

In coming to verses 40-52, we come to something of a pinnacle with regards to the people's response to Christ's claims—throughout the previous chapters, tension was been increasing—now, there is a formal and open division among the people—the passage divides itself into two halves—A Division (vv40-44), and A Defense (vv45-52)...

I. A Division—vv40-44

II. A Defense—vv45-52

I. A Division—vv40-44

1. There are basically four different responses from the crowd, concerning Christ's amazing claims of divinity...
2. [1] Some thought He was the Prophet, v40—"Therefore many from the crowd, when they heard this saying, said, Truly this is the Prophet..."
3. The saying they heard, was the gracious invitation in vv37-38—where He claims fulfillment of OT types and prophecies...
4. V37—"If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of this heart will flow rivers of living water..."
5. By "the prophet" is meant the prophet promised by Moses, in Deut.18—a prophet that will speak on God's behalf...
6. 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..."
7. Thus—these people were right, Christ was "the Prophet"—He was God's greatest, ultimate, and final Prophet...
8. But—the Jews were waiting for a prophet to precede the Messiah, and thus didn't equate the prophet with the Messiah...
9. [2] Some thought He was the Christ, v41a—"Others said, This is the Christ"—that is—the promised Messiah...
10. The word "Christ" is merely the Greek equivalent to the Hebrew "Messiah"—which literally means—the Anointed One...
11. Now—there're no way of knowing to what extent they believed this—whether they believed from the heart...
12. It's very possible, and even likely, their understanding of the Messiah was flawed—they may have been expecting a political deliverer...
13. Or else, it's also possible that some of them really and truly believed that He was the Christ, the Savior of sinners...
14. [3] Some doubted He was the Christ, v41b-42—"But some said, Will the Christ come out of Galilee? Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the seed of David and from the town of Bethlehem, where David was..."
15. These couldn't believe that He was the Christ, because the OT prophesied the Christ would come from Bethlehem...
16. According to v27—many knew He was from Nazareth, which was in Galilee, whereas Bethlehem was in Judea...
17. These people of course, were right, the Scriptures did foretell that the Messiah would come from Bethlehem...
18. Micah 5:2—"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of your shall come forth to Me the One to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting..."
19. But—here's the problem—unknown to these Jews, our Savior was born in Bethlehem, and raised in Nazareth...
20. Thus—the simply wrote Him off, based upon incomplete evidence—they could have easily found out the truth...

21. They simply hear something and believe it, without investigating the truth for themselves—they looked for a reason not to believe...
22. John Calvin—"In this manner, out of the Scriptures themselves, which lead us by the hand to Christ, men frequently make obstacles for themselves, that they may not come to Christ..."
23. [4] Some wanted to harm Him, v44—"Now some of them wanted to take Him, but no one laid hands on Him..."
24. That is—they wanted to harm Him—they wanted to either, hand over to the authorities, or else kill Him themselves...
25. Jn.7:43—"So there was a division among the people because of Him"—He became a source of division among the people...
26. Obs.1—Christ divides all humanity—that is—they are divided depending on their understanding of who Christ is...
27. Because mankind hasn't fundamentally changed, there remains—"a division among the people because of Him..."
28. This is the greatest cause of division in the world—not skin color, language, or nationality—but Jesus Christ...
29. My friends—there is no man in the history of this world, that more divides people, than the Lord Jesus Christ...
30. Muhammad, Buddha, Krishna, Confucius—no man has more divided humanity than the Lord Jesus Christ...
31. Richard Phillips—"The Rocky Mountains form the Continental Divide, so that all streams to their west flow to the Pacific Ocean and all to the east flow to the Atlantic. What the Continental Divide is to the United States, Jesus Christ is to the human race. Like the Rocky Mountains jutting up to the sky, his very presence divides, and from him the two streams of humanity flow in opposite directions..."
32. [a] This division is INEVITABLE—that is—it's unavoidable or certain—there's simply no way to avoid it...
33. [i] Some hate Him—that is—they despise and spurn Him—they become angry whenever He or His word is mentioned...
34. Brethren—think of it—what historical figure creates more enmity in the hearts of fallen men, than Jesus Christ...
35. [ii] Some deny Him—that is—they accept Him as a historical figure, but deny He is the eternal Son of God...
36. They may admit that He's from God in some sense—they are willing to believe He was a good man or even a prophet from God...
37. For example—Islam believes that Christ was a prophet of God, and Jehovah Witnesses' believe He was "a son of God..."
38. But all of these deny His eternal divinity and Sonship—they fail to bow to Him as the God-Man, God incarnate...
39. [iii] Some ignore Him—that is—millions of people simply don't give Him any thought—they are indifferent...
40. There are many, all over this country, you sit this morning in Bible believing churches, who don't deny who Christ is...
41. They have been taught from their infancy, that Christ is God's eternal Son, the God-Man incarnate, Savior of sinners...
42. They don't openly hate Him, they don't deny who He is—they simply ignore Him—they pay little attention to Him...
43. [iv] Some trust Him—that is, just as strong as oppose, hate, and ignore Him—others love, esteem, and serve Him...
44. [b] This division is PAINFUL—by this I mean—this division often includes close friends and family members...
45. It's rather easy to endure this divide when we don't know the person, but when they are a family member, it's another thing...
46. Lk.12:51-53—"Do *you* suppose that I came to give peace on earth? I tell you, not at all, but rather division. For from now on five in one house will be divided: three against two, and two against three. Father will be

divided against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law..."

47. [c] This division is ETERNAL—that is—there's a sense in which your opinion of Christ determines your eternity...
48. It is for this reason that Christ Himself will sit as Judge in the final day—and pronounce sentence on all men...
49. There is a sense in which, in this passage, these men made a judgment about Christ, concerning who He was...
50. But—there is coming a time when Christ will make a judgement about all men, concerning their eternal destiny...
51. Obs.2—Christ unites all Christians—that is—while He divides humanity, He unites ALL TRUE Christians...
52. Does this mean that all true Christians are united—YES—the person of Christ unites all Christians together...
53. If Christ was the reason for the division—then Christ is also the reason for true unity—it's all about Christ...
54. Brethren—what is it that brings true Christians together—it's not some political agenda, or some social issue...
55. While it's true that these things have their place and are important to us—they are NOT what unites us together...
56. What unites us together is what we think of Christ—the fact we trust, love, and obey Him, as God's eternal Son...
57. For example, who will be at the center of the saints in heaven for all eternity—the risen and glorified Lamb...
58. He will be the temple, the people of God encamp around—He will be the Sun, the people of God bask under...
59. And if Christ will be the center of all saints in heaven, then brethren, He must be the center of all saints now...
60. Do Christians have real differences—YES—some are Baptist, Presbyterian, dispensational, and covenantal...
61. CHS—"While Christ is the great cause of division, it is also true that he is the great means of union. There is nothing that welds men together as the love of Christ does; it is the most potent force in the universe for gathering together those who are scattered abroad, and making them truly one..."

## II. A Defense—vv45-52

1. Within this second half of our passage, we have a conversation between two groups of people—the officers and the chief priests and Pharisees...
2. [1] The officers—these were temple police, responsible to oversee the temple, and answerable to the chief priests and Pharisees...
3. This is why the officers reported to them—from v32 we learned, the chief priests and Pharisees sent the officers to arrest Christ...
4. The reason the officers failed to arrest Christ is rather interesting, v46—"No man ever spoke like this Man..."
5. The word "man" is emphatic in the Greek text—we could perhaps render the phrase—"No mere man ever spoke like this Man..."
6. There is something about this man, not true of any other man—He's unique—different from all other teachers...
7. In other words—the officers were captivated with the Man, the chief priests and Pharisees sent to take captive...
8. A.W. Pink—"What a testimony was this from unbelievers! Instead of arresting Him, they had been arrested by what they had heard..."
9. [2] The chief priest and Pharisees—these were the religious leaders, who held the highest authority among the Jews...

10. They not only were responsible to teach the Scriptures, but also, to enforce their application to various situations...
11. They were in some sense the ruling body among the Jews, both on theological but also practical issues as well...
12. They led the Jewish seminaries but also the courts—they were both the politicians and theologians of the day...
13. For the most part they were self-righteous hypocrites—they reduced religion to an external conformance to tradition...
14. They opposed our Savior throughout His ministry, and eventually arrested Him and turned Him over to Rome...
15. Verses 48-49 drip with self-righteousness and pride, v48—"Have any of the rulers or the Pharisees believed in Him..."
16. That is—have any of us, the chief priests (rulers) or Pharisees believed in Him—have we seen what you've seen...
17. You tell us—"No man ever spoke like this Man"—but who are you to make that judgement—we're the leaders...
18. CHS—"This was as much as to say, If we have not believed on him—we who are the great dons of the nation—the rulers and the Pharisees—why, then, there cannot be anything in his claims..."
19. V49—"But the crowd that does not know the law is accursed"—that is—the people receive Him out of ignorance...
20. The inference being—WE don't believe Him because we know the law—they are tempted to believe Him, because they do not...
21. In other words—they are suggesting that the crowds of ordinary people are believing Him out of ignorance...
22. In v50, we find not all of the Pharisees were in agreement, because John re-introduces us to a wonderful exception...
23. V50—"Nicodemus (he who came to Jesus by night, being one of them) said to them"—Nicodemus himself a Pharisee, said to the other Pharisees...
24. V51—"Does our law judge a man before it hears him and knows what he is doing"—in other words, the other Pharisees didn't know the law as well as they thought...
25. Their response, in v52, is full of contempt—"They answered and said to him, Are you also from Galilee"—is this why you defend Him...
26. V52—"Search and look, for no prophet has arisen out of Galilee"—this was simply not true—Jonah , Nahum, and others were from Galilee...
27. It simply shows—for all their supposed learning and study—they simply did not know the OT as they thought...
28. Obs.1—No man ever taught like Christ—this should never surprise us, because everything He did was perfect...
29. He was and is, a perfect prophet, priest, king, preacher and teacher—everything He did was without a single flaw...
30. No man ever taught like Him—both with regards to the manner and matter of His teaching—He was perfect...
31. Thus—as in every other activity, our Savior serves as the great example, the perfect example of a preacher or teaching...
32. [a] Authoritatively—that is—He taught with authority—He taught dogmatically—He taught with authority...
33. Mk.1:22—"And they were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes..."
34. Our Savior never taught, by suggesting what He said was open for debate—He spoke with absolute authority...
35. He spoke as one from God—He spoke the truth of God—He spoke as one sent from God—He spoke for God...
36. Now—obviously, our Savior spoke with an authority that no mere man has—He spoke as God's Final Prophet...

37. But—though regular ministers lack this authority, because they speak in His name, they speak with authority...
38. 1Tim.4:11—"These things command and teach" Tit.2:15—"Speak these things, exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no one despise you..."
39. My friends—for preaching and teaching to be like Christ's—it must come backed with a sense of divine authority...
40. The minister must be convinced of his divine calling—that he speaks in the name and stead of the King of kings...
41. [b] Intelligently—that is—He taught wisely—He taught precisely—He taught accurately—He taught without error...
42. Matt.13:54—"And when He had come to His own country, He taught them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished and said, Where did this *Man* get this wisdom..."
43. Now again—obviously no mere man can preach or teach infallibly and perfectly, in the way our Savior did...
44. But—nevertheless—ministers of the gospel must study the Scriptures to speak accurately and with precision...
45. 2Tim.2:15—"Study to show yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of God..."
46. [c] Simply, Mk.12:37—"And the common people heard Him gladly"—that is—He was easy to understand...
47. Though our Savior spoke of heavenly things, and spoke things, at times hard to receive, He spoke plainly and simply...
48. He never used the exalted language of the learned—He never spoke with philosophical and complex thought...
49. He spoke in such a way, that the common people, the average and unlearned, heard Him gladly and with joy...
50. So too, ministers must speak simply and plainly—without trying to sound OVERLY learned and educated...
51. 1Cor.2:4—"My speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God..."
52. Now—this of course does not mean, we are dumb the truth down—we must speak the truth as revealed in Scripture...
53. Gabriel Grossi—"Simplicity, however, does not mean lowering the standard in the use of biblical terminology. Rich biblical words such as justification, sanctification, reconciliation, propitiation must never be left out of our sermons..."
54. Obs.2—True religion often comes slowly—this is seen in Nicodemus, who John mentions a total of three times...
55. John 3—Nicodemus come to Christ by night—our Savior informs him of his need to be born again by the Spirit...
56. John 7—where he at least says a word in defense of Christ—he doesn't fully defend him, but at least says something...
57. Jn.19:39—"And Nicodemus, who at first came to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds..."
58. Thus—it seems evident—that somewhere along the way, this timid Pharisee, because a humble follower of Christ...
59. And thus I suggest to you—that oftentimes, true religion is realized in the soul, through a rather gradual process...
60. Simply put—oftentimes, people come to Christ over a slow process, where people continue to sow and water...
61. Now—in closing—I want to suggest that this final observation provides us with both a warning and encouragement...
62. [a] A warning—that is—we must be careful to write someone off, simply because they remain timid and ignorant...

63. Obviously, a person must understand certain things to become a Christian, but his understanding of these can be minimal...
64. Furthermore—we must be careful not to write off every person within groups that may even be hostile to Christ...
65. J.C. Ryle—"We must never conclude hastily that there can be no Christians among a body of men, because the great majority of them hate Christ, and are hardened in wickedness. There was a Lot in Sodom, an Obadiah in Ahab's house, a Daniel in Babylon, saints in Nero's palace, and a Nicodemus among the Pharisees..."
66. For example—it's possible, even likely, that God has people scattered throughout churches that we would never attend...
67. [b] An encouragement—in Nicodemus we learn that God often opens eyes in a more gradual and slow manner...
68. Nicodemus starts out in chapter 3 ignorant, in chapter 7 he's timid, and in chapter 19 an open follower of Christ...
69. Brethren, we mustn't lose heart—what starts off rather slow today, could end in a very solid and lasting conversion...
70. You know—it's interesting that each time John refers to Nicodemus, he does so as—"he who came to Jesus at night..."
71. I think he does this to remind everyone, of his humble religious beginnings, that we would be encouraged ourselves...
72. We likely all have a Nicodemus in our lives—someone who appears to be making little if any spiritual progress...
73. Well don't lose heart, dear Christian, because it's very possible that your Nicodemus will end like this Nicodemus...