

# Understanding the Conflict Surrounding Jesus

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**John 7:40-52**

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So, take a look at verse 43. It says, "There was a division among the people over Him." So, the people are divided, the people are taking sides against each other, and the reason is, it says at the end, it's over Jesus.

I remember talking to a guy about Jesus once, and I wasn't being mean at all. I promise. You don't believe I would be mean at all, right? But I was presenting the truth about his sin and his need for a savior to him, and after a little bit, he got right in my face and wanted to beat me down, and the reason is, Jesus. Thankfully, there was a black belt karate master standing next to me, he was ready to take him down. So, that was helpful. But anyone ever experienced that? People in conflict, people at odds with you because of Christ?

I've talked with many of you. Your non-Christian family have taken sides against you for being a Christian. Others of you, non-Christians at work or at school find it hard to be around you. Some of you have had to quit your jobs because the environment has just become too anti-Christian for you to endure. Things have changed. Statistically speaking, the weird ones in our culture are the ones who go to church, because the normal person in our culture, statistically speaking, doesn't.

Courage is going to be a virtue, I think, that we will regularly need to instill into our souls as time goes on. Anyone here getting to handle some of this kind of conflict over Jesus coming up in the next couple of weeks? I wish I could say it's going to end soon. I wish I could say that "Hey, that's not going to happen," but I'm sorry, it won't. It's not going to end. The division that we're seeing in our day was exactly true of the people in Jesus' day, and the division wasn't over Christian teaching, and it wasn't over Christian ethics. The division is always, as it says here in our text, over Jesus.

So, hopefully, after today, you will have a better understanding of the conflict that surrounds Jesus. Where does this conflict come from? Why is it here? How can we understand the conflict and understand the people that we may be in conflict with? What's going on in their heads, what's going on in their hearts? How can we think through it when that conflict comes to our lives? My hope is to answer these things for us from our texts today.

Now, our text has a context, and the context is the city of Jerusalem. It's the Feast of Tabernacles. It's the fall. This is one of the three major holidays where every Jewish male, 20 and over, had to attend. So, the city is swollen with tens of thousands of pilgrims from all over the Roman Empire. In verse 37, the text says, "This is the last day of the feast," what they called the great day because the celebration is coming to its apex. The joy, the exhilaration was at its peak.

I talked about this more last weekend, but this is the climax of the week, and at this climax, there are thousands of people in the Temple Court, on the Temple Mount. They're praising God as the priests are pouring water out into these channels next to the altar of sacrifice. This water is... These thousands of people are looking at the water. It's reminding them of the exodus when God took care and provided water for 2 million plus people in the exodus from Iraq. It's also reminding them of the provision of God taking care of them that year with the rain that led to the crops that led to their food.

And that water also spoke to them of a future when the Messiah would come and pour out not water but pour out his spirit on earth and on the people of the earth, fulfilling the promises made to the Jews and actually from them blessing the world. So, all of this is going on in their heads. These tens of thousands are rejoicing in God's love and his care and his provision, that he would give them life through that water. And then, verse 37, in the middle of all of that, Jesus stands up as they're praising God for water and he shouts, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink." To people living in a desert like us who know that water is life, Jesus says, "I've got something even better for you than water."

Verse 38. "Whoever believes in me, as the scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water." Continuous, overflowing, eternal satisfaction for your soul. Jesus saying, "That can be yours." A washing away of all your sins, a refreshing and a renewal that lasts when all the other things that promise to satisfy all those things when they fade away, that thirst in your soul that no one and nothing can satisfy. Jesus says, "I'll do it. I'll satisfy it now and forever." If verse 38, "You believe in me."

Jesus invites anyone to this. Verse 37, "Anyone come and drink." Drinking is a metaphor that points to taking him in, believing in him, receiving him in to satisfy your soul. There are thousands of people listening to Jesus say this, and I love the chapter because it doesn't just end in verse 39 with the explanation of what he's saying. But we see, starting in verse 40, the responses, and you see it's in their responses that we see this division develop over Jesus, and that division, as we see taking place in our text, is going to help us understand a little better the conflict that we often face in our lives because of Jesus.

So, in our text, we're going to see four responses to Jesus. These responses are common today, just as common as they were 2000 years ago. Let's see the first one, starting in verse 40. It says, "When they heard these things, some of the people said, 'This really is the Prophet.' Others said, 'This is the Christ.'" So, when the people heard the words of verses 37 and 38, it divided them from one another. First group says, "He's the prophet." Another group, verse 41, say, "This is the Christ." So, in the crowd that day, people are automatically disagreeing about Jesus, and notice, they also believe there is a difference between the Prophet in verse 40 and the Christ in verse 41.

In their minds, this wasn't two ways of saying the same thing. The way they saw it, the prophet was a different person altogether from the Christ. These are two different people. So, I see four responses to Jesus here which explain the division. The first one is this. ***Point #1), some say to Jesus, "Yes, but." Some say to Jesus, "Yes, but."*** They agree with some ideas about Jesus, but

they also disagree. They're a yes, but a yes, but. And what do I mean? Well, the Prophet is a figure promised in Deuteronomy 18:15 that a Jewish prophet like Moses would come to the people and the people were to listen to him. Some of the people there that day think Jesus is that figure. This Prophet, this second Moses, who would probably deliver the people from Roman tyranny just like Moses delivered them from Egyptian tyranny.

Others, verse 41, who are not part of this group... Says "Others," beginning of verse 41. So, they're in a different group, and they think Jesus is the Messiah, which at that time means that he is a political leader who again would free them from Roman tyranny and fulfilling all of God's promises to Israel. So, what we see here is people who have a reverence for Jesus. They have respect for him. They think of him highly. They see him as someone God is clearly working through, but their knowledge of him is not correct. You see, the Prophet and the Christ are, in fact, the same person. Jesus is that person. So, the division here points to inaccurate knowledge of Jesus. They're saying all the right words about Jesus. He's a prophet. He's the Christ, but what they mean by those titles is not biblical, which means that it's not accurate, which leads to the division.

I wonder if you've ever interacted with this person. Maybe you used to be this person. Maybe you are this person. Agree with a lot of truth and even use the same words, but their definitions are vastly different from the Bible's. Like, "Yes, Jesus is the son of God. I believe that" but he's the literal child of God, just like you are, just like I am. There's nothing special there. Yes, Jesus is a Prophet, but he's not special. He's just one in a long line of other prophets. He's certainly not God. Yes, Jesus is God, but he had a God consciousness that you can have too. Yes, I celebrate Jesus at Christmastime. Yeah, glory to the newborn king and all that, but not a Jesus that demands I believe in him. I mean, he and I have a deal. I respect him, a couple times a year. He stays out of my life. A lot of yes, buts, based on inaccurate, incorrect data about Jesus.

You see, the real Jesus is the Prophet. His words should be listened to because his words are the words of God. That's what it means to be a prophet. His words are not to be admired, in other words. They're to be taken seriously, followed, adhered to, even obeyed. The real Jesus is the Christ. He is the Messiah. He's the King over all kings. He's the Lord over all lords. He will establish his kingdom on earth and reign over the whole earth one day, and as the Messiah, he's also a priest.

He's a priest. He comes between the people and God. He comes between us and God, and as God, he represents God to us, and as truly human, he represents us to God. He's a true go between. He's our representative, and as a representative, he not only makes a sacrifice for our sins like priests would do, but he is the sacrifice for sin with his death on the cross. He's punished for all the sins of all those who would believe because he is the Messiah, the Prophet, the Priest, and the King. That's what it means for Him to be the Christ. That's the Jesus people need to come to, and that's the Jesus that causes division because people have their own ideas about who Jesus is, who Jesus should be in their minds, so that this Jesus, the real Jesus, he just doesn't fit their mold.

And that's the first response to Jesus. Halfway into verse 41, we see the second response to Jesus. Take a look. It says, "But some said..." This is another group, now, a third group. "Is the Christ to come from Galilee?" So, this group of people asked two questions that show where they're at with Jesus. These people clearly know the Bible and they're saying, this Jesus, he's disqualified, he's not eligible to be the Messiah. We know the Bible and he's not eligible because of where he's from and because of who his family is.

Again, look at verse 41. "Is the Christ to come from Galilee?" That's not an honest question looking for information, that's a rhetorical question, which assumes a no answer. Their no answer is then supported by what they say Next, verse 42. Has not, the scripture said that the Christ comes from the offspring of David and comes from Bethlehem, the village where David was?" In other words, God's painted a picture of the Messiah for us in the Bible so that, when someone comes and claims to be the Messiah, we can test him by those passages and we can recognize him, and this guy doesn't pass the test, because he's not from Bethlehem. Whoops, he sure was and he's not from the line of David. Whoops, he sure was, huh.

They are certain that, based on these two tests, he cannot be the Messiah. When he passed both tests. It wouldn't have taken much for them to verify these conclusions, but they don't. But really, I mean, why would they? Don't bother them with the facts. They already know the truth about him. Based on all this, the second response to Jesus that explains conflict is **point #2), Others just say, "No." Just flat, "No.** I will not come to Jesus. I will not believe in him." And then, they give their reasons. These people try to solidify their objection to Jesus with the Bible. Think about that. People in our text, they know the Bible. They're quoting texts. They can argue about doctrine. They can think through, "Here's what the Bible teaches, and then they can take that and apply it to life." They have no idea what it's really saying, though. Their spiritual eyes are still blind. Their hearts are dark and they're dead in their sins. They need to be born again.

People in our text, they knew the Bible. They knew promises that were there to help people identify the Messiah. And, you think about it, the membranes in their ears are vibrating with words that are coming out of the mouth of their Messiah, and they say, "That's not the guy. That's not the guy." Their ignorance would be comical if it wasn't so eternally tragic as they use their knowledge of the Bible to say that Jesus can't be the Messiah when that's what he really was.

Now it's a little easier to see why verse 43 says, "There was a division among the people over him." And then, there's a fourth group of people introduced in verse 44 that said that some of them wanted to arrest him, but no one laid hands on him. These people get violent. They want to arrest him, seize him. There's some kind of anger in them. They can't stand this anymore. They got to grab him, but it wasn't God's time for that yet. That would come about six months from these events, and so, no one could even touch him.

There are many who still do this today, right? They don't want to say, "I'm just not into Jesus." But, when they give their reasons, those reasons are just firmly established in midair. They point to verses that they don't know they're taking out of context. "Well, it's just your interpretation."

Verses that actually say the opposite of what they're saying those verses say. Verses they completely misunderstand, and then, after all that, they proclaim, "And that's why it's fine for you, but I don't want to follow Jesus."

I don't know about you, if you've had those interactions before, but I have. And, in those moments, it's hard for me to listen, because I'm trying to listen to them talk. At the same time, I'm praying, "God, open their eyes." They see it in the text, they see the truth. Just imagine, these people are quoting the Bible. "He can't be the Messiah because Messiah's from Bethlehem," and you just got to sit there like, "What?". That's where he's from. And you just wonder, as people talk like this, like, "God, just remove the scales from their eyes, help them see the truth that's staring them right in the face."

The same thing is going to be true not just of the people in verse 41 and 42, and not just the people in verse 44 who are all saying "No," but you also see the religious leaders in verse 45. They're going to do the same thing. They argue from ignorance and even use multiple logical fallacies to defend their rejection of Jesus. But, in the end, that's all that people have who reject Jesus. Inaccurate knowledge and illogical reasons. Why? Because Jesus didn't just speak the truth. Jesus is the truth. And, if Jesus is the truth, then to reject him is to reject him based on inaccurate knowledge and illogical reasons.

Let's look at these religious leaders. They're going to interact with another group of people who give a third response to Jesus. Verse 45. "The officers then came to the chief priests and Pharisees who said to them, 'Why did you not bring him?'" These officers are priests who keep the peace in the temple area.

So, they're Levites who had religious training. Maybe some of them were even trained by these religious leaders. So, about two to three days earlier, verse 32 says, "These officers were dispatched by these leaders to go arrest Jesus." And today, they come back, a couple days later, and they return empty-handed, and the authorities want to know, "What's going on here? Why didn't you bring him?" In verse 46, the officers respond, "No one ever spoke like this man."

As an aside, 2000 years later, after every major culture in world history has pretty much been open to us, this statement in verse 46 sticks still rings true to this day. No one ever spoke like Jesus. These men are mesmerized by what Jesus said. They're mesmerized by how he said it. He didn't speak like a mere man. They're seeing something unique and something special about Jesus. These guys, again, they're not a group of thugs, they're a group of pastors. So, they've preached sermons. They've heard sermons. They're sermon people and they're going, "This guy, there's something special about him."

They're so impressed with him, they can't even carry out their orders, and notice, they don't blame the crowds. "They were just so many people, we couldn't get to him." They don't blame politics. "Oh, if we arrest him, I mean it could cause a riot, and you don't want that." They don't do any of that. They actually tell the truth. Muster up the courage and they're like, "Dude, the guy's amazing," probably knowing that they would get in a lot of trouble, which is what happens.

Verse 47, the Pharisees answered them, "Have you also been deceived? Have any of the authorities or the Pharisees believed in him? But this crowd that doesn't know the law is accursed." Safe to say, these leaders are ticked with their temple police force, right? They use ad hominem and appeals to authority. And, when logic is called damning, the origin all to attack these officers.

Here's what they're saying, verse 47. "You aren't deceived, too? Come on, you're smarter than that, right?" Verse 48, "You should reject him because we, your religious authorities, we reject him, and we're the ones in charge." Verse 49, "You don't want to be like those idiots out there who don't know the Bible. They're the only ones that believe in him. Whose side are you on? The crowd who is cursed for not knowing God's word, or are you on our side? The scholars who know the Bible the best?"

You ever interact with this person? Most PhDs are atheists, right? I don't know if that's true, but that's what people say. Most college graduates, they're not religious. Maybe that should tell you something about Christianity, or maybe it should tell you something about college. More about indoctrination than about the truth.

But anyway, as an aside, verse 49 is interesting. It proclaims something that has stood the test of time down through the ages. That, when it comes to deception, when it comes to losing the truth, when it comes to turning away from the truth, it is often led by scholars who lead people astray, while the regular, everyday Christian just continues to remain faithful. Now, interestingly, we don't know what the officers did with all this. We don't know how they responded to their superiors or to Jesus. It doesn't say that they were like, "Oh, you're right," and they got back in line, and they started figuring out how they're going to arrest Jesus. It doesn't say that. But it also doesn't say, they said, "You can take this job and shove it. I'm going to go follow Jesus." It doesn't say that either.

And so, we don't know how they responded, and since we don't know, it makes sense to me to say that the third response to Jesus that can lead to conflict is *point #3), Others say, "Maybe." Others just say, "Maybe."* There's a sense that these men recognize something holy, something distinct about Jesus, but not enough to come to him, not enough to believe in him. So, they admire Jesus. They see something special about him, but they seem to still be far from turning from their sins and trusting in him as their savior. It doesn't say they see him as their Messiah. They don't become his followers. At least, doesn't say that in the text, but they also don't reject Jesus, either.

So, they're in this limbo, this no man's land, half in, half out, caught in the middle type thing. Know anyone like this? They're impressed with Jesus. Maybe every Christmas and Easter, they're happy to come to church with you, and when they're here, they like it. They like Jesus, but they never seem to cross the line. They never make the decision. They never come to Christ. They know the truth, and they know the truth is true. They have no problem with that. They agree with you totally when you talk about the Bible, but something just seems to be missing.

Maybe it's because they're a big "Maybe." To maybe even try to convince them, "Hey, you need to cross the line." You try to explain to them that knowing the truth and knowing the truth is true is not enough. Demons know the truth and know the truth is true. There's got to be something else. They have to believe. They must turn from their sins and trust in Christ. But, at that point, it often leads to conflict. "I'm good. What are you talking about? I believe just like you do." When you know there's, something still missing. You know this person?

See, the real Jesus doesn't allow anyone to be half in and half out and okay. To own the home, you have to sign your name on the dotted line. To be married, you have to say, "I do." You have to make a commitment. And this Jesus that we're seeing in the text, he demands that we respond. Either we receive him a savior in Lord, not with our head only, but with our whole heart, our whole lives, or you're already rejecting him. It's two circles that do not cross at all. Mutually exclusive, receive or reject. There's no middle ground, but people like to stay there and think, "I'm okay." But in Jesus, there is no middle ground. He is the great divider. He divides people one from another, which we see one more time, starting in verse 50.

"Nicodemus, who had gone to him before and who was one of them, said to them, 'Does our law judge a man without first giving him a hearing and learning what he does?'" A couple of things about Nicodemus. Notice, verse 50, he's described as someone who had gone to him before. That happened in John 3. Jesus, about 18 months earlier, was in the Temple and he was preaching, and he catches the attention of Nicodemus. And so, Nicodemus goes to meet with him and talk to him and asking questions, and Jesus turns it around on him, says, "You must be born again. You will not enter the Kingdom of Heaven unless you're born again." And then, he talks to Nicodemus about how to go to Heaven when we die.

Nicodemus is also described in verse 50, as you see it, as one of them, one of the religious leaders, part of the religious and social elite of that day, someone Jesus called in John 3:10, "The teacher in Israel." He is the best, the most revered teacher in Israel alive at the time. He had the largest crowds of people coming to hear him speak.

I don't know if you noticed the comedy in the text, but here's Nicodemus in verse 51, reminding them of what their law says. After these men had just slammed the crowds in verse 49 for not knowing what the law says. Nicodemus is exposing their hypocrisy. The scholars who knew the Bible the best didn't live according to it. All he's saying is, "Everybody deserves a fair trial." That's what our law says. That's what the Bible says that Jesus should be treated as innocent until proven guilty, that we don't come to a verdict before hearing the evidence. And he does it in the least offensive way possible. He just asks a question. But you see in their response, their hatred for Jesus, because they go after the guy who's near if not at the very top of the top in their culture.

Verse 52, they reply to him, "Are you from Galilee too? Search and see that no Prophet arises from Galilee." You one of His followers? Did you come with him from Galilee? You know that backwoods hick towns up there in Galilee? You're one of those, like Jesus is? And then, they say to the teacher in Israel, "Search the scriptures." Like, you don't know the Bible, do you? No

prophet comes from Galilee, except Jonah and Elijah, maybe Hosea, Amos, and Nahum, too. But, other than those guys, no prophet comes from Galilee. Whoops.

So, either they're saying that, which is just wrong, or they're saying this. "The Prophet does not arise from Galilee," which then goes back to the objection of verse 41, which is true. Messiah doesn't come from Galilee. So, it's true, but it's also ironic, since once again, Jesus isn't from Galilee. He's born in Bethlehem.

Now, over the next six months, Nicodemus actually becomes a follower of Jesus. But he's not one here. Not now, not yet. So, in this, we see a fourth and final response, the response *point #4), of others who say, "Soon."* "Soon". For others, still, it's not a no, but it's a not yet. It's an almost. They're in between, but, unlike the third group of people who are just staying in the middle, there is movement towards Christ in this group. There's grace in their soul. The father is drawing them, but they haven't come to him yet. They haven't yet believed and been saved.

So, what we're seeing in Nicodemus here in chapter 7 is a snapshot, but the full story of his commitment to Jesus hadn't been written yet in John 7. That awaits. He fades into the background here, but he comes back in chapter 19. So, let's turn to chapter 19 and see the rest of the story.

John 19, starting, "If you've got a Bible from one of the ushers here, that's on page 1004. 1004. Let's pick things up in verse 38, John 19:38. It says, "After these things," which is after the death of Jesus, "Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews." Let me just pause right there and say, "I want you to notice that a disciple of Jesus who was hiding that fact because he was scared is somebody that God is going to use in a most unique and powerful way."

That we often look at Christians like, "You need to do better, try harder, suck it up, be more public." And here, you have God using a secret disciple who was afraid of the Jews to do something remarkable. He asked Pilate, so he goes to the governor, and now, his secretness is becoming more public. He asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus, and Pilate gave him permission. So, he came and took away his body. Now, the body of crucifixion victims were not revered at all. They were typically, they're criminals. They're the worst of criminals. That's why they're crucified. And so, they're typically thrown into pits and eaten by animals. But here, Joseph of Arimathea, a very rich man, other gospels tell us, come, and take Jesus' body down from the cross.

But notice verse 39, Nicodemus, our guy, also, who earlier had come to Jesus by night, that's John 3. He came. So, he came to help, but he came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about 75 pounds in weight. Nicodemus has got some means as well. That's a massive gift. So, now, Nicodemus is not only giving this massive gift, but he's also becoming public in his commitment to Jesus.

And what we see here is, Nicodemus demonstrates he's a follower of Jesus by being one of only two people who were courageous enough to get Jesus' body and bury it. I mean, think about it.



Where's Peter? Where's Mary? Where's John and Matthew and all the other guys? They're cowering in some house. They're hiding. These two men had the courage to go and bury Jesus, showing him respect, risking their reputation, for Nicodemus, risking his position with the religious and social elites that he was a part of. And God uses these two guys to fulfill Old Testament prophecy, 700 years before this event. Isaiah in Isaiah 53:9 says, "The Messiah would be killed, and his grave would be connected to a rich man." And it happens right here because of Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus.

By the way, turn back to John 7. Verse 45 is a summary of a conversation between the religious leaders. If you've got to ask the question, maybe, I don't know if you do. I asked the question, "Where did John get this information? Where did that come from? He wasn't a part of those people. He couldn't have been there. Where'd he get that from?" Maybe, just maybe, Nicodemus told him what took place because Nicodemus became a follower of Jesus and was able to give John the information that we see here.

So, in chapter 7, Nicodemus isn't a believer, but soon he was, and church history tells us he suffered greatly for his commitment to Jesus. And when I say greatly, I mean greatly. History tells us he was canceled. He was shunned by his colleagues, which after we just read is not a surprise at all, right? That's not a surprise. When he was baptized as a follower of Jesus, he lost everything, his status, his positions, he even lost his property and his possessions. He was kicked out of Jerusalem. He was not allowed to be in the city anymore. His family was allowed to stay, but now, they had to fend for themselves. Now, they are in utter abject poverty. There are stories of his daughters picking up grain on the road and digging through piles of dung to find something to eat. That's how bad things became. And finally, history tells us that, one day, he was surrounded by a mob and beaten to death for being a Christian.

One author said that Nicodemus lost everything in this world but gained everything in the world to come. He endured excommunication, destitution, persecution, and eventually execution, and he endured it all because his soon became a yes.

So, why is there so much conflict over Jesus? Well, because of all the responses there are to Jesus. There are "Yeses," of course, but there are "Yes, buts" and "Nos" and "Maybes" and "Soons." Put all those people together in different combinations, and you get what we see in our text and what you see in our lives. Conflict, division, strife, therefore, is inevitable. Now, I wish there wasn't. That would be nice, right? I wish there wasn't division over Jesus. I wish that every false notion of Jesus would just evaporate, and we could all agree that Jesus is who Jesus said he is. It's important because there's nothing at all that is more important than to know the truth about Jesus, that he is the one who came to show us God because he is God, the one who came to teach us God's word, the one who came to save us from our sin, the one who rose from the dead. To say, "Everything I've said and everything I've done, it's all true."

See, even though the division is over Jesus, he's not the real reason for the division. The ultimate reason for the division lies in the heart of each and every person. As long as there is still sin and rebellion against God in the human heart, there will be division. There will be division when

there should only be one view, which is Jesus' view of himself, which is that he is the son of God and Savior of the world.

By the way, John didn't just write this to give a historical account of what happened after Jesus invited people to come to Him at the Feast of Tabernacles that year. You see, John wrote this text that we just looked at so that we can see in these four responses what our response to Jesus is. So which one of the responses did you see for yourself? A yes, but? A, no? Maybe? Soon? I know most of you are a yes, but if you found yourself, if you see yourself in the mirror of God's word, don't walk away like you didn't see yourself. Take that seriously. Make the commitment. Sign your name on the dotted line. That's why you would be here. That's why God would bring you here and show you yourself in a 2000-year-old book, because this book is living and active and it's showing you the truth about yourself so that you would respond.

And just to be clear, it's not come to our church or come to our club or join our community or come to our political rally or come and do this set of rules that all the rest of us are doing. That's not what this is. This is come to Christ, come to Jesus. All you have to lose is your sin and your sentence of condemnation before God and the guilt in your soul. That's all. So, come to him. Don't harden your heart. Don't pretend you didn't see what you just saw about yourself. Come to him, and Christian, wish I had better news, but this conflict will continue and until your faith becomes sight, and it will continue in this world until everyone sees Jesus for who he really is, at which time, every knee will bow, and every tongue will confess the same thing. There will be unity across every human being that's ever lived because they will all proclaim, "Jesus Christ is Lord." Until that day, conflict over Jesus is inevitable.

But I hope our text encourages you, which means, I hope it instills courage in you, and it may just be like Jesus. It'll be your courage to speak the truth, your courage to be faithful when it is hard. Your courage in that moment when you're tempted to say nothing, to say something. It may just be that God will use your courage in the face of conflict to save someone, just like God used it to save Nicodemus.

Now, Christian, as you face a Christmas or you face just a reality that can cause conflict to you because of Jesus, I hope that this look at God's word has helped you understand the conflict that you may find yourself in. And, if you don't find yourself encouraged and in conflict, then I hope this look has equipped you to help someone who is. Let's pray.

Jesus. Every time your word is taught, every single time, there is a moment of clarity that we receive where we see the truth about ourselves clearly, abundantly, absolutely, and we're forced in that moment to decide whether we're going to see ourselves in the mirror of your word and do something about it, or whether we're going to walk away and pretend we didn't see what we saw. Oftentimes, we interpret that moment as something negative, when really, it is evidence of your immense kindness and mercy to us that you would allow us to see the truth so that we could respond in a way that's pleasing to you. And so, I pray that for each of us here and watching, that you would use these truths to impact our lives, that we would be different people because of what we see here. Do this please for our good and do it please for the glory of your name, Amen.

