



THE OFFENSIVE CHRIST

Kevin Presley

Good day and welcome to our program. I'm glad we can spend a few moments together looking into the bible. This is a bible study program. We are not a television or internet church. Let the Bible Speak is not a religious organization. I'm simply a gospel preacher and a church of Christ near you is presenting this broadcast in your community. So, thanks for watching. We're not here for your money. We never solicit a dime for our viewers nor sell products here. We are simply interested in your eternal welfare and a few moments of your attention as we read and study the bible.

Today, I want to consider with you a characteristic of Christ that you may not really associate with Him. Christ Jesus came to bless the fallen world with salvation and redemption. He came to restore the human relationship to God. He came and showed love like none other to a world that did not deserve His love. So, why don't all people follow Him? Why is He so often hated and rejected? The lovely name of Jesus Christ is one of the most polarizing names in all of history. It evokes love, surrender, and service from some... but it stirs feelings of anger and resentment and even hatred in others.

The prophets of old said that it would be this way hundreds of years before He was born in ancient Bethlehem. The apostle Peter quotes the prophet Isaiah in his first epistle. In fact, he combines two passages from Isaiah in one statement recorded in 1 Peter 2. We read there beginning in verse 4: ***"Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. Therefore it***

is also contained in the Scripture, "BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A CHIEF CORNERSTONE, ELECT, PRECIOUS, AND HE WHO BELIEVES ON HIM WILL BY NO MEANS BE PUT TO SHAME." Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious; but to those who are disobedient, "THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED HAS BECOME THE CHIEF CORNERSTONE," and "A STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE." They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed."

Thus reads 1 Peter 2:4-8. Jesus is the cornerstone of the great and true temple of God. Those who were to be builders of God's true and spiritual house, though, rejected this stone. Peter says He was a stumbling block to them. He calls Him a "STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE." Jesus, Himself, indicated that many were offended by Him; even some who set out to follow Him. Did you know that the Christ of love, mercy, and entreaty is also an offensive person? Today, we want to consider "The Offensive Christ",

Does Jesus Christ ever offend you? Most who profess to follow Him would probably say no. But did you know that Jesus offended many people, including His would-be disciples while He walked and talked among them? In fact, the message of Jesus perhaps disturbed these people as much or more than those who claimed no interest in Him. On several occasions, Jesus warned His disciples that if they were not careful, they would be offended by Him. He certainly said and did things that made little sense to them at the time and were it not for their simple faith in Him, they would have easily been made to turn away from Him. Some have the image of Jesus as being all sweetness, love, and mercy. They see Him as an all-benevolent Savior who only came to do some good deeds, say some nice and inspirational things, and that's about the totality of His mission and message. They see the Lord as empathizing and even endorsing our sinful conduct, not really being concerned about how people live their lives as long as they don't hurt others, and so forth. But the message and deeds of Christ often brought a bitter and negative reaction from the people. At the very least, He left many surprised by what He said and did and because the Lord so upset their preconceived image of Him and their Messianic expectations, they lost faith, stumbled at His word, and even quit altogether. The same thing happens to those who are confronted with Christ's mission and message today. Jesus was an offense to many then, and He still offends men and women when they hear His controversial teachings.

There were at least three groups of people we read about in the gospels who were offended by Christ, and they still exist today. First, Jesus warned that His disciples would be offended by the opposition and persecution they would have to endure. The twelve disciples Jesus chose and those who subsequently decided to follow Him, quickly formed a false impression of what Messiah's appearance meant. They expected Jesus to burst upon the scene and lead them to swift victory over the Roman Empire and finally restore the sovereignty and glory of the nation of Israel. They saw themselves reigning with Him and putting their enemies under their feet. Well, that would happen but not at the time and in the way they expected. Jesus, instead, warned them that tough times were ahead for them if they followed Him. He used terms like "denying self" and "bearing a cross", and that's not what came to their mind when they

thought of Him as the King or them as part of a Messianic kingdom. No, Jesus said there will be persecution, tribulation, and even death.

In the Farewell Address recorded in John 16, the Savior said in verses 1-2: "These things I have spoken to you, that you should not be made to stumble. They will put you out of the synagogues; yes, the time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service." Jesus knew that when such times came, it would be tempting to turn away, raise the white flag, and escape persecution. And He said that same week in His Olivet discourse, in Matthew 24:9-10, "Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake. And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another." Well, that's the image they had of following the Christ, nor is the image most people have of following Christ today. In fact, the common message today is that if you serve the Lord, it will be an ever-ascending life of wealth, health, and happiness! Such is not the true picture though.

Perhaps we have been jaded by the general conditions of western culture over the past century where it was considered respectable, even desirable to be a churchgoing, bible-toting Christian. That all began to change several years ago though and though we still possess the freedom to exercise Christianity in our own lives for the most part; if you say much about it, today, you'll find yourself under intense scrutiny and even face the hate of an increasingly immoral and unbelieving world. The fact is the past few hundred years have been the exception and not the rule. Christians throughout most of history and many cultures around the world have faced far worse things than any of us have had to face. We feel as though we have been persecuted if we are made fun of or excluded from some part of society, but Christians in many other times and places have faced imprisonment, torture, and even death. I am convinced it is not that unthinkable that some of us could live to see conditions again in places we never would have imagined. Will you stand if such times come to us? Will you stand tall for Christ when the forces of hate and evil are unleashed against you? That's a very serious question that we should search our hearts and consider! When Jesus told the church at Smyrna "Be faithful until death, and I will give you a crown of life" in Revelation 2:10, He wasn't talking about living out a long and happy life and slipping off to glory at a ripe old age and if you'll just keep on keeping on until then, you'll get to go to heaven. Oh no! He meant much more than that. Listen to the rest of the verse: "Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life." The death He's talking about is a violent death for the sake of Christ.

If you truly live for Christ Jesus; if you are really a committed Christian; if you truly live out your faith and pledge your whole allegiance to Christ, you are not going to be applauded by most people. In fact, many are going to hate you for it. They will hate you for how you live; how you talk; what you believe; what you call sin; what you practice. Now, if you keep your head down and keep your faith undercover and be a lukewarm, half-committed, half-baked Christian, you might get by with most of the people you are around. But if you get too serious, the world is going to come down on you like a hammer. "Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus

will suffer persecution.”, said Paul in 2 Timothy 3:12. Jesus taught in His parable of the sower that many are like the rocky soil into which the seed of the Kingdom, the Word of God, is sown. It grows for a while. It looks promising. It promises fruit. But its roots don't run very deep, and Jesus said that when temptation, persecution, and tribulation come, they wither up and die. In other words, they are offended. John the Baptist didn't understand why he was thrown into prison and why things were as they appeared to him to be since Jesus was the Messiah and the conquering King. But Jesus sent word back to John that opposition didn't mean His kingdom was not real and triumphant, and He added this admonition: 'Tell John, ""And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me.""' (Matthew 11:6). Would you be made to stumble if your faith is really put to the test in the days ahead? It's not all sunshine and roses. It's not all sweetness and light. It's not all mountains and triumph. If you don't expect it and prepare for it while times are easier, you'll be among that number who fall when times get hard.

Second, many are offended by Christ's rebuke of their sin and their false religion. Some will follow Jesus so long as He lets them be and approves of their lifestyle or their religious preferences. They will claim faith in Him until He finds fault in them. Consequently, some don't believe that preachers should point out false doctrine or do much in the way of condemning sin. The Lord often, however, became an offense to people because He made them keenly feel the guilt of their sin, exposed their self-willed and prideful hearts, and called people to repentance. He discredited the traditions of men when they became substitutes for the word and the will of God. For example, Jesus was usually at odds with the Pharisees and other religious leaders. He did not oppose their orthodoxy, rather, He opposed them making up their own orthodoxy. Under the guise of serving God, instead of following the law, they followed their own traditions the law said nothing about. While at the same time, He exposed their hypocrisy and their selective view of sin. He called people to leave their immorality and wicked living and repent and turn to righteousness. With some, this did not set well and left them either denying their sinfulness or hating Him for exposing them. For example, in Matthew 15, in one of Christ's most famous verbal clashes with His detractors, He called their sin what it was. He did not mince words in condemning their hypocrisy and their corruption. And of all people to get upset, His disciples were the ones who protested. They later remonstrated to the Lord saying in verse 12: "Then His disciples came and said to Him, "Do You know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?"" In other words, "Lord, you're not going to win people that way." "You've upset these people." They were shocked that Jesus so sternly and harshly went against the grain. But that's what Jesus does. He did not come to the people then nor now trying to hammer out a truce or reach a happy compromise. He came speaking out of yes, love, but with great authority and He demanded that people serve God in spirit and in TRUTH. His message was far too narrow, exclusive, and radical for the thinking of the religious crowd and the self-righteous and complacent... and it still is. Many today would gladly receive the blessing and salvation Christ came to give as long as it doesn't demand repentance and conforming to the Word of God as opposed to what we want to do, and for this reason, many walk away offended.

Third and finally, others are offended by Christ because He does not meet their expectations. He does not do the things they expect Him to do and when they realize this, they stumble over

Him and turn away. This was true of many of His disciples who heard Him preach one of His most difficult sermons in John 6. Jesus had been performing miracles and this garnered much fame and a quickly growing following. The multitudes would hardly leave Him alone by this point in His ministry, many of them just wanting to see, and even better, benefit from one of His miracles. On this occasion, Jesus miraculously fed them. Well, that excited the crowd. The common folks started to look at Jesus as their meal-ticket. They remembered the miracle in the wilderness as Moses led the people, how he brought down manna from heaven to feed and sustain them. These miracle-mongers saw Jesus as their new Moses. He was their new Moses but not in the sense they thought. He came to lead them out of spiritual bondage and the slavery of sin. His miracles were only testimonies to His power and ability to deliver them from SIN and SPIRITUAL slavery. They weren't interested in that though. They wanted the miracles. They wanted freedom from Caesar and Rome. They wanted freedom from sickness, poverty, and oppression but didn't realize their real slave master was Satan and not Caesar. So, Jesus taught them a very hard lesson in verses 32 thru 58 that He was the real bread from heaven. He and His life-giving teachings were what they needed, not physical bread. When Jesus said that He was the true bread from heaven and that they had to accept and live by His teachings to live, they said "This is a hard saying, who can hear it?" Jesus said in verse 61: "Does this offend you?" And in verse 66: "From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more."

You see, many will follow a Christ who promises them comfort, security, and earthly blessing, but they're not as interested in a Christ who calls them to repentance and tells them to give up their life here for the hope of a life over there. The people then looked for a Messiah who would restore Israel as an earthly kingdom and bring power and wealth such as Israel had enjoyed a thousand years earlier during the Davidic and Solomonic empire. This was not the kingdom that Christ came to establish. But the thinking of the masses has not changed much. The 'health and wealth' prosperity gospel is a gross and sickening perversion of the gospel of Christ. It is a poor, poor substitute for the true hope the gospel gives.

Some today will follow Christ until they run into temporal problems. When they get sick, they blame God. When they get into financial trouble, they wonder why Christ doesn't come to the rescue. When there are problems, difficulties, and disappointments, they think 'if Christ can't do any better than that, then what's the use of following Him anyway?' But friend, Jesus never promised any of those things. He never promised anyone material wealth. In fact, He said through the apostle Paul that those who desire to be rich are asking for trouble and end up falling into a trap and their faith is destroyed. He never promised you would be healthy. He didn't heal every sick person when He was on earth performing miracles. Sickness and ultimately death are results of the fall of Adam and we will live with those effects until the resurrection in the last day and the dawn of eternity. Don't blame Christ when He doesn't do what He never promised to begin with.

Christ promised forgiveness of sins to those who would believe in Him, repent, and be baptized for the remission of sins (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38). He will always keep that promise. He promised

not to remove the storm but to give you peace through the storm, and if you truly know Him, you'll have that kind of peace that the world cannot explain. He promised you joy, and that is an assurance, confidence, and hope that life's circumstances can never take from you. You CAN have THAT! And those are the true riches of life and the things worth following Him for. But you must trust Him and unconditionally follow Him. The Psalmist said in Psalm 119:165, "Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them." Do the words and ways of Christ offend you? Then could it be you have never really surrendered your life and your will to Him? The unbelieving stumble over Christ, this stone of offense, but the righteous find in Him a Christ who will never disappoint and will never offend because they have placed their faith in Him person, His work, and His work and have found Him to be always true and faithful.

©2022 BibleWay Media. All rights reserved.
BibleWay Media grants permission to copy this material for personal use. Permission is also granted to distribute this transcript as long as it is reproduced in its entirety, used solely for its original purpose of spreading the gospel, and attribution is given to the author and Let the Bible Speak.