

# The Fork in the Road is Jesus

John 7:40-52

**BI: The privilege of following Christ is both free and costly. Will you still follow Christ when friends and family disapprove?**

Read John 7:40-52

Introduction:

When Jesus presents the gospel He often does so using the parallel metaphors of eating food or drinking water. For example,

- In chapter 4 He says to the woman at the well that He could give her “living water” (4:10). Then He says “Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give Him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life” (4:13-14)
- On the other hand, the whole message of John chapter 6 is that Jesus is the bread of life. This is where he feed the 5,000 a banquet of bread in the wilderness demonstrating that in Him is the limitless supply of that which gives life (6:1-14).
- Later in that chapter, He calls himself the “bread of life” and says that while the Jewish refugees escaping Egypt ate the manna from heaven, in the end they all died, but those who eat the bread that He gives will never die.
- Then in chapter 7 he reverts to the image of drinking when he stands up in the temple and declares “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in me, as the Scripture said, ‘From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water’” (7:37-38).

So responding to the offer of eternal life is like eating or drinking. That is, “believing in Jesus” is compared to eating food and drinking water. It’s simple. It’s not difficult to understand. Receiving the gospel is not like going to graduate school or seminary. Its not like some kind of Bible-boot-camp. Even a child can understand the gospel. On the other hand, it’s something more than simply agreeing with doctrinal statement. It more like taking the truth of Jesus into our souls like a man who is dying of thirst drinks water allowing it to refresh and vivify every part of his being. So believing in Jesus like eating and drinking.

Now, for two weeks I have been appealing that you should come to Jesus. Is your soul hungry? Come. Does something inside of you thirst for forgiveness and reconciliation with God? Come. Do you secretly wish there were possible to wipe away the shame and

guilt of past sins? Come. There is nothing in this life that can compare to the joy of knowing Christ personally, cleansingly, and savingly. That's why the Bible repeated appeals, as in Rev. 22:17, "let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost." So I once again plead, if you have not yet come to Jesus for all that God offers to you in Him, then you should come.

However, it is also incumbent upon me to warn you that drinking the living water that Jesus offers may bring difficult consequences to your life that you have not known before. Think for a moment about your relational world. There are probably people in your life who will not like the fact that you have become a follower of Christ. In fact, if you persist they may hate you for it! They may try to dissuade you from associating with Christ and His people. They may mock you, insult you, and attempt to ruin your reputation. They may call you a religious "fundamentalist" or "intolerant" or a "fanatic." You may lose friends and opportunities for advancement on your job.

You see, one of the questions you will need to answer as you think about coming to Jesus is this, am I willing to pay the price for associating with Jesus? Is knowing Christ more precious to me than the relationships I may lose? Am I willing to count the cost? These are important questions because their will probably be a relational price to pay. Let me refresh your memory on how people responded to Jesus here in chapter seven.

## **I. Jesus Divides Israel's Masses: (40-44)**

1. Remember, this was all happening at the end of a major feast in Israel where throngs of people had packed into the temple area. Having heard Jesus' teaching, some were strangely drawn to Christ. They were saying (40) that perhaps He is the Prophet Moses said would come. Others, taking a bolder stand (41), declared emphatically that He is the Christ. But NOT everyone was convinced that He had come from God.

2. John says (read 41-42).

3. Now here is a strange irony. Jesus was indeed born in Bethlehem. As Tenny observes, "The very passage that convinced His critics that He could not be the Messiah was one of the strongest to prove that He was."<sup>1</sup>

4. "So (43) a division occurred in the crowd because of Him" The word for division here is *schizma* from which we get the word schism. It literal means "to tear" or "rip," "to split, crack, or divide." It's a term of open discord regarding how people viewed Jesus. Some people believed He was the Christ. Others were not so sure. Still others wanted to seize Him.

5. The point of this message as I see it this morning is simply this: The life, message, and ministry of Jesus Christ always causes division. He did not come to unify all people. He

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Constable, *Dr. Constable's Notes on John*, (p. 142), on the *Sonic Light* website, viewed on June 7, 2014, [www.soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/john.pdf](http://www.soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/john.pdf)

came as a fork in the road. To come upon Jesus Christ is to be forced to make a decision about Him. You will either consider His claims with the supporting evidence and love Christ, or you will reject His claims despite the evidence and dismiss or even hate Christ. This is precisely the effect Jesus had on the crowds. But it wasn't just the crowds that were divided on Him. The division extended even to the theologians and teachers of Israel. First we saw how Jesus divided the masses. Now we see that...

## **II. Jesus Divides Israel's Leaders: (45-52)**

1. The division begins between the Sanhedrin (High priests and Pharisees) and the Levites. You may remember that last time we learned that the temple had its own police force. These officers were not Romans but Jews. Specifically, they were Levites and they would have been just as devoted to the law of the Lord as the Pharisees claimed to be. You may remember as well that (7:32) the Pharisees sent some of these officers to arrest Jesus. Here (45-46) we see the result (Read 45-46).
2. What's going on here? Well, apparently the Levites who went to arrest Jesus were privileged to hear Him teach, but they didn't have any pre-conceived animosity toward Jesus. And once they heard Him teach they must have concluded that He was saying nothing contrary to God's law. More than that, He taught like no one they had ever heard before! Elaborating on this verse Constable observes: "They had gone to arrest Jesus with their weapons, but Jesus arrested them with His words."<sup>2</sup> So they came back to the Sanhedrin empty-handed, and their response to their superiors serves as another witness to Jesus' identity. This is where the division begins among Israel's leaders.
3. Notice how the Pharisees respond to the officers (read 47-49).
4. Let there be no mistake. When a leader responds with insults and conjecture rather than truth, He has lost control and is being led by his emotions to his own ruin. Here the Pharisees insult both the common people and the Levites implying a lack of basic spiritual discernment and rudimentary education in the Bible. They insinuate here that the "rulers" of Israel without exception had concluded that Jesus was a liar and deceiver. But this wasn't true! We know from 3:2 that Nicodemus has already confessed belief that Jesus had come from God. And later (12:42) we will see that many other leaders of Israel believed in Jesus.
5. Far from offering true spiritual leadership, the Pharisees and chief priests were engaging in shameless intimidation. Once again we see John's eye for irony as those who profess to be wise show themselves publically to be fools.
6. But it was really worse than that. These religious leaders were not merely acting foolishly. Sadly, their actions revealed that they themselves were under the very curse they had wrongly foisted upon the "ignorant masses." They put themselves under God's curse by not believing in Jesus.

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<sup>2</sup> Thomas Constable, (143)

John 3:36 “He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.”

7. The division of Israel’s leaders is not only demonstrated in how the Pharisees treat the Levites and the crowds, but also by how they respond to the sound counsel of one of their own (Read 50-52).

8. We have to remember here that the Pharisees and the chief priests had one major responsibility. They were the keepers of the law. They were the teachers of God’s word. But here, when one of their own actually performs his sworn duty of bringing the law of God to bear on an important issue of concern, they resort to an ad homonym attack: “You are not also from Galilee, are you?”

9. And then, as if they had not yet publically paraded their ignorance enough, they falsely appeal to the Scriptures for support: “Search [the Scripture] and see that no prophet arises out of Galilee.” At this point we know the wheels have completely come off their wagon and they have lost any pretense of reason and sound judgment. The fact is, there were indeed prophets who had come from Galilee. Jonah, Hosea, Nahum and probably others had come from Galilee. And there were most certainly men sitting in the room that day who knew it. But it didn’t matter. They hastily concluded that since Jesus grew up in Galilee He must have been born there, but He wasn’t. He was born in Judea in a little village called Bethlehem just as the prophets had foretold. But it just didn’t matter. The only thing that mattered to them was discrediting Jesus at all costs so they could condemn Him a false Messiah and have Him executed.

10. Again, I want you to think about the implications of becoming a disciple of Jesus. For two weeks I have been appealing to you to come and drink deeply of the Living Water found only in Christ. But as you consider coming you need to count the cost. Do you imagine that receiving Jesus will put you at peace with all men? It will not! As I said at the beginning, there will be people in your life who will not like that decision. Now as ever Jesus stands as a fork in the road dividing people one way or the other.

11. We would do well to recall Luke 12:51-53 where Jesus warns, “Do you suppose that I came to grant peace on earth? I tell you, no, but rather division; <sup>52</sup> for from now on five members in one household will be divided, three against two and two against three. <sup>53</sup> “They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law.”

12. You see, the gospel is absolutely free, but that doesn’t meant you will not pay a price for believing it. When you truly understand the glory of the gospel you understand that none of this too great a price to pay. Witness the man who found a treasure while walking through a field (Matt. 13:44) and “or joy over it he sells everything he has and buys that field.”

13. And recall the merchant seeking fine pearls (Matt. 13:45) and “upon finding one pearl of great value sold everything he owned to buy that pearl. That’s how awesome it is to experience the privilege of having a personal, intimate friendship with the Son of God.

You just have to know that saying “Yes” to Jesus means saying “No” to other things. Trusting in Jesus always brings some level of division in this life. You are saved out of darkness into God’s marvelous light, so you cannot be willingly yoked together with Christ-rejecters any more.

14. We see the dividing effect of faith throughout the NT. Jesus divides believers from unbelievers (3:18, 36; 1 John 5:10); those who walk in the light from those who walk in darkness (John 8:12; 12:35; 46; Eph. 5:8; 1 Thess. 5:5; 1 Pet. 2:9; 1 John 2:9); the sheep from the goats (Matt. 25:32-33); and the children of God from the children of the devil (1 John 3:10). Everyone is either for Him or against Him; there is no middle ground (Mat. 12:30).<sup>3</sup> Standing before Jesus Christ as a fork in the road you must make your choice.

15. I can tell you from experience, my friend, that the water of life is everything Jesus promises it will be... and more! You should come to Jesus. You should believe in Jesus. You should cast all of your hope for this life and the next on Jesus. You will not be disappointed. You will be rewarded 100 fold.

16. This is helpful for those of us who already belong to Christ because it’s comforting to know that rejection is normative and should be expected. When people respond to our gospel overtures with hostility and rejection we are sharing in the sufferings of Christ. He said, (Luke 6:22–23) “Blessed are you when men hate you, and ostracize you, and insult you, and scorn your name as evil, for the sake of the Son of Man. <sup>23</sup> “Be glad in that day and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven. For in the same way their fathers used to treat the prophets.”

17. Mark 10:28–30 “Peter began to say to Him, “Behold, we have left everything and followed You.” <sup>29</sup> Jesus said, “Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms, for My sake and for the gospel’s sake, <sup>30</sup> but that he will receive a hundred times as much now in the present age, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms, along with persecutions; and in the age to come, eternal life.”

18. No less than the apostle Paul himself said, “(Phil. 3:7–11) “But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. <sup>8</sup> More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, <sup>9</sup> and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, <sup>10</sup> that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; <sup>11</sup> in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.”

17. Amazingly, Paul was one of those religious leaders who hated Christ and did everything in His power to destroy those who followed Him. But though He attempted to

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<sup>3</sup> John MacArthur,

arrest Christ's people with weapons, one day Jesus arrested Him with His life transforming word. And Paul was never the same.

18. What about you? Let's pray.

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