

# THE DIVIDING WORDS OF JESUS

WHOEVER IS NOT WITH ME IS AGAINST ME,  
AND WHOEVER DOES NOT GATHER WITH ME SCATTERS.

(MATTHEW 12:30 ESV)



## RIDING THE FENCE PROHIBITED

Jesus' words emphasize the great divide between light and darkness, heaven and hell, life and death ... and with his words he calls people to himself and away from their confusion and indifference ...

## 1. Review: Jesus spoke to the spiritually thirsty inviting them to believe in him, 7:37-39.

- (John 7:37–38 ESV) On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, “If anyone thirsts, **let him come to me and drink**. 38 **Whoever believes in me**, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’ ”

***In review ...*** Jesus stood up and called out to those who were thirsty to come to him and drink. Coming to him and drinking was the equivalent of believing in him.

## 2. After Jesus spoke “these words” there was a division among the people over him, 7:40-44.

- (John 7:40–44 ESV) **When they heard these words**, some of the people said, “This really is the Prophet.” 41 Others said, “This is the Christ.” But some said, “Is the Christ to come from Galilee? 42 Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the offspring of David, and comes from Bethlehem, the village where David was?” 43 **So there was a division among the people over him**. 44 Some of them wanted to arrest him, but no one laid hands on him.

A. Jesus spoke with the intent of creating tension (mental and emotional strain) to help the thirsty to strive to enter God’s rest through the narrow door.

- (Luke 13:24 ESV) **Strive to enter through the narrow door**. For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able.
- (Hebrews 4:11 ESV) Let us therefore **strive to enter that rest**, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience.

B. Jesus’ dividing words give clarity as to why his words draw some to life in him but seal the fate of others.

### EXCURSUS: THE IMPORTANCE OF UNDERSTANDING THE PURPOSE AND PERIL OF DIVISIONS IN SCRIPTURE ...

#### I. Jesus intentionally caused the division over him among the people in 7:43.

- A. People need to see the difference between darkness and light ... between true belief and mere profession.
- B. The response of people to the dividing words of Jesus reveals their heart condition before God.

#### II. We need to have a proper understanding of divisions in Scripture.

A. The division in our text is called a schism.

- (John 7:43 ESV) So **there was a division among the people over him**.

**σχίσμα [schisma]** ... schism; division of a group into opposing factions.

Understanding the nature of a schism helps us to distinguish the difference of beliefs and actions of the opposing factions. To distinguish means to perceive a difference in - mentally separate; to separate or mark off by differences.

#### III. Here are examples of the potential of a positive effect of the schism Jesus created by his words.

A better understanding of the difference between ... belief in versus mere interest in Jesus ... hearing God with faith versus only hearing words ... sincere seeking versus lukewarm interest of the things of God ... Scripture leading us in our pursuit of truth versus using the Bible to give merit to our argument.

#### IV. Negatively ... schisms on the human level are usually the result of sinful behaviors that serve the devil’s purposes.

- (Romans 16:17 ESV) I appeal to you, brothers, **to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them**.
- (1 Corinthians 1:10 ESV) I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, **that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment**.

A. Here is an excellent example of a division that is sinful but God uses to serve his purpose.

- (1 Corinthians 11:18–19 ESV) For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, **I hear that there are divisions among you**. And I believe it in part, 19 **for there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized**.

B. Causing divisions is a work of the flesh that marks a person who will not inherit the kingdom of God.

- (Galatians 5:19–21 ESV) Now **the works of the flesh are evident ... dissensions, divisions ... I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God**.

C. The person who stirs up divisions should be warned and then disassociated.

- (Titus 3:10–11 ESV) **As for a person who stirs up division**, after warning him once and

then twice, have nothing more to do with him,  
11 knowing that such a person is warped and  
sinful; he is self-condemned.

To disassociate means to distance ourselves from individuals or groups because we do not desire to be associated or involved in their behaviors and beliefs.

V. Various accounts in Scripture reveal where Jesus caused division by his actions and his words.

A. Jesus caused division among the Pharisees.

- (John 9:16 ESV) Some of the Pharisees said, “This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath.” But others said, “How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?” And there was a division among them.

B. Jesus caused division among the Jews.

- (John 10:19 ESV) There was again a division among the Jews because of these words.

VI. A stated purpose of Jesus in coming to earth was to cause division within families.

- (Luke 12:51–53 ESV) Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division. 52 For from now on in one house there will be five divided, three against two and two against three. 53 They will be divided, father 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 mother-in-law.”

—END EXCURSUS—

3. The words of God (whether spoken or written) are always given with God’s purpose in mind.

- A. God from his infinite wisdom and for his glorious purpose chose the words.
- B. The Protestant Bible has around 750,000–800,000 words, depending on the version. The King James Authorized Bible, for example, has 783,137 words.
- C. The necessary conclusion is that all the words in the Bible will serve to accomplish God’s purpose.
- (Isaiah 55:10–11 ESV) For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, 11 so shall my word be that goes out

from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.

D. The purpose of Jesus’ words was to prompt decisions regarding him and his gospel.

E. This division Jesus caused was intentional.

- (John 7:43 ESV) So there was a division among the people over him.

F. The response of the people to “these words” revealed their heart condition.

Some heard his words and said he was the Prophet. Some heard his words and said he was the Christ. Some heard his words and rejected that he was the Christ based on Scripture.

4. The response of the Pharisees to these words was bewilderment, disrespect, opposition and ridicule, 7:45-52.

- (John 7:45–52 ESV) The officers then came to the chief priests and Pharisees, who said to them, “Why did you not bring him?” 46 The officers answered, “No one ever spoke like this man!” 47 The Pharisees answered them, “Have you also been deceived? 48 Have any of the authorities or the Pharisees believed in him? 49 But this crowd that does not know the law is accursed.” 50 Nicodemus, who had gone to him before, and who was one of them, said to them, 51 “Does our law judge a man without first giving him a hearing and learning what he does?” 52 They replied, “Are you from Galilee too? Search and see that no prophet arises from Galilee.”
- A. These men were very contentious toward Jesus even after hearing his amazing offer of rivers of living water flowing from their hearts.
- B. So first we observe that they do not have the Spirit flowing out of their lives.
- C. Next we need to remember that in general people love darkness and hate the light.
- (John 3:19–20 ESV) And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. 20 For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed.
- D. As a group these Pharisees proved their love for the darkness by their hatred of the one who is the light of the world.

- (John 1:4 ESV) In him was life, and the life was the light of men.
- (John 8:12 ESV) Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

E. They didn't hate the light because it was not true but because it was true and revealed their sinful works.

F. They were inconsistent and deceived in their understanding of the law (God's word).

G. Their words of opposition, ridicule, accusation, pride and self-deceit exposed the condition of their hearts.

Richard Caldwell ... If you want to understand what is going on inside a person, then listen to what they say. You will hear what is in their heart.

- (Matthew 15:18–20 ESV) But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person. 19 For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander. 20 These are what defile a person. But to eat with unwashed hands does not defile anyone.

H. The officers (Levite temple guards) had been sent to arrest Jesus (v. 44) but could not do it.

I. The officers were awed and stunned when they heard the Son of God speaking the words of God.

J. Jesus spoke what God the Father told him to speak and in the authority the Father had given.

- (John 7:16 ESV) So Jesus answered them, “My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me.”
- (John 3:34 ESV) For he whom God has sent utters the words of God, for he gives the Spirit without measure.
- (John 14:10b ESV) The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works.
- (John 14:24b ESV) And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father's who sent me.
- (John 8:28b ESV) ... I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me.

### CONCLUSION: WHERE DO I FIND MYSELF?

**GROUP ONE:** I love Jesus with all my heart, all my soul, all my mind and all my strength. I am willing to totally give up my old life and embrace the new life Jesus offers. My heart's desire is to always be led by the Spirit so that I please him in everything I do and bear much fruit to his glory. I delight in his word and in bowing low before him in worship.

**GROUP TWO:** I like Jesus a lot and kind of love him even. I like spending time with Jesus and worship him as my schedule allows. I am willing to meet Jesus in the middle so that he can be an important part of my life.

**GROUP THREE:** I oppose Jesus and think it is ridiculous that he expects me to live by his words without even respecting my opinion.

