

DIVISION OVER CHRIST

Disciples are made in conversion but then need to grow. In faith, they become a learning/follower, but that is just the beginning of a lifelong process. They need to continue to learn and grow; hence, after they are baptized, Christ said to continue “***teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you.***” (Matt. 28:19-20) There is a growth process, and in that process disciples can get off track or fail to grow, etc.

However, the commitment of a true disciple is made very clear by Jesus as seen in the context of Matthew 10. All the way through, Jesus is emphasizing what true discipleship looks like, and what He shows is that it involves a supreme commitment to Him above all else. In other words, true disciples recognize Jesus as Lord! That is the issue through and through in this context!

Matthew 10:34 (NKJV)

34 “Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword.

Truth unites, but it also divides – depending on what side of Jesus we fall on. Jesus is telling us that some will accept Him on His terms (true disciples/believers) and some will not (unbelievers). And consequently there will be tension between them.

When Christ said, “***Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth.***” That needs to be qualified. In the grand scheme of things, He did come to ultimately bring peace. Isaiah 9:6 calls Him the “***Prince of Peace***”. For the individual believer, being “***justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ***” (Rom. 5:1). As fellow believers, Christ “***Himself is our peace***” who has broken down the divisions between us (cf. Eph. 2:14-17). So certainly, we have personal peace and relational peace with God’s people through the coming of Christ.

In the context of Matthew 10, Christ is making a contrast between true disciples/believers and those who will not follow Him. This is where the point of contention – the sword comes in. The sword represents division, conflict, or separation. The cross-reference of Luke 12:51 clearly shows that what Christ is metaphorically depicting is the idea of DIVISION.

Luke 12:51 (NKJV)

51 Do you suppose that I came to give peace on earth? I tell you, not at all, but rather **division**.

Christ's FIRST coming resulted in division. There has been division over Him ever since He came. Certainly, as God's people we are to be "peacemakers" (cf. Mt. 5:9). And Paul instructed us...

Romans 12:18 (NKJV)

18 If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.

So, it is not that we as believers are looking for conflict. We are NOT! We try to get along with everyone. The problem as addressed by Christ here is that the unbelieving world that is rejecting Him is going to have a problem with us. We are not going to agree on Christ. And that right there is the issue. True disciples will insist on being loyal to Christ above all – while those rejecting will have a problem with that and force the issue.

Note in the end there will be peace on the earth, and Christ will ultimately bring it about – but that will not happen until His SECOND coming (cf. Lk. 2:14).

Isaiah 2:4 (NKJV)

4 He shall judge between the nations, And rebuke many people; They shall beat their swords into plowshares, And their spears into pruning hooks; Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, Neither shall they learn war anymore.

In the pre-second coming era, there is this long shaking out of history in which people constantly face the decision on where they will stand with Christ. Will they become a disciple, or will they stand in opposition to Christ and His people? This will be the ongoing issue until the Second Coming. But then in the Second Coming Christ will come in power and glory to forever put down all resistance and to rule with a rod of iron. Then there will be lasting peace on earth – but not before.

Right after the fall of mankind in Genesis 3, we see the issue of division introduced. There would be enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the devil (cf. Gen. 3:15). As we move into Genesis 4-5, we see an ungodly seed line and a godly seed line, and that develops throughout history.

In Genesis 4 godly Abel was killed by ungodly Cain, and that pattern continues down through history. There is light and there is darkness. There are children of God and children of the devil. There are followers of Christ and followers of Antichrist. And this relates to every sector of society.

Everyone has to decide what they will do with Christ and this decision is the major dividing point amongst humanity. Some decide for Him and some decide against Him! Jesus said...“Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword.” Expect division over Christ! It is a reality!