it to you. You remember that Christ has already said: ***"No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day."*** And who does the Father draw to Christ? Those whom He predestined. You see that in Christ's wording – ***"inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world"*** but also in places like

***Ephesians 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,***

***4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love,***

***5 having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will,***

***6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved.***

Now this should be of great comfort to you. Because God uses something as simple as the preaching of the gospel to overcome even the most stubborn of sinners. It means that those stoney-hearted people whom you love who seem so totally resistant can in fact be overawed. To quote Josh Hamilton's recent testimony regarding God turning him around from drug addiction: "I'm proof that hope is never lost." There is always hope that those divisions will be forever healed as your loved ones are brought to saving faith in Christ, that is why you must never stop witnessing to them. As long as they are still alive, they are not beyond God's sovereign power.

*So in closing, who is Christ to you? The Supper is intended to be a witness to your decision. When we believe we declare it to the world and we come and we feast with Him.*