

No One Ever Spoke Like This Man

by John Piper

The uniqueness of Jesus Christ is the fulcrum that creates a double division among the people, and his claims and teachings are not just moral teachings, but are actually claims to deity.

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Scripture: John 4:14, John 6:35, John 7:46, John 10:27, John 11:25, John 14:6, John 15:5, John 17:24

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Description

This sermon delves into the unique claims of Jesus Christ, focusing on how His words divided people then and continue to do so today. The message emphasizes the importance of fully believing in Jesus as the Son of God and surrendering to Him for eternal life. It challenges listeners to not just acknowledge Jesus' uniqueness, but to come to Him, drink from Him, and find ultimate satisfaction in Him.

Transcript

Father, I pray that across these campuses now, you would move, awaken in your people a hunger for Christ, a thirst for the water that He is. If any of you thirsts, Jesus says, right now, through my mouth, let Him come to me and drink. So, Christ, come and pour out your Holy Spirit and make rivers of living water flow in the hearts of your people and draw those outside Christ to yourself.

Help me to be faithful to this word and show how unique you are. Persuade minds and awaken hearts to your absolutely all-satisfying, glorious, one-of-a-kind uniqueness. I ask this in Jesus' name, amen.

What I want to do now in this message is give an overview of the double division, two sets of divisions in this text, divided by verse 46, which is the fulcrum, the hinge. Let's read verse 46, the key phrase we're focusing on, no one ever spoke like this man, referring to Jesus. So, I want to focus on that and with the help of C.S. Lewis and U2's Bono, believe it or not, to open the truth of that statement and to show why it is so offensive and why it is so compelling.

And all of that, I pray, will help many of you climb down off the fence of wavering and give yourself wholly to Christ. There's so many believers and almost believers who live their lives wavering between, I'm walking away from this and maybe someday I'll really get committed. Just right in there.

And my prayer for this message is that God might use it to just help a lot of you just climb down off that fence. It's not a great place to live, living on fences. So first, the double division.

There's a double division, verses 40 to 44, we see the crowds split into three pieces. And then in 47 following, we see another three fragments, but let's just take them one at a time. First this, verses 40 to 44.

Verse 40, some of the people said, this really is the prophet, referring back to the promise in Deuteronomy 18 that there'll be a prophet like Moses someday who will rise up, and it's referred to in the book of Acts and applied to Jesus. So some people say, that's him. Another group, verse 41 says, others said, this is the Christ, the Messiah.

And then third group, middle of verse 41, didn't see how that was possible at all because the Messiah's supposed to be from Bethlehem, and they don't know he's from Bethlehem. I don't know if you've ever thought about how quiet that was. He lived in Nazareth, came down, went back, and most of the people, evidently this group didn't know where he was from.

So they say, some said, is the Christ to come from Galilee? Has not the Scripture said that Christ comes from the offspring of David and comes from Bethlehem, the village where David was? So he can't be the Messiah, he's not from Bethlehem, he's from Nazareth in Galilee. Now the summary then, get these three groups, and it says in verse 43, so there was a division among the people over him. Some wanted to arrest him, but no one laid hands on him.

So just get the picture that there's splintering when Jesus speaks, and that's the way it was then, and that's the way it is today. Wherever you faithfully present Christ, there will be a division of the house. Don't ever expect to be accepted by everybody when you declare yourself a Christian or try to make Christ known.

Some might give a hearing, some will think, no way, can that be real? That's the way it was then, that's the way it will be always until Jesus comes. Now verse 45, the officers, remember them from last week, had been sent by the chief priest back in the earlier part of the chapter to arrest him, and they come back empty-handed. So let's read verse 45.

The officers then came to the chief priest and the Pharisees who said to them, why did you not bring him? Now their answer is the hinge, the fulcrum of this passage. Verse 46, the officers answered, no one ever spoke like this man. Now think of all the things they might have said to cover their backside, because they're in trouble.

They could have said, it's a volatile situation out there, which was true, and if we had done that, there could have been a riot and you could have been in trouble, Pharisees and chief priests, they could have said something like that. But all they said was, nobody ever spoke like this man. So they didn't charge their empty-handedness to the situation.

They charged it to what they heard coming out of his mouth. So the fulcrum of this text is the uniqueness of Jesus Christ. Nobody ever spoke like this man, and that uniqueness is creating a double division.

We've seen one of them, and now we turn to the second division, and this one is a little different. This time the Pharisees themselves named the divisions, and they named them with their own particular diagnosis, and I think John wants us to hear the diagnosis of each of these three divisions in a way that shows that the Pharisees are digging themselves a deeper and deeper hole, because every diagnosis they give, John wants us to understand is true of them. So let's see what these three divisions are.

Verse 47, they say, the officers are deceived. The Pharisees answered them when they told them nobody ever spoke like this man. They answered them, have you also been deceived? Have any of the authorities or the Pharisees believed in him? So the officers had been given a very positive impression of Jesus, and they chalked that up to deception.

You're deceived. Look at us. And I think John means to say, yeah, who's deceived here? Second, the crowds are cursed.

Verse 49, this crowd, Pharisees say, this crowd that does not know the law is accursed. So all that confusion out there, all that volatile situation, all that mixed response, that's because they're all cursed. This is breathtaking.

It would be like the pastor saying, the whole congregation's cursed. That's why they don't agree with me. And I think John would hear us say, who's cursed? At least the crowd is groping, reasoning, trying to figure it all out.

Third, Nicodemus shows up after chapter three now a second time, not the last time. He, they say, is blinded by bias. Verse five, good old Nicodemus, who I don't know if he's born again yet or not.

I remember Jesus told him, you've got to be born again, Nicodemus, or you can't even see the kingdom of heaven, and maybe it's already happened, but he sure is uncomfortable with what's going on here. And so verse 51, he says, does our law judge a man? He was one of the Pharisees, said that back in chapter three. Does our law judge a man without first giving him a hearing and learning what he does? Like you might learn where he's from.

And to this justice and caution that Nicodemus is trying to get them to pursue, they accuse him of bias. At least that's my understanding of verse 52. They say, are you also from Galilee? Like you search and see that no prophet arises from Galilee.

In other words, the only reason you could be expressing any caution here at all, any desire to give this man the benefit of the doubt is because you're one of his clan. That's the only explanation we can think of. You're from Galilee too, and you guys stick up for each other.

And I'm sure John wants us to hear here who's biased. So summary of the second division. The officers are blinded by deception.

The crowds are blinded by a curse, and Nicodemus is blinded by bias. And I think the writer of this gospel wants us with sadness and fear and trembling to say the Pharisees are deceived. The Pharisees are cursed.

And the Pharisees are biased. And at the center now of this double division, the crowd's all confused, and you get Pharisees divvying everybody up with their particular diagnosis of blindness, and in the middle is nobody ever spoke like this man. That's the fulcrum, that's the hinge, and that's what's unleashing all this.

Nobody ever spoke like this man. We're not surprised, are we, when the uniqueness of Jesus lifted up, one of a kind in all the universe splits humanity. We're not surprised by that.

You remember Simeon, his little baby Jesus being brought into the temple, and Simeon, the old man, been waiting for the kingdom, and he sees the Lord's salvation, and God anoints him with a prophetic

insight and voice, and he says, Behold, this child was appointed, this child is appointed for the fall and the rising of many in Israel, and for a sign to be spoken against. So here I am, trying to speak for Christ in this service, knowing that the appointment is that my voice is the aroma of life to life for some, and the aroma of death to death for others, because Jesus is appointed for the rising and for the falling of many in churches. So know that that's what's happening in this room right now.

I'm going to use the words of Jesus. This is what he said, Do not think that I have come to bring peace on the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword, so there's a sword just slicing right through this service right now.

And on one side will be those who fall and say, No way, can't be real, not interested, want to go home and watch TV. And on the other side will be those who are rising, Yes, my Lord and my God. And some pray for each other right now that God would cause you to fall on the right side and rise.

What caused the officers to return empty-handed? They said, Nobody ever spoke like this man. So what did they heard? You remember where we were last week. The last thing that's recorded in this chapter that they had heard before they came back was this, verse 37, If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink.

Whoever believes in me, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water. What kind of human being talks like that? That's what they heard. What? What is the world? They just, Nobody says that.

You thirsty? Come to me. If you believe in me, your heart will become a river, many rivers. There'll be a river maker in your heart.

Nobody talks like that. Any preacher that talks like that, leave that church immediately. So they said, Nobody ever spoke like this man.

Now my question is, with regard to that sentence, is what specifically did they have in mind? Because in a lot of ways you could describe a person's talk as being unique. And my answer is, they had in mind the breathtaking, unique claims of Jesus about himself. Not his wisdom, not his intelligence, not his forcefulness, not his meekness, not his courage, not his clarity, though I'm sure all of those were amazing, but probably not unique.

But the claims that he made, Believe in me, your heart becomes a river. Come to me. I'm water.

I'm living water. Those kinds of claims, they just shook their head at. Nobody talks like that.

So what I want to do in the rest of our time together is just take you on a little brief tour of the Gospel of John where he talks like this. Okay? I'm going to give you eight outrageous claims. And then we're going to go to C.S. Lewis and Bono and let them come to terms with these claims.

All right? And then we'll close with you. Claim number one. And these are in the kind of order, I didn't put them in any textual order, I put them in the order of what seems to be a causality and flow.

But these are all from John, and my goodness, we could spend hours drawing them from elsewhere in John and from other Gospels, but this is just, let's just stay in John. Number one, Jesus claims to be God. I am telling you, John 13, 19, I am telling you this now, and he's referring to the betrayal of Judas.

I am telling you this now, before it takes place, that when it does take place, you will know, you will believe that I am. Now, it's always translated that I am he, with the he kind of unspecified. But in Greek, it's just I am.

He is saying, thinking in terms of Exodus 3 and Isaiah 42 to 48, where the foreknowledge of Yahweh was unique among the gods, and here he is saying, I know my betrayer well. He will do this. He'll do it when it's all designed, and he speaks this way, that you may know that I am.

And the word, I am, of course, is coming from Exodus chapter 3, verse 14, where Moses says to God, how will I identify you when the people say to me, who sent you, and you, God says to Moses, tell them, I am sent. Jesus does claim to be him. I and the Father are one.

To confirm this, let's go to claim number two. Jesus claimed to exist before he was born. First poem I ever had published, but that long, in Christian Life magazine, which is defunct in 1977, in fact, I think it's the only poem I've ever published.

Little poem was inspired by this statement. Jesus said to them, John 8, 58, truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am. Now, he could have said, I was, and he didn't, because he's making a point that is more breathtaking than preexistence.

Got this? It is more breathtaking than preexistence. It is the existence of I am before he was born. Before Abraham was, I am.

This gets you crucified. Number three, in this deity, he claims to come into the world as a shepherd to die for his sheep. He wants to make his dying, he intends to make his dying the key to eternal life for his sheep.

So John 10, 11, I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. Or the verse just before that, I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.

In other words, my dying as a lamb and a shepherd is the key that unlocks your everlasting existence with me in heaven. Number four, he claims to be the only way to God. John 14, 6, I am the way, the truth, and the life.

No one comes to the Father except through me. John 8, 12, I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.

So the way, the truth, the life, the light, and if you don't believe on him, he says in John 12, 46, you will remain in darkness forever. Nobody talks like this. Number five, he claims to be the bread and water that impart eternal life.

John 6, 35, I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me shall not hunger. Whoever believes in me shall never thirst.

You come to me, never thirst. Ever, forever, you'll never thirst to come to me. Whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again.

The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life, John 4, 14. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me, and I give them eternal life. They will never perish.

No one can snatch them out of my hand, John 10, 27. Nobody can talk like this, can they? Number six, he claims we can do nothing without him, John 15, 1 and 5, 1 and 5. I am the true vine. My father is the vine dresser.

Now verse 5, I am the vine. You are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him will bear much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

Really? Yes, more really than you think. All things were made through him. He sustains the universe by the word of his power, and nobody does anything of any spiritual lasting significance unless they're grafted into the vine.

These are breathtaking claims nobody else has ever taught. Number seven, he claims to be the one who raises people from the dead at the end of history. John 11, 25 and John 6, 40.

11, 25 and 6, 40. I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live.

For this is the will of my father, that everyone who looks on the son and believes in him should have eternal life. And I will raise him up, I will raise him up on the last day. Other places in the Bible it says the spirit will raise us up, and in other places the father will raise us up, and Jesus says I'm raising you up, and we work at it together.

If you ever rise from the dead, Jesus will have raised you from the dead. Lastly, number eight, he claims to be the supreme glory that will satisfy us forever in the age to come. John 17, verse 24, Father, he's praying, I desire that they also whom you have given me may be with me where I am to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.

Your final destiny, he says, is to spend eternity watching him, looking at him, being satisfied with him, amazed at him and all that he is and all that he's done. It will take an eternity to exhaust the glory of Jesus. You will never be bored, that's an outrageous claim.

Nobody talks like this, do they? And, of course, those are only eight. What if we were to spend time on he claims to forgive sins, he claims to return in glory, he claims to fulfill the whole law, and the list goes on and on and on. So, the officers had it right, and John surely intends for us to see that, that the fulcrum of this text that divides the world is nobody ever spoke like this man.

How do you account for that? That's the question now. That's where we need some help. Maybe from C.S. Lewis, maybe even from Bono.

How do you account for that? And both of them say the same thing, and I'm virtually sure they're both from Ireland. I'm virtually certain that Bono read Lewis on this, he sounds just like him, but the context is different and perhaps in our day maybe even more compelling. So, let me give you Lewis first.

Lewis is real famous on this. This comes from mere Christianity. Sometimes it's known as liar, lunatic, or lord, but you need to hear the words of Lewis because they really are compelling.

They really are compelling. So, let me read you this section from mere Christianity, page 55. I'm trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Jesus, like, I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept his claim to be God, end quote.

Now Lewis again, that is the one thing we must not say. A man who said the sorts of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would be a lunatic on the level of a man who says he's a poached egg, or else worse, the devil of hell.

You must make your choice. Either this man was and is the Son of God, or a madman, or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool.

You can spit at him and kill him as a demon, or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us.

He did not intend to. That's, in other words, the way Jesus spoke. No one ever spoke like this man makes it irrational to say nice things about Jesus and reject his deity.

If he's not God, he's not nice. C.S. Lewis' fellow Irishman, Paul David Hewson, otherwise known as Bono, which comes from Bonavox, which was his nickname as a teenager, good voice. He's the leader of the rock band U2, maybe the most famous one.

He read Lewis, I have no doubt. He doesn't say he did, but you'll hear it. And a few days after the Madrid bombing in 2004, when so many people were killed and I think a thousand injured, terrorist bomb in Madrid, he was interviewed by a French journalist named Michka Assayas.

And then the next year a book was published. It's called Bono in Conversation with Michka Assayas. And that's where this comes from, page 227.

You can see it at Amazon. In the conversation, the unbelieving French journalist tries to draw him out about the religious nature of the bombing of the train to show that religion causes this kind of stuff. And Bono launched into this grace statement.

It's all over the web. It has been for several years called grace over karma or something. You can find it.

And he closes that little vignette of responding by saying, it's not our good works that gets us through the gates of heaven, to which the journalist says this, such great hope is wonderful, even though it's close to lunacy in my view. Christ has the rank of the world's great thinkers. But son of God, isn't that far-fetched? Okay, now there's the setup.

He did what Lewis said you can't do, right? He just did what Lewis said, you can't do that. And Bono is onto it, really onto it. Okay, so here's his response.

His answer, isn't that far-fetched to call Jesus the son of God? He says, no, it's not far-fetched to me. Look, the secular response to the Christ story always goes like this. He was a great prophet, obviously a very interesting guy, had a lot to say along the lines of other great prophets, be they Elijah, Muhammad, Buddha, or Confucius.

But actually Christ doesn't allow you that. He doesn't let you off the hook. Christ says, no, I'm not saying I'm a teacher.

Don't call me a teacher. I'm not saying I'm a prophet, I'm saying I am the Messiah. I'm saying I am God incarnate.

And the people say, no, no, please just be a prophet, a prophet. We can take that. You're a bit eccentric.

We've had John the Baptist eating locusts and wild honey. We can handle that, but don't mention the M word. Because, you know, we're gonna have to crucify you.

And Jesus goes, no, no. I know you're expecting me to come back with an army and set you free from these creeps, but actually I am the Messiah. And at this point, everyone starts looking at his shoes, says, oh my God, he's gonna keep saying this.

So what you're left with is either Christ was who he said he was, the Messiah, or a complete nutcase. I mean, we're talking nutcase on the level of Charles Manson. I'm not joking here.

The idea that the entire cosmos, I'm sorry, the idea that the entire course of civilization for half the globe could have its fate changed and turned upside down by a nutcase, for me, that's far-fetched, end quote. Now, I'm almost done, but I have to draw out a very, very careful question. Is Bono born again? And of course, the answer to that is, I don't know.

Or you might think, whoa, why don't you know after that? If he's not, I have prayed, I do pray now, and I will pray that he will be. That would be wonderful. But I don't know, because it's possible to be persuaded by the logic of Lewis and be lost.

And the reason I know that is because I am totally persuaded that the devil is persuaded totally by this logic. There's nothing in it he disagrees with at all. The devil knows and is totally persuaded Jesus is the Holy One of God, and the devil is not born again.

Which brings us back to our text from last week, doesn't it? No one ever spoke like this man. What had he said? He had not just said, I'm God. He had said something more life-changing.

He had said, is anybody thirsty? Let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water. Believing is more than being compelled by the liar, lunatic, Lord logic.

The devil's compelled by it, and he's lost. I don't know about Bono. I have good hopes for Lewis.

In other words, believing on Jesus means that if you, and I, and Lewis, and Bono want to be saved, we must both be persuaded that no one ever spoke like this man. He is who he says he is. He's true.

And come to him to drink. We must come to him as our all-satisfying supreme treasure. We must come to him as our thirst-quenching, life-giving water.

We must come to him as our hunger-stilling bread from heaven. We must come to him as our perfect, precious, sacrificed lamb of God in our place. We must come to him as the all-illuminating, all-guiding light of our life.

And we must embrace this water, and this bread, and this light, and this lamb as our supreme portion and feed off of him, and be transformed little by little into his image. He is everything to us. That's what belief is.

No man ever spoke like this man. He is true. He is who he said he was.

But I plead with you, don't leave it at that. Come, drink, eat, trust, and find satisfaction in him forever. Father, I pray that the logic of C.S. Lewis and Bono would be compelling in this room.

But God, I pray for so much more. There's just so many, many professing Christians who talk that language and don't drink. Don't eat.

Don't trust. Don't walk in light with joy abounding. So I'm praying for real salvation, not just persuasion.

Come. We have heard the voice of Jesus say, come to me and rest. Come to me and drink.

Come to me and eat. And we come. In Jesus' name, I pray.

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