

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Reactions to the Claims of Jesus

Scripture: John 7:37-52

Code: 1518

Answering Life's Ultimate Questions

As we come to our message this morning, we come to a very, very important message. This message is really the summation of this whole chapter. In fact, in many ways the summation of the whole presentation of the gospel throughout history for it catalogs for us the different reactions that people have made and do make to the claims of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ as usual in chapter 7 is making astounding claims. As we come to these verses for this morning, we're going to see Him conclude His discourse at the Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem. And then we're going to see how the people reacted to the...to His claims. And we're going to see those reactions catalogued and they really become the universal pattern for all kinds of reactions throughout all ages, even today. If you have an outline there in your bulletin of the message, you might follow and perhaps desire to take notes as we move.

Now the absolute ultimate question in the world, the question beyond every other question, the most profound, penetrating, soul-searching question ever asked was asked by Pilate. Pilate was the Roman governor in Judea at the time of the death of Jesus Christ. Pilate was confronted by a mob of people who were thirsty for the blood of Christ. They wanted to see Him killed. And Pilate had tried Him, at least in his own heart, and had concluded that there was nothing wrong. He said, "I can find no fault in this man." And Pilate, not wishing to violate his own conscience, decided that he must endeavor to get Jesus Christ freed. And so because it was the custom at the feast at this time every year to release a criminal, Pilate brought up the most heinous individual in captivity, a man by the name of Barabbas, a great criminal. And he gave the people the option, thinking that they would take him off the hook by selecting to release Jesus rather than this criminal, Barabbas. And so he asked the mob which of these shall I release unto you, and they all cried, "Release unto us Barabbas."

And then Pilate uttered the most profound question that could ever be uttered, the most penetrating question that every man must answer. He asked the question, "What then shall I do with Jesus which is called the Christ?" Matthew 27:22. "What then shall I do with Jesus which is called the Christ?" Oh disturbing question. And the mob without hesitation cried, "Crucify Him, crucify Him." And some of you are in that mob because by your rejection of Jesus Christ, you are guilty of crucifying Him afresh and putting Him to an open shame. What will you do with Jesus Christ? You must do something with Him and you are doing something with Him.

Now this same haunting question faced Israel. What are you going to do with this Jesus? It faces every man today because Christ lays that claim at the door of every man, "I'm God, I'm the dividing line between life and death, both here and now and eternally." But perhaps it never faced anybody any more starkly than it faced the city of Jerusalem. They had been confronted with the living personal Jesus Christ. They had heard from His own lips His claims unequaled, unparalleled. And they were trapped in the vortex of decision and they had to do something and do something they did.

As we come to our text, we meet Jerusalem face-to-face with Jesus. And we see how they reacted to His claims. Jesus, you see, was the first-century mind blower. Jesus created mental havoc. Jesus created spiritual trauma. He stirred up people and flipped them every which way by His claims. And now He's come to Jerusalem for the last time. He'll never leave Jerusalem as such for six months from now He shall be nailed to a cross outside the city. He knows only six months are left and He has to reach those people that the Father has given Him with the truth of who He is. And so prompted by love and knowing that His time is running out, He goes back to the hostility and the hatred and the persecution and the imminent death in Jerusalem because He wants to reach the people who will believe no matter what the cost. He comes to present Himself and to plead with His beloved Israel to receive their Messiah, their Savior before it's too late. And He has been warning them, He's been telling them who He is and saying, "Receive Me before it's too late." And He wrapped up the discourse in verse 36 by saying, "Because you're going to seek Me some day and not find Me and where I am you won't be able to come."

Jesus has said to them, "I'm God, I'm from heaven, I'm the Redeemer, I'm the Savior, I'm the Messiah, I'm here, believe!" And He says, "Because if you do not receive Me while you may, they'll come a time when you'll seek Me and you will not find Me. I'll be in a place that you cannot come to." You see, unbelief forever removes a man from the presence of Jesus Christ and unbelief forever removes Jesus Christ from the presence of that man. You contrast that with John 14:5 where Jesus said, "I'm going away." And Thomas says, "Lord, we don't know where You're going, how can we find out how to get there?" And Jesus said to Thomas, "Thomas, I am...what?...the way." Oh how different for the one who knows and loves Jesus Christ, when Christ goes away, that's nothing because I'm going to go where He is. But for the one who doesn't know Jesus Christ, when Christ goes away he has no hope of ever going there.

And so, the choice of every man is this...to be with Christ or to be without Him. That's the choice. And Jerusalem faced that choice. Same choice that Pilate had and Pilate offered the people at the death of Christ, they were faced with the same searching penetrating question...what shall I do with Jesus?

Now in our text we're going to see four groups responding to this question. Four groups who responded to the claims of Christ and these four groups, mark it now, this is an important message here, these four groups form the universal pattern for reactions to Christ. You can classify everybody in one of these groups.

Before we look at the four groups, let's first of all review the claims of Christ. Point number one in the outline is the claims. Then the next four points will give us the groups and how they reacted, but we want to show what they reacted to. So before we look at the four groups, we're going to look at the claims of Christ.

Now He makes these claims in verses 37 to 39 reiterating in a different phraseology, with a different metaphor the same claims that He has made before. In effect, I'm God, I'm here, I came to redeem you, believe in Me, you can be redeemed. Reject Me, and you've...you've sentenced yourself for time and eternity. He reiterates the same claims again. And, in fact, He makes a great invitation to the whole city of Jerusalem here, and then we'll see how these four groups responded to Jesus Christ and His invitation.

First of all, notice the claims of Christ. They appear in verses 37 to 39. And as I said, it's nothing new to them, they've heard it before. It's a reiteration. Verse 37, "In the last day that great day of the feast," and mark that well because that phrase right there is the key to what I'm going to say in a few minutes. "In the last day that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and...and there we meet the word *ek krazen* again...and cried out." He yelled at the top of His voice again. He did it one other time in anger. This time He does it in invitation. He stands in Jerusalem and at the top of His voice He yells, "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink." Loud He yells, *ek krazen*, He cries out, piercing the air with His voice. Jesus is not, as I said, angry this time, He's yelling because He wants men to hear. This is a public invitation. Some people don't think you need to give a public invitation. Jesus did. Jesus did. And while He spent most of His time teaching privately, most of His time He was with the few people instructing them He did make public evangelism a part of His ministry. And here He announces that He is water for the thirsty soul.

You know, that's really not anything new because if you remember the story of John chapter 4, you remember the Samaritan woman and Jesus met her at the well and He said to her, "Well, your water's okay, but you're going to have to get some more when you get thirsty again. But the water that I give you, if you drink it you'll never thirst again." And He talked to her about living water, didn't He? And He was saying, in effect, I can quench the thirst of your soul. So the idea of Him being water for the thirsty soul is not new. He said that in John 4. He's also food in John 6 for the hungry heart.

You say, "Well why does He say this here? I mean, you don't just stand up in the middle of a whole thing in Jerusalem and say come unto Me if you thirst and drink. I mean, why would He use that metaphor, why that analogy? Why was He talking about the water here? I can understand it in John 4 cause the woman had the water, she pulled the water out of the well and He bounced off of that thing and said I am the true water, that's right. I get that. And I can understand in chapter 6 when they were eating food and He says I am the true food. But what's the water have to do with what's going on at the Feast of Tabernacles?"

Let me show you what it has to do...and it becomes one of the most climactic and dynamic demonstrations of Christ, absolutely the master of the right moment was Jesus. And I want you to see what He does. This is fantastic. And the whole key is in that phrase in verse 37, "In the last day, that great day of the feast."

Now there were three feasts that were the major feasts of Israel. Pentecost, Passover and the Feast of Tabernacles. The Feast of Tabernacles took place every year from October 15, it's the month of Tishri to them but to us it's October 15 to 22 which puts it right where we are. And at the Feast of Tabernacles there was a commemoration of God's leading Israel in the wilderness. He commemorated all the wanderings when they dwelt in booths and tents and so forth and so on. And the populace of Israel would move into Jerusalem for this great feast.

Now there was one particular ceremony connected with the feast that is really a very fascinating and it was the major ceremony. It had been taken from original scriptural injunction and then had been added to by the Pharisees and the rabbis. By the time of Jesus, this is the ceremony that went on. The worshipers, that is all the people who came for the ceremony, and it happened every day...it happened every day for the seven days or eight days of the feast. Some think there's seven days, some think there were eight, it doesn't matter, it's on the last day that we want to get to, whether it's the seventh or the eighth. But every day they came together. And they took literally Leviticus 23 and rightly should they have taken it literally which said this, that they were to take the fruit of goodly trees and branches of palm trees and thick boughs of thick trees and they were also to take the willows that grew by the brook and everybody got a branch. And they all marched to the temple with all these branches, they did it every day during the Feast of Tabernacles. And the instruction of the Pharisees when they got to the temple, they took all their branches and they held them out like this and formed a great round roof over the altar. And the altar being there was covered them by the roof of these branches. And at the same time that this was going on, the priest had in his hand a golden pitcher which held about two pints of water. It was empty. And he would go down to the pool of Siloam and he would scoop out two pints of water, fill his pitcher, walk back through what is called the water gate back to the temple and he would carry this water toward all these people who had their branches over the altar. And in the time when he came through the water gate, the people all recited Isaiah 12:3

which says, "With joy shall he draw water from the wells of salvation." And here he came symbolically with the water.

The water was then carried into the temple. He moved underneath the roof and poured the water out near the altar. Now while this was being done, the whole congregation of Israel was gathered around they were singing the Hallel, Psalm 113 to 118. They were singing it praising God. In fact, it was sung...they were led in singing by the Levite choir accompanied by people playing flutes. It was a big deal. All these people with all their trees and this ceremony of the pitcher and singing and flutes and the whole deal. This was the key big ceremony in the Feast of Tabernacles.

Now get the picture. I can see the strategy of the moment. It says in 37, "In the last day that great day of the feast." Timing is the key here. The whole dramatic ceremony became even more dramatic on the last day because the last day the whole group with all their boughs and branches was marching around the altar and they marched around it seven times...coming to a climax and then the water was poured. Why do you think they marched seven times? That's how many times Israel marched around the walls of Jericho. And so they were symbolically remembering Jericho, all a part of the wilderness wanderings. And then the water was poured out.

Now watch it. I believe it is at that moment against that background that Jesus Christ stood up somewhere and His voice rang out like thunder and He said, "If any man thirsts, let him come unto Me and drink." Oh what timing. The last day, the great day of the feast, everybody's praising God. In fact, they were even praying for rain. That was part of the ceremony was to pray for rain while they were thanking God for the water in the wilderness. Remember how the water came through the rock? They were all thanking God for the water, praying for rain, pouring out water and Jesus says, strategic timing, "If any man thirsts, let him come unto Me and drink."

Now do you see why He said what He said? The Master of the moment. He grabbed that moment of Jewish ceremony and spun it around and focused it right on Himself in one second. What a Master. In effect He was saying, you're all thanking God for physical water, if any of your souls thirst, here I am, come and drink. You know, the whole nation Israel through a period of about several thousand years had built up a great illustration and He just took that whole ceremony and used it as an illustration of who He was. Come to Me for the water that quenches the thirst of your soul. Oh I love to see Jesus Christ in such a dynamic thing. In all their minds they understood what He was saying. You know, in that statement, "If any man thirsts let him come unto Me and drink," is the whole gospel. It's all there. There's three words there that just jump off that page in my eyes. Thirst, come and...what?...drink.

Man, the first word is thirst, that's the idea of a recognized need, right? You're not going to come if you don't feel thirsty. And you want to know something else? Nobody needs to tell you when you're

thirsty, do they? It's fairly obvious, right? Listen, when a man knows his soul is thirsty, he knows. There's a craving, there's a soul-thirst that's as real as body thirst. When a man longs for forgiveness, when he longs for hope, for love, for meaning, for peace, for liberty, for salvation, that's nothing more than spiritual thirst and Jesus says, "Here I am, come and drink." But it's got to start with a thirst. So Jesus said, "If you're thirsty," see. If you're not thirsty, sorry, you won't come. If you're thirsty.

Second word, come. That signifies the action of the will. Move toward Christ. That's...that's...that's the same thing you do with your heart that you do with your feet. If Jesus was over there and said "Come here," and you walked over there. It's just taking yourself over to where Jesus Christ is. It's expressing the action of the will. It's moving toward Christ. It's beginning to turn your back on the world. It's beginning to abandon your self-confidence. It's the point of real thirst where you're ready to grab whatever you can. I always think of the joke in the magazine, you know, where the guy is crawling through the desert and finally he lands at the soda stand and says, "What flavors do you have?" He wasn't very thirsty. You come to the point where all you can do is drag your thirsty soul over to the feet of Jesus Christ. Jesus says if you're really thirsty, come, here's where the water is, come, come, come.

But you can't just come, you've got to do one other thing. What's that? You've got to drink. That's to appropriate Christ. That's like the rich young ruler, man, he said, "There's Jesus." He went running to Jesus, he even slid right up to His feet. "Oh, Master," you know, and then he went away sorrowing because he was very rich. He came but he went away. Jesus says come and then drink. That's to appropriate. If you have a river flowing through a valley where people are dying of thirst, it doesn't do them any good if they don't drink it. Jesus says if you feel thirsty come, but you can't stop there, you've got to take it and drink.

So, Christ says if your soul is parched and thirsty, come to Me and take Me into yourself. You know something? The results are permanent. When you take Jesus Christ, John 4:14, fabulous truth, "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst, but the water that I shall give him shall be a well of water springing up unto everlasting life." Take Jesus Christ and you will never thirst again. So says Jesus to the people.

Well the song writer put it this way. "I heard the voice of Jesus say, Behold I freely give the living water. Thirsty one, stoop down and drink and live. I came to Jesus and I drank of that life-giving stream. My soul was revived. My thirst was quenched. And now I live in Him."

Jesus Christ can quench the thirsty soul. That's only the beginning of what He does though. Verse 38 takes another dimension. He didn't just save us to fill us full of living water. No, no, verse 38, "He

that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of His heart shall flow rivers of living water." See, when you come to Jesus Christ initially, that's not the end, my friend, that is the beginning. Not only do we drink and have our own thirst quenched, but we become the supplier, would you believe it? The supplier of living water to the world. That's the real key to this. We are channeled for living water to reach the world. Out of our hearts should flow rivers, not one river and not a drip. Most of us can't even say, "Out of my heart drips living water." I think the reason that so many Christians stink spiritually is because they have become stagnant storage tanks instead of rivers of living water. And I always say most of us need a good dose of spiritual Drano because somewhere along the line the channel is clogged.

And so says Jesus, not only will you be quenched and you be blessed, but you'll become a fountain that gushes out rivers to the world. Wow, you say, that's me as a Christian? Fantastic. Now this is really a prophetic statement, I want to show you how John qualifies this statement. This is prophetic and it really can't come true for a while. Verse 39, John tells us why. You know, we'll back up to verse 38 for a thought, here it is. "He that believeth" is present tense. But "shall flow" is future. So you can believe now, Jesus says to those people, but the flowing is still in the future. Verse 39 describes it. "But this spoke He of the Holy Spirit," or of the Spirit, "whom they that believe on Him should receive for the Holy Spirit was not yet given because Jesus was not yet glorified."

You say, "What does that mean?" John is literally saying this. You will flow with rivers of living water, but not until you get the resource for rivers of living water which is whom? The Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ. Now, they could receive that living water right there that day in Jerusalem through faith in Jesus Christ. They could receive that. But it would be seven and a half months until Jesus was dead, risen and ascended and the Holy Spirit came and then, my friend, the living water really started to flow.

You know what it really means? It means witnessing. That's what it means. And blessing others and exchanging spiritual gifts with the body of Christ. And so, if you look at the gospel account you'll find this, that before the cross the disciples really couldn't exercise the truth of being rivers of living water, they sort of gathered around Christ and just got their own thirst quenched. But when the Spirit of God came in Acts chapter 2, from then on, man, the story of the church is a story of gushing rivers of living water.

But John says, remember, this is prophetic, it can't happen till Jesus ascends and the Spirit comes. And Jesus Himself said later on in John's gospel, "If I go not away, the Comforter cannot...what?...come." And so Jesus had to be glorified after His ministry, the Spirit came. That's what Jesus meant in Acts 1:8 when He said, "You shall receive power after the Holy Spirit is come upon you and you shall be My...what?...witnesses." You can't be that kind of a witness, that river doesn't flow apart from the Spirit of God.

So, the power behind us is the Holy Spirit. And so Jesus says, "You can believe now and have your thirst quenched now, but you shall seven and a half months away, all of a sudden find inside of you are going to be turned loose rivers of living water." You know, that early church in the book of Acts, they just gushed all over everywhere, didn't they? Man, they were just drowning people in the living water. But it can't happen till Jesus goes away. And when He comes, the Holy Spirit, He'll turn on the rivers. And that's the story of the church, rivers of blessing. And this is witnessing, as I said, but I think it's another thing, too. I think it's that living water by which we as believers bless other believers, the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Doesn't the Holy Spirit give us gifts to minister one to another? And don't we minister the living truth of Jesus Christ in all of His beauty to each other? Of course we do. But primarily it has to do with evangelism.

And so He says, only the Holy Spirit can make it happen. Only the Holy Spirit can turn loose the living water. Now I want to draw a footnote out of this verse very quickly. Verse 39, there are some people who teach that there are Christians who don't have the Holy Spirit. That is absolutely anti-Scripture, but it's very common. Notice verse 39. "But this spoke He of the Spirit whom they that believe on Him should receive." Who receives the Holy Spirit? They that believe on Christ. Part of them, some of them? All of them! Romans 8:9 if you don't have that scribbled somewhere in your Bible or in your brain, you're missing it, it says this, "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." Turn that around. If you belong to Him, you have His Spirit.

And this...I react to this idea that Christians don't have the Holy Spirit and you've got to get Him through some thing else. That's not so. Why you wouldn't...you would be impotent, you couldn't witness, you couldn't exercise spiritual gifts, you couldn't do anything without the holy Spirit. Jesus says, "You will flow with living water because of the Holy Spirit." It's not a command, my friend, it's a fact.

So, Jesus makes these startling claims. He says, "I am...I am living water." And He says, "Like the Old Testament," and He's throwing together passages from Isaiah and elsewhere. The Scripture said, "Out of you is going to flow rivers of living water." These are His claims.

Now let's see the four groups that reacted to His claims. And they're very obvious. We'll see them very quickly. Verse 40 and 41a show us the first group. These are the convinced. Now the convinced, he receives the truth, see. He receives it. Look at...meet the convinced ones. I like them. I'm one of them. Verse 40, "Many of the people," there's a good group, too, "Many of the people therefore when they heard this saying said, 'Of a truth this is the prophet.'" See, they're convinced. And the next group at the first of 41 said, "This is the...what?...the Christ, anointed, *Mashiah*, Messiah." Hey, I like the convinced ones, they received the truth, didn't they? They took His claims.

They believed. And it's kind of the small flock, you know. But the word there is *alethos*, you see it? It says "of a truth," that's truly, genuinely, honestly, for sure this is the prophet, no doubt. They don't have any doubts at all.

You say, "What do you mean THE prophet?" Well, back in Deuteronomy 18 Moses had promised that there was coming a prophet like unto Him. And Moses had told the children of Israel the Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren like unto Me, Him shall thou hearken unto. And all through Israel's history they had been looking for that prophet. Back in 121 of John's gospel, they went up to John the Baptist and they said to him in verse 21, "Art thou that prophet?" And he answered, "No." Later on in chapter 6 the Galileans came to Jesus. In verse 14, "Then those men when they had seen the miracle Jesus did said, 'This of a truth is that prophet.'" They were looking for THAT prophet. And over in Acts chapter 3, Peter indicts the whole society in Jerusalem when he says to them in verse 22, "Moses truly said unto the fathers, a prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren like unto me. Him shall you hear in all things, whatever He shall say unto you." And he goes on to say, "And you crucified Him." But He was that prophet that was to come, that greatest of prophets. And some of them knew it. They said, "Truly, honestly, genuinely, for real, no doubt this is Him." Oh, I like them, they're convinced, boy.

And, you know, they blurted it right out. Look back at verse 13 of the same chapter. When Jesus first arrived, man, they all had...they were like the Arctic river, frozen over at the mouth. They didn't want to say a thing. They just....they didn't want to talk about Jesus, they might get in trouble with the leaders, see. "Howbeit no man spoke openly of Him for fear of the Jews." They didn't want to make any claims until they had heard the word straight from the mouths of the leaders. But now they don't care. They're convinced. Wow, this is the prophet, you know. And the next group says, "Not only that, this is the Messiah." Let's take it a step further. Verse 41a, "This is THE Christ, anointed one, Messiah." Oh, these are believers.

You know what this is? This is God's remnant in Israel, isn't it? God loves Israel. God loves them and if you don't love Israel, then something's wrong. God loves them and always has his remnant there. And even though the mass of them do not believe...these did. And God had His little remnant. God always has His remnant. You read Romans chapter 11 verses 1 to 5 and you'll see that there's always a remnant according to the election of grace, that's verse 5..or 4. God always has His remnant in Israel, and here they are, that little flock. And it always seems all through the ages that the convinced ones are the small group. Over in Matthew chapter 7, Jesus tells us that. He says, "Enter in at the straight...pardon me...enter in at the narrow gate," which is a better translation, "for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction and many there be who go in that way." Listen, because narrow is the gate, hard is the way which leadeth unto life and few there be that...what?...find it. It's always that little group. Oh, I like these convinced ones. I like them...they're

convinced and they're standing up and saying what they believe in spite of the Jewish leaders. They thirsted. They came and...what?...they drank. And seven and a half months later, they're going to gush.

Now I want you to meet the second group, the contrary. The contrary, he rejects the truth. These are the ones that say,...the very antithesis of the convinced. And this is really exciting. This is something. The contrary ones throw in another one of these questions with the little particle *me*, you know, that implies a negative answer. Verse 41, "But some said, 'Shall Christ come out of Galilee? He's not coming out of Galilee? You convinced people, what's wrong with you? You think Messiah comes from Galilee?'" And they mock them. It's a statement of mockery. Galilee was considered, you know, hicksville, or something, up in the...you know, the boondocks, nothing important ever happened in Galilee. Jerusalem was big time. Not only that, they went one step further, they knew a little bit about the Old Testament. They even knew that Micah 5:2 said this, "But thou Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, out of thee shall He come forth to be ruler over My people Israel who was from old, from everlasting." They knew Micah said He'd come out of Bethlehem.

They said, "Wait a minute." Verse 41, "Shall Christ come out of Galilee?" Verse 42, "Hath not the Scripture said that Christ cometh of the seed of David and out of the town of Bethlehem where David was?" What's the matter with you guys? You convinced people. Don't you know the facts?

Well there they are in their stupidity again. They assumed that Jesus was born in Nazareth. All they had to do was ask and He would have told them He was born in Bethlehem. But, you know, unbelief is smug, isn't it? It's always that way. Self-satisfied. Willful, ignorant, unbelief just says, "My mind is made up, don't confuse me with the facts." That's what unbelief always says. And so many people are contrary to Christ and they don't even want to hear about it, do they? Don't even bother me with that stuff. They're smug, self-satisfied. They know it all. They've got it all compartmentalized and Jesus doesn't fit.

And I'll tell you, we've said it every week now for a few weeks, Jesus never commits Himself to unbelief, does He? He doesn't say...I was born in Bethlehem. He doesn't say that. Why? Because He never commits Himself to willing unbelief. If a man doesn't want to know the truth, you know what? He won't know the truth. And it's interesting to me that these are religious people because, you know, they knew all about the Scripture but didn't know anything about what it meant. They knew the Old Testament. Didn't know who it applied to. A lot of good it did them. So we meet the contrary.

Now we come to the most exciting verse in this whole passage. Verse 43, "So there was a division among the people because of Him." Isn't that thrilling? You say, "Huh? So thrilling? What's so...?"

That just blesses me, that verse is terrific. You say, "What's so terrific?" What's terrific is that there was a division. You say, "Why is it terrific?" Because it means that the convinced ones stayed convinced, doesn't it? Here these guys are going...oh, Galilee...they were giving them all this intellectual argument, and they just...they just held their ground. I mean, I'm sure that they didn't care that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, Nazareth, or Cucamonga at that point. They didn't know, they didn't understand maybe but they knew this, that's Him, I don't know anything about all this where He was born, but that's the Messiah. It reminds me of that blind man, they were giving him the twenty question deal after the Lord had given him sight and he says, "You figure it out, I used to be blind, now I can see, you figure out who it is." Praise the Lord the division remained, see. Isn't it amazing how powerful faith is? Listen, don't bother to assail me with your intellectual arguments, I don't need to mess with your intellectual arguments. I believe, see. My faith destroys intellectual arguments, especially ignorant ones.

And so, the convinced aren't swayed. They don't know anything about Bethlehem or Nazareth maybe but they don't care. They know somehow some way it's all going to work out because this is Messiah and it has to be right. Oh, I like that verse, so there was a division. Boy, they held their ground. But isn't that what Christ always does? Christ divides, doesn't He? Let me read you something in Luke chapter 12 verse 51. "Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth..." Listen to this. Now the second time He comes He'll come to give peace, right? "Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth the first time, I tell you nay, but rather..now watch this word...division." That's what He says. "For from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two and two against three. The father be divided against the son, the son against the father, the mother against a daughter, the daughter against the mother, the mother-in-law against the daughter-in-law, the daughter-in-law against the mother-in-law." Jesus says I'm going to come and just fraction your families all up because some of you are going to believe and some of you aren't. And so there was a division because of Him. I'm glad for that division. I'm glad.

Well, the contrary ones reacted to the division as they would normally in verse 44. "Some of them would have taken Him but no man laid hands on Him." And again here you have the superintending power of God that restricted them from even touching Him. Back in verse 30 they sought to take Him, but no man laid hands on Him cause His hour wasn't come. They couldn't touch Him...they couldn't lay a hand on Him. God restrained them.

So we meet the convinced and the contrary, now let's meet very quickly the confused. Now you've got the ones who know they believe and you've got the ones who know they don't believe, and then in the middle you've got the ones that are just kind of wrestling with it, see. The confused one, he wrestles with the problem, kind of hassling the whole thing in his mind. And here we meet our old friends, the temple police.

Now we first met the temple police back in verse 32 when they were commissioned to go arrest Jesus. The Pharisees and the chief priests said, "We've got to get rid of Jesus, so let's send the temple police to arrest Him." So they were sent to arrest Him. Now they return with their report, verse 45, and these are the ones who are confused and wrestling with what's going on about Christ. "Then came the officers, or the temple police, to the chief priests and Pharisees and they said unto them, that is the chief priests said to the officers, 'Why have you not brought Him? What are you doing empty-handed?'" Here they went to get Jesus and they come back without Him. And they're really just baffled. They come back to them in bewildered state of amazement, see, and they're confused and they don't exactly know...I don't think they understood even why they didn't get Him. I'm not sure they knew. I know and you know because, and I love this verse, Pilate was showing off his power in John 19:10, Pilate says, "You better speak, Jesus. Don't You know that I have the power to crucify You and the power to release You?" See. Jesus says to him, "You could have no power at all against Me, except it were given thee from above." You have power? You don't have any power at all. Listen, you couldn't move one muscle in your body if God didn't let you.

And so, the chief priests and Pharisees, "Go get Jesus." Might as well tell them to go turn out the sun. They couldn't go get Jesus. So they come back empty handed and you know what they've got to say? They kind of stand there and they say this, verse 46, "Never a man spoke like this man." See. They don't know what's going on. They don't say "we believe," they don't say "we don't believe," they just say "We never heard anything like this. It's all news to us." They had had the startling, shocking experience of confronting Jesus Christ and hearing what He had to say and they are confused. They could have lied. They could have come back and said, "Well, He got away," or they could have said, "Well the crowd pressure kind of threatened us." No, they just said, "We never heard anything like this. I mean, is this for real?" They were honestly shackled by His words, they were impotent, they couldn't move and they were wrestling with truth, they were bewildered and they were confused. And there are a lot of people like that. They were. Jesus says, "Take Me and drink." Satan says, "Take Him and kill Him." Jesus says, "Believe Me." Satan says, "Arrest Him." And they wrestle with it, the pressure of the adversary, and the pressure of the power of the person of Christ.

And so you know what they do? They just stand there bewildered. And indecision can be tragic because these Jewish leaders pick up on this indecision and they drive home a pretty hard point, verse 47, "Then answered them...the Pharisees...are you also deceived?" I mean, have you gone along with this crowd? Oh, you haven't, have you? It's kind of...it's got another *me* in it so it's implying a no answer. You haven't gone along with them, have you?

You know, this is a very important thing cause watch the next verse, "Have any of the rulers or the Pharisees believed on Him? But this people who know it's not the Law are cursed." Boy, they're really mad at the people. They're cursing them out. They're mad. Those cursed people.

But look at their logic with these guys. Now the temple police are just one echelon up from the common people, but that's a big step, you know. They got a little authority, temple police. Not down there with the cursed common people. They're a few steps below the chief priests and the Pharisees, but they're up there. So these guys say to them, "Are you going to go along with the cursed, common people?" See. "Have any of us rulers and us wise leaders believed in Him?" See what they're doing? They're appealing to their desire for prestige. They're appealing to their ego. And they're appealing to their economic status. See. And, in effect, they're saying, "We are the ones who decide. The stupid, ignorant, cursed people know zero, we decide." As if to say the people...they say the people in verse 49 don't know the Law, they're not academically qualified to determine who Messiah is. See. We'll tell you who Messiah is, we're the spiritual qualified ones. See. So they try to make the officers look stupid and try to identify them with the ignorant common people. And it's really a gimmick. And it very often works with the confused mind. A man who is trying to decide between Jesus Christ and his prestige, or his honor among his men, or his money, or whatever he wants to stand between him and Christ, this is where the confusion comes. And so the officers say, "You can't decide anything, we will decide, we are the authoritative ones." And this is always the character of false religion, set up a whole lot of big wheels at the top who make all the decisions and the common people know zero, they don't know anything. This is the way the cults and this is the way Catholicism has operated for centuries. Nobody knows anything but the leaders. Keep the people ignorant and the leaders informed and the people will have to follow. Now that's being broken up today and many people living in cults and Catholicism are beginning to discover who Jesus Christ is, and be on their own independent study of God.

But this is what was going on in Israel. Man, they had the people buffaloed and they were holding this over them. So they were trying to get these people to reject Christ, these officers, on the basis of prestige and honor and identification so that they would not be identified with the common, cursed people.

You say, "What happened to those officers?" I don't know, the Bible doesn't say they were ever redeemed, doesn't say they ever did believe. It doesn't say they were ever convinced. And in every case, if that's what's going on in your mind, if you're struggling with whether you ought to give your life to Jesus Christ or whether you're afraid you might lose a little prestige, or your ego might drop in the eyes of your contemporaries, if you're fighting that battle, you're going to decide which way you go. And so did those officers and the Bible doesn't tell us. Some people just wrestle with the truth.

But lastly, we've seen the convinced, the contrary, and we've seen the confused. Now I want you to meet the contemplative. He researches the truth. This is the one who says, "Well, it looks like it might be something...think I'll dig in to this thing." His name was Nicodemus. Verse 50, "Nicodemus

saith unto them, he that came to Jesus by night being one of them..." Oh, is that ever a dig, see. Get it? Back in verse 48, "Have any of the rulers or the Pharisees believed on Him?" Nicodemus... "Me," see. He's getting there. See. He's already been to Jesus once, right? Came by night and said, "Rabbi, we know You're a teacher come from God, nobody can do what You do except You be from God." And he said, "You know, what must I do to be born again? How can I enter my mother's womb and be born?" And, you know, he's had a conversation with Jesus and it's ringing in his head. And he's contemplating it, he's researching the truth. You know what happens to somebody who researches the truth, who honestly wills to do God's will? He knows the truth. Remember John 7:17, "If any man wills to do His will, he shall know of the doctrine whether I speak of Myself or not." Boy, the honest seeker, here he is, ole Nicodemus.

Nicodemus says to them, verse 51, "Does our Law judge any man before it hear him and know what he doeth?" Let's use the research method, let's listen to what he says and see what he does. Let's not run off half cocked and judge him. Let's think this thing through.

You say, "Well, what happened to Nicodemus?" Well around John 19 verse 39 or 40, he's gathered in a little group of people who love Jesus Christ. Nicodemus met Christ. Why? Because he was honestly researching the truth. He wanted to know. What did we say last week? God told Israel through Moses, "If you seek Me with all your heart, you shall surely...what?...find Me...find Me." The contemplative, honest searcher, Christ commits Himself to that man.

So we meet the convinced, they receive Christ. The contrary, reject open unbelief. The confused, kind of wrestling with it. And the contemplative, the one who researches, moving step by step willingly openly toward the truth of Jesus Christ. Where are you? I ask you the same question that rings in my mind that Pilate asked two thousand years ago, what will you do with Jesus Christ?

Our Father, we thank You, this morning, for Your Word to us. Lord, we know we're all doing something with Jesus Christ right now. Father, may we be careful to see what we're doing with Him. May we consider carefully the eternal consequences. We pray, this morning, that if we've already received Christ and we stand with the convinced, that, Lord, we might really allow the rivers of living water to flow out of us, unrestricted, unbounded to the world of men who are contrary, confused or contemplating Jesus Christ. These things we pray in His name. Amen.

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