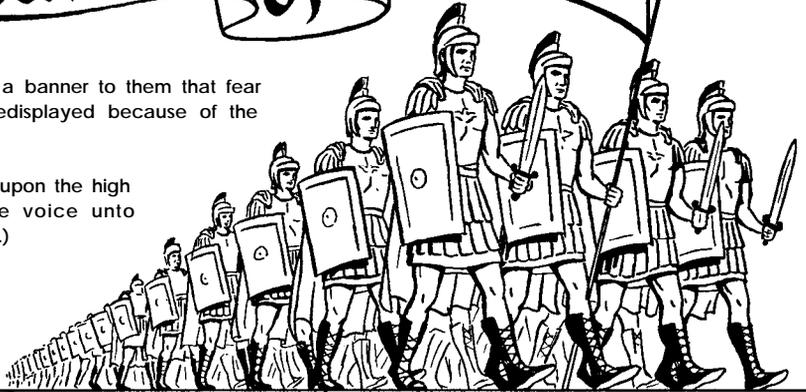


Banner of Truth

"Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee, that it may be displayed because of the truth." (Psa. 60:4.)

"Lift ye up a banner upon the high mountain, exalt the voice unto them . . ." (Isa. 13:2.)



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THE OFFENSIVE CHRIST

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"But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone; As it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumblingstone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed." (Ram. 9:31-33 cf. Isa. 28:16; 8:14.)

An offence is anything that might occasion one to stumble or fall. Literally, it is a stumblingblock. The law said: "Thou shalt not curse the deaf, nor put a stumblingblock before the blind, but shalt fear thy God: I am the Lord." (Lev. 19:14.) Figuratively, it is an impediment or hindrance. Thus Peter was charged with being a "stumblingblock" unto the Lord, when, through a misguided judgment, he rebuked the Savior. (Matt. 16:21-23 ASV.)

"In N.T. skandalon (rendered in our text 'offence,' JPL) is always used metaphorically, and ordinarily of anything that arouses prejudice, or becomes a hindrance to others, or causes them to fall by the way. Sometimes the hindrance is in itself good, and those stumbled by it are the wicked." (Hogg and Vine on Galatians, p. 262, as

quoted in Vine's Expository Dictionary of N.T. Words, p. 129.)

Christ was a "stone of stumbling and a rock of offence" to the Jews because he did not measure up to their expectation of the Messiah. This caused them to reject him as the promised Messiah, and this rejection decided their fate.

The English word "offensive" means that which causes displeasure or resentment; that which is disagreeable, distasteful, repulsive.

Let us now consider how Christ is offensive to some today.

His Birth

His birth is offensive to the modernists. They deny the virgin birth. The doctrine that Jesus was born of a virgin is repulsive to them. They reason that a virgin birth never occurred before the birth of Jesus, and none has occurred since, therefore the virgin birth of Jesus did not occur. They boast of knowledge, and assert that a virgin birth would necessitate a "biological miracle," which they aver is an impossibility.

In spite of their vaunted knowledge, "this they willingly are ignorant of," God

announced four thousand years before it came to pass that a "biological miracle" would take place. To the serpent God said: "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." (Gen. 3:15-1

Now, everyone knows that seed is of the male species. But God said the seed of **the woman** should bruise the head of the serpent.

Seven hundred and fifty years before the birth of Jesus, God said through the prophet Isaiah: "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Rehold, **a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son**, and shall call his name Immanuel." (Isa. 7:14.) Paul said: "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, **made of a woman . . .**" (**Gal. 4:4**.) Matthew wrote: "Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a publick example, was minded to put her away privily. But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. Now all this was done, **that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and bring forth a son**, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us." (Matt. 1:18-23.)

The virgin birth of Jesus is so distasteful to the modernist, he closes his eyes to the promise of God, stops his ears to the prophecy of Isaiah, disregards the history of Matthew, repudiates the testimony of the angel, and rejects the revelation of the Holy Spirit.

His Life

The unblemished life of Jesus is offensive to those who "love darkness rather than light." (Jno. 3:19-21.1 Christ is "the light of the world." (Jno. 8:12.) He is "the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh

into the world." (Jno. 1:9.) "In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not." (Jno. 1:4,5.) Purity of life is neither their desire nor goal. They are so enmeshed in evil deeds that even though they know "the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them." (Ram. 1:32.) The pure life of Jesus holds no attraction for them.

His Poverty

The poverty of Jesus is offensive to the rich and fashionable. "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." (Lk. 9:5&1

He warned against the danger of riches, and affirmed: "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." (Matt. 19:24.) This points up the difficulty of one's being saved who "trusts in riches." (Mk. 10:24.) Those exposed to this danger are not only persons already rich, but also persons who eagerly pursue riches. The apostle Paul wrote young Timothy: "But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the **love of money** is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness." (1 Tim. 6:9-H.) He instructed Timothy to "charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, **nor trust in uncertain riches**, but in the living God, who giveth richly all things to enjoy; That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; Laying up *in store* for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life." (1 Tim. 6:17-19.1 To the rich ruler who had inquired of the Lord what to do to inherit eternal life, Jesus said: "One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shall have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me." (Mk. 10:17-21.1 Luke in-

forms us of the young man's reaction. "And when he heard this, he was very sorrowful: for he was very rich." Mark adds that he "went away grieved." (Mk. 10:22.) He viewed with displeasure and resentment the instruction of Jesus. He stumbled at his teaching.

Jesus was of humble origin. He had neither wealth nor position, nor was he educated in the rabbinical schools. The people of his own country said: "Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works? Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? And his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this man all these things? **And they were offended in him.**" (Matt. 13:54-57.1 Jealousy, pride, self-conceit — prejudice — held sway in their hearts, and they "were caused to stumble" (footnote, ASV) at his teaching and mighty works. Jesus was too poor, too plain.

His Humiliation

At one time Jesus was so popular with the people that they would "take him by force, to make him a king." (Jno. 6:15.) They would cast him into the mold of their own thinking. They did not understand that Jesus was to be "led as a sheep to the slaughter." (Isa. 53; Acts 8:32-35.1 When Jesus showed his disciples "how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day," Peter rebuked him and said, "Be if far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee." (Matt. 16:21,22.)

The people wanted a "fighting" leader then, and they want one now. They want a leader that will fight with the carnal weapons men employ. One that would meekly allow himself to be taken and crucified, without a fight, is not the kind of leader they either admire or respect. They will not follow him.

When the mob came to take Jesus, Peter "having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear." But Jesus said to him, "Put up thy sword into the sheath: the **cup** which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" (Jno. 18:10,11.1 Peter was frustrated at the Lord's unwillingness to resist, and was offended in

him, as were also all his disciples. (Matt. 26:31-35,56.1 They understood neither his mission into the world, nor the nature of his kingdom, and so were offended because of him.

The mission of Christ was to "take away the sin of the world" (Jno. 1:29), and the nature of his kingdom is spiritual and eternal, not material and ephemeral. "My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight . . . but now is my kingdom not from hence." (Jno. 18:36.) This necessitated his giving himself humbly and willingly to be crucified. So Paul wrote, "He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." (Phil. 3:8.)

The humiliation of Jesus is extremely difficult, if not impossible, for the proud and arrogant to accept. It is distasteful, repulsive; and they are caused to stumble at his humiliation.

His Death

His death on the rugged tree of the cross is offensive to both Jews and Greeks, but the power and wisdom of God to the saved. "But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God." (1 Cor. 1:23,24.)

His Kingdom

The nature of his kingdom is offensive to the worldling. His kingdom is heavenly, not earthly. (Jno. 18:36.1 It is within, not without. (Lk. 17:21.1 It is spiritual, not temporal. (Ram. 14:17.1 It is not concerned with social betterment and entertainment, but with the salvation of the souls of men. The emphasis, placed by Jesus, is on the spiritual, rather than the material. "Labour not for the meat which perishes, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life." (Jno. 6:27.) "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth . . . but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven." (Matt. 6:19,20.) "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness." (Matt. 6:33.) "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." (Lk. 19:10.1

His Simplicity

His simplicity is offensive to the wise and learned. They want more show in religion. They desire ritual, pomp, and ceremony. They observe special days and hold special services. They demand robed choirs and mechanical instruments of music in worship. They set up bigger and more efficient organizations, in their judgment, in religion. They broaden the scope of church function, and enlarge the range of its work. God's way is too plain and simple for them.

For them, the way of salvation is too simple as set forth by the Lord and his apostles in such passages as Matt. 28:18-20; Mk. 16:15,16; Lk. 24:46,47; Acts 2:38,41,47; 8:12; 22:16; 1 Pet. 3:21. They are offended because of these and kindred passages.

The simplicity of New Testament worship is too plain for many. They want to embellish it with rites of their own choosing. Simply to worship God "in spirit and in truth" (Jno. 4:24), does not satisfy their craving. To sing God's praise, to offer prayers of thanksgiving to him "from whom all blessings flow," to eat the supper in memory of him who died that we might live, to contribute into his treasury as he has prospered us, and to be edified by feasting upon his word is too unsophisticated.

Many today stumble at the simplicity of the gospel, they want something spectacular.

His Authority

Christ has all authority in heaven and on earth. (Matt. 28:18) There is no more authority than this. To bow to this authority is repugnant to the stubborn and rebellious.

Like Israel of old, men today want to follow their own ways. When God called upon the Israelites to "return ye now every one from his evil way, and make your ways and your doings good," they replied, "There

is no, hope: but we will walk after our own devices, and we will every one do the imagination of his evil heart." (Jer. 18:11,12.)

Some who are offended at the authority of Jesus, "fear the Lord, and serve their own gods." (2 Kgs. 17:33.)

Some who reject the authority of Christ, shout "liberty," and are themselves in bondage. (2 Pet. 2:19; Rom. 6:16.1)

Any person who would be saved must submit to him who has "all authority" in heaven and on earth. "For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people." (Acts 3:22,23.1)

His Doctrine

The doctrine of Christ is offensive to the disobedient. Christ is "a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient." (1 Pet. 2:7,8.1) Of this class, were the Pharisees (Matt. 15:12), many of the Lord's disciples (Jno. 6:60-66.1, they of the circumcision (Gal. 5:11); and, we may add, of this class also are those who stumble at repentance and baptism for the remission of sins. (Acts 2:38.1)

As Christ was offensive to some in the days of his flesh, so he is offensive to some now. What is your attitude toward him? Are you offended in him?

"And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me." (Matt. 11:6.1)

CHURCH OF CHRIST

Valley Avenue O Sherrill Drive

SUNDAY:

BIBLE STUDY _____ 10:00 A.M.

WORSHIP _____ X _____ 10:50 A.M.

6:30 P.M.

WEDNESDAY:

WORSHIP _____ 7:30 P.M.