

*1 Corinthians 1:13***PREFACE**

In v13 of our text, Paul really nails his response to the situation in Corinth. He could have approached it from one of several directions, but in three short sentences, delivered like rounds from a Gatling gun, the apostle cuts right to the nut of the issue.

Read 1 Corinthians 1:10-13.**HAS CHRIST BEEN DIVIDED?**

Naturally, the first round from Paul's Gatling gun is a head-scratcher. What does he really mean by "Is Christ divided?" We can consider this from several possible angles, and we can gain a measure of insight from each of them.

You have divided Christ!

Because the Greek can be read as a statement, as well as a question, a minority of (mostly earlier) commentators render it so: "Christ has been divided!" or "Christ is divided!" The idea is that by the various factions in the Corinthian church subdividing the assembly, they are effectively—since each surely still calls upon the name of Jesus—dividing Christ Jesus among them. Each would be claiming, by their allegiance to their respective figureheads, to claim the *true* Lord. But later in this same letter Paul will refute the idea of any subdividing of Christ.

Read 1 Corinthians 8:5-6.

Although the *grammar* can support making this a statement rather than a question, most interpreters believe it is meant to be a question.

Can only one group have Christ?

Another minority view is espoused by Gordon Fee, who interprets this as "not so much that Christ is being divided into parts and apportioned out [i.e., [a leg here](#), [and arm there](#)], [but] that he has been apportioned out as only one among many. Thus Paul is asking, in direct response to the final slogan [["I of Christ."](#)], 'Absurd! Can Christ be made a party in the same breath as the others?' or 'Do you mean to say that Christ has been apportioned out so that only one group has Him?'"

Again, the argument can be made for this interpretation, but it feels labored to me.

Has Christ been divided?

I believe the interpretation with the best fit is similar to the first interpretation, but a rhetorical question instead of a statement, as most of our translations have it. As he does on a number of occasions, Paul is using a rhetorical question—the obvious answer, as regards this situation, is "yes"—to make the point that since it is utter nonsense to think that Christ Jesus Himself can literally be subdivided, and since the church *is* the mystical body of Christ, it should not be subdivided as well—a point he makes later in this letter.

Read 1 Corinthians 12:24b-27. ("But God...")

Because Christ *cannot* be subdivided, the church (the body of Christ) should not be divided.

PAUL WAS NOT CRUCIFIED FOR YOU, WAS HE?

It makes perfect sense that the second round from Paul's Gatling gun would include this, again, rhetorical question, since it is his priority in ministry.

Read v17.

Read vv22-23a.

And though this argument seems absurd on its face, it forces one to answer the fundamental, central question: *Who is my Lord?* If I am a Christian, I can have only *one* Lord: the One who died that I might live, the One who suffered for my salvation, the One who reigns even now at the right hand of the Father in heaven. No human being, nor any so-called god fits that definition.

This key question can also be turned around, to be used as a check and balance against incipient idolatry.

- to the parishioner beginning to think too highly of his or her pastor, the pastor should confront them with, "I was not crucified for you, was I?"
- the shepherd of a church, sensing a preening sense of importance taking root in himself, should occasionally inquire of himself, "I was not crucified for them, was I?"

Paul's third and final round fired regards baptism.

OR WERE YOU BAPTIZED IN [LIT., INTO^{NIV}] THE NAME OF PAUL?

Before Christianity, and even well into the centuries after Christ, baptism was a rite required of proselytes to the Jewish faith—both men and women. This was adopted and adapted by John's baptism, which was one of "repentance for the remission of sins" (Luke 3: 3), which then was adopted and adapted by the early church to be a public sign of association with Christ Jesus. Unlike John's baptism, Christian baptism was administered "in the name of Jesus" ([New Bible Dictionary, 1984](#)).

from MCC Articles of Faith: We believe Christian baptism is the immersion of the believer in water to show forth in a solemn and beautiful emblem our faith and union to the crucified, buried, and risen Savior.

Christian baptism is the believer declaring openly his or her allegiance to *and immersion into* the life of Christ Jesus.

in, into = *eis* (ace) = to or into (indicating the point reached or entered, of place, time, fig. purpose, result).

Gordon Fee: To be baptized "into the name of" someone means that the baptisand [i.e., the initiate, the one being baptized] has turned over allegiance, has given oneself to, and thus entered into an enduring relationship with, the one *into* whose name one has been baptized, where *name* carries the greater significance of all that is associated with the person who bears that name.

In closing,

Read Ephesians 4:4-6.