

THE GOSPEL OF

JOHN**Confusion
and
Division****INTRODUCTION**

John 7:25-52

A story is told of two old ladies who lived together. One summer evening they were sitting on their porch, enjoying the peaceful scene. One woman was listening to the sound of a church choir a few doors away as they practiced. The other woman was listening to the sound of the crickets chirping. The woman listening to the choir said, "Isn't that a lovely sound?" The woman listening to the crickets replied, "Yes, and I understand that they do it by rubbing their legs together."

Sometimes confusion can be humorous, but at other times it can be disastrous. That's especially true when it comes to spiritual matters. Contrary to the prevailing popular view, spiritual truth is not whatever each person prefers it to be. There are not many ways to God, so that you can just pick whatever suits your fancy. Jesus was very exclusive when He said (John 14:6), "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me." Either He was right or He was wrong. You must decide. Spiritual truth is quite narrow. Spiritual confusion is eternally fatal!¹

OPEN IT

1. **What is the most challenging project that you have had to tackle recently? (Anyone assemble anything from IKEA?)**

¹ <https://bible.org/seriespage/lesson-42-don-t-be-confused-about-jesus-john-725-36>

READ IT

John 7:25-52

EXPLORE IT

- 2. Why do some people doubt that Jesus is the Christ? (v.27)**

- 3. Why do some people believe that He must be the Christ? (v.31)**

- 4. How do the religious leaders respond to the talk of the crowd? (v.32)**

- 5. When Jesus tells them that He is going away, where do the religious leaders think He might be going? (v.35)**

- 6. There arose a division among the people - what was it specifically about? (v.43)**

- 7. Why didn't the officers arrest Jesus? (v.46)**

- 8. Who spoke up for Jesus? (v.50)**

APPLY IT

In our text, we see different groups of religious Jews who are confused about Jesus. There is the group that John calls “the Jews” (7:1, 11, 13, 15, 35). This refers to the Jewish religious leaders, whom John also identifies as the Pharisees and chief priests, who were Sadducees (7:32). These groups were often rivals, but they viewed Jesus as a common enemy. So they joined together to try to seize Him (7:30, 44, 45). But they knew that many in the crowd liked Jesus. They also remembered Jesus’ disrupting their business by cleansing the temple. So they had to proceed cautiously.

Also, there is a larger group whom John calls “the crowd” (7:12, 20, 31, 32). This would include Jewish pilgrims who had come up to Jerusalem for the feast from all over Israel and from other countries. Many of them were not aware that the Jewish leaders were seeking to kill Jesus, so when He mentioned this, they accused Him of having a demon (7:20).

Then there is a narrower group that John calls “the people of Jerusalem” (7:25-27). They were confused both about who Jesus was and about why their religious leaders were not arresting Him. Because of misunderstanding both about the origins of the Messiah and Jesus’ origins, they concluded that He could not be the expected Messiah.

So the overall feeling of our text is that a lot of people were confused about who Jesus is. But John (20:31) wants us to know the truth about who He is so that we “believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing [we] may have life in His name.” So John is showing us that ...

While there are many confused opinions about who Jesus is, your eternal destiny depends on believing the truth about Him.²

9. The people who believed in Jesus were diametrically opposed to their own religious leaders. Have you ever had to stand up to people who have been placed over you in leadership? How do you know when it’s appropriate to do so?

10. Are you a confrontational person? What do you like or dislike about confrontational situations?

² <https://bible.org/seriespage/lesson-42-don-t-be-confused-about-jesus-john-725-36>

11. How have you seen Jesus as being "confrontational" in the Gospel According to John? Could Jesus have done something to diffuse the situation?

12. When you try to share Christ with someone and they say, "That's just your opinion," what should you say? If someone tells you that he is worried that he has missed the opportunity to trust in Jesus, how would you respond?

When you read Jesus' words here, where He promises that from the innermost being of the one who believes in Him will flow rivers of living water, you have to stop and ask, "To what extent is that true of me? Since I trusted in Christ as my Savior, has it been my experience that ever-flowing, abundant rivers of living water have gushed up inside of me and flowed out of me?"

Those questions are both convicting and hope-producing. They are convicting because none of us, if we're honest, can say, "Yes, those words nail it! That's exactly how to describe my life since becoming a Christian!" Honesty forces me to say, "Well, there has usually been a trickle of living water, although there have been some droughts where even it has dried up. Occasionally, there has been a creek of living water. But ever-flowing, abundant rivers (plural)? It would be a stretch to describe my Christian life like that!" So Jesus' words convict me with the barrenness of my walk with Him.

But Jesus' words also give me hope. If my life doesn't match His description here, it can! So can yours! This is a promise from the Son of God to all who will come to Him and drink: Out of your innermost being will flow rivers of living water. It describes, as Calvin points out (Calvin's Commentaries [Baker], pp. 308-309), an ideal that none of us can possess perfectly in the present life because of indwelling sin and because of differing measures of faith. But it's an ideal in which we can make progress as we walk with the Lord. We really can experience consistent fullness of joy in Him that flows from us to others. And so we should have hope because He who began the good work of salvation in us will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus (Phil. 1:6). But we need to press on toward the goal (Phil. 3:12-16). Here is Jesus' promise to all:

*Jesus Christ blesses all who believe in Him with rivers of the living water of His Spirit so that we will bless others.*³

13. When we trust in Jesus, He tells us that our hearts will overflow with "rivers of living water." Then John explains to us in verse 39 that Jesus was talking about the Holy Spirit. Look at these Old Testament passages, asking what can we learn about the Spirit from these texts:

Deuteronomy 8:15-16

Nehemiah 9:19-21

Isaiah 55:1-3; 58:11

³ <https://bible.org/seriespage/lesson-43-rivers-living-water-you-and-you-john-737-39>

14. Assess your normal experience: To what extent does “rivers of living water flowing from your innermost being” describe you?

15. To the extent that it does not describe you, try to determine why not. Is your trust in Christ as Savior? Are there sins that keep you from this blessing? Do you feed on Him in the Word daily?

16. Galatians 5:16 - “So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.” Walking in the Spirit seems harder and slower than a sudden, dramatic “baptism” in the Spirit. Why does the Bible command us to walk in the Spirit, but never to be baptized in the Spirit?

Now, after Jesus gave the open appeal of John 7:37-38, “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,’” the crowd’s response was both mixed and mixed up. Some thought that He was the promised Prophet. Others went so far as to venture that He was the Christ, while others disputed that idea. The Jewish leaders wanted to arrest and execute Jesus. But the officers that they sent to arrest Him came back empty-handed, saying (7:46), “Never has a man spoken the way this man speaks.” Then Nicodemus, whom we met in chapter 3, tries to check the murderous intent of the Sanhedrin, only to be rebuked. John 7:43 sums up the overall flavor of this section: “So a division occurred in the crowd because of Him.”

Do you think of Jesus as being divisive? We like to think of Jesus’ words in John 13, where He says that by our love the world will know that we are His disciples. Or we think of His prayer in John 17, that His followers would all be unified so that the world would know that the Father has sent Him. So we join hands and sing, “We are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord.” Jesus and division don’t seem to go together.

But Jesus Himself said (Matt. 10:34-36), “Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I came to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man’s enemies will be the members of his household.” (See, also, Luke 2:34.) So we don’t have a true perspective of who Jesus is unless we see Him, in part, as one who divides people.

Why does Jesus cause division? One reason is that He is the truth and truth necessarily divides. Although the postmodernists today want us to think that there is no such thing as absolute truth in the philosophic or religious realm (which means that postmodernism is not absolutely true!) or that if there is truth, we can’t know it, Jesus drew a distinct line in the sand when He said (John 14:6), “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.” Or, as Peter boldly proclaimed (Acts 4:12), “And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved.” There aren’t many different ways to God. The familiar slogan, “It doesn’t matter what you believe, just so that you are sincere,” is patently false. Faith in Jesus Christ, as revealed in the apostolic witness of the New Testament, is the only way to God. That is inherently divisive! Here we learn:

Because Jesus claims exclusive allegiance as the truth, He inevitably causes division among people.⁴

17. How and why were some people then and some today disappointed in Jesus?

⁴ <https://bible.org/seriespage/lesson-44-divisive-jesus-john-740-52>

18. What are your thoughts in response to the following statement: “In the essentials we need unity, in the non-essentials we need freedom; but in all things we need love.” — Rupertus Meldenius

19. What are some essentials of our faith that will divide us from other people, including professing Christians?