

Schisms

I. Introduction & Definition

A. Schism: *a division, separation; esp. with discord, disharmony.*

B. Greek Vocabulary

1. σχίζω schizo ^{#4977}: *to cleave, rend, divide* (Mt. 27:51_{x2}; Mk. 1:10; 15:38; Lk. 5:36_{x2}; 23:45; Jn. 19:24; 21:11; Acts 14:4; 23:7).
2. σχίσμα schisma ^{#4978}: *rent, division* (Mt. 9:16; Mk. 2:21; Jn. 7:43; 9:16; 10:19; 1st Cor. 1:10; 11:18; 12:25).

C. The synoptic gospels employ σχίζω & σχίσμα in literal applications

(Mt. 9:16; 27:51_{x2}; Mk. 1:10; 2:21; 15:38; Lk. 5:36_{x2}; 23:45).

D. The gospel of John employs two literal applications of σχίζω (19:14; 21:11), and three personal applications of σχίσμα (7:43; 9:16; 10:19).

E. The remainder of the NT has only personal applications of σχίζω & σχίσμα.

1. Luke uses σχίζω (Acts 14:4 & 23:7).
2. Paul uses σχίσμα (1st Cor. 1:10; 11:18; & 12:25).

II. Three Schisms in John

A. The Feast of Tabernacles schism developed out of a confusion over the birth of Jesus Christ (Jn. 7:40-44).

1. Some felt He was the prophet (Jn. 7:40; Dt. 8:15,18).
2. Others felt He was the Christ (Jn. 7:41a). Note: The promised prophet *is* the Christ (Acts 3:20-22).
3. Others were trying to understand the Word of God (Jn. 7:41b,42).

B. The Man Born Blind Schism developed out of confusion over the work of Jesus Christ (Jn. 9:16).

1. The Pharisees viewed the Lord's miracle as a violation of the Sabbath.
2. Others viewed the Lord's miracle as a sign. σημεῖον semeion ^{#4592}.

C. The Good Shepherd Schism developed out of confusion over the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Jn. 10:19-21).

1. The schism arose because of the Lord's message (Jn. 10:19).
2. The message detailed His death and resurrection (Jn. 10:18).
3. Many viewed the Lord's message as being demonic (Jn. 10:20).
4. Others rejected the demonic accusation and rested their arguments on the miracles (Jn. 10:21,25,37,38).

III. Schisms in the Ministry of Paul

A. The Ultimate Schism (Acts 14:4).

1. On Paul's first missionary journey, the gospel of Grace was seeing both Jews and Gentiles saved (Acts 14:1). The natural schism between Jews and Gentiles was thus removed (Eph. 2:14).
2. The opponents of the gospel, both Jew and Gentile, were united together in their efforts to murder the Apostles (Acts 14:2,5). Once again the natural schism between Jews and Gentiles is removed!
3. The natural racial schisms are superceded by a new spiritual schism, unbelievers versus believers (Acts 14:3,4).

B. The Danger of Schisms (Acts 23:7).

1. The Sanhedrin is united in their trial of the Apostle Paul (Acts 23:1-5).
2. Paul observes the separate groups of Pharisees and Sadducees (Acts 23:6).
3. The Pharisees and Sadducees allowed their political and religious schism to be used against them (Acts 23:7,8).
4. The schism boiled over to the point of violence (Acts 23:9,10).

- C. The Tragedy of Schisms within the local church (1st Cor. 1:10,11; 12:25).
 - 1. The setting is a body of believers within the same local church (1st Cor. 1:10).
 - 2. Schisms within a local church make unity impossible (1st Cor. 1:10).
 - 3. Bringing brewing schisms to the attention of spiritual leadership is not sinful gossip (1st Cor. 1:11).
 - 4. Personality issues are divisive, and detract from the glory of Christ (1st Cor. 1:12,13).
 - 5. Schisms arise when believers lose their perspective on the purpose for spiritual gifts (1st Cor. 12:25).
 - a. When believers forget that their gift is a gift of grace (1st Cor. 12:4-11).
 - b. When believers start to think that some gifts are more important than others (1st Cor. 12:14-24).
 - c. When believers stop caring for one another (1st Cor. 12:25,26).
 - 1) In times of suffering.
 - 2) In times of glory
- D. The Necessity of Schisms within the local church (1st Cor. 11:17-19).
 - 1. Schisms in the local church turn the assembly into a place where they are torn down, rather than built up (1st Cor. 11:17).
 - 2. Schisms in the local church are necessary in the plan of God in order for the faithful believers to shine forth in obedience to the will of God (1st Cor. 11:19).