

Blessed Is He Who Is Not Offended By Christ

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In Matthew the 11th chapter, John the Baptist sends two of his disciples to Jesus Christ to inquire whether or not He is the “Coming One.” Jesus tells the messengers to report to John the miracles that they have witnessed, and states that “blessed is he who is not offended because of Me.” In the New Testament, the verb “to offend” literally means to place a stumbling block in someone’s path: the term is used metaphorically to symbolize arousing prejudice or becoming a hindrance to others (Vine 441).

How could someone be offended by Christ? Several Bible commentaries suggest that some people stumbled at the teachings of Jesus because He was a carpenter from Nazareth and poor (cf. Luke 4:16-30), thus they did not respect His authority. However, prophecies sighted in the New Testament describing the Messiah as a “stone of stumbling” and a “rock of offense” show that those who are offended by Christ are those who stumble on His *message*, i.e. those who disobey and disregard the truth that He preached.

For example, the Pharisees were offended by Christ when He rebuked them for their hypocrisy in Matthew 15:1-20 (note vs. 12). Christ condemned their traditions and man-made doctrines, stating boldly that all who follow the doctrines of men rather than the word of God make their religion vain and useless. In this case, Christ caused offense because His message of truth did not agree with the Pharisees’ pride in their traditions, even though those vain traditions caused them to disregard God’s commands.

Similarly, in I Peter 2:7, the apostle Peter refers to prophecies in Psalm 118 and Isaiah

8 in declaring that Christ is a “stone of stumbling and rock of offense” to the disobedient. The inspired writer then explains that, “They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed” (vs. 8). In other words, people will stumble because of Christ anytime they esteem unrighteousness and their own opinions/traditions so highly that they choose to reject Him who is “the Way, the Truth, and the Life” (John 14:6).

God’s ways are above the ways of man, His thoughts are higher than man’s thoughts, and His word is true and just (Isa 55:8; Ps 119:160). Time and time again, the New Testament warns against allowing the wisdom of men to replace the will of God. In I Corinthians 1:18-31, Paul forcefully states that the wisdom of this world is foolishness compared to the wisdom of God. The Gospel of Jesus Christ becomes a stumbling block and rock of offense to those who so highly value their own judgments, morals, and traditions that they either reject Christ completely, or choose to give praise to God with their mouths while hypocritically neglecting, adding to, or taking away from His word (see II John 9-11; Rev 22:18-19).

The only way to truly know God and to learn to present ourselves pleasing to Him is through studying the Holy Scriptures. Only the Scriptures can make us “complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work” (II Tim 3:14ff; II Pet 1:2ff). If faith is founded upon the word alone (Rom 10:17), and not upon the vain traditions and doctrines of men, then the Gospel of Christ will not become a stumbling block – and blessed is he who is not offended by Christ!