

IS JESUS THE ONE?

In answer to John the Baptist's question "*are You the one?*" Jesus replies with a beatitude: "*blessed is the one who is not offended by Me.*" This alludes to Isaiah 8:14-15 about Christ as a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense. Don't stumble over false expectations about Him.

YOUR EXPECTATIONS - John knew his ministry was ending. In John 3:30 he said of Jesus, "*He must increase and I must decrease.*" John's disciples must follow Jesus. They, and we, must not be offended by Christ because of our own faulty expectations of Him.

"Many are puzzled, even disappointed with Jesus. Many cannot believe in Him if spiritual salvation is His main interest, rather than political or economic salvation," relates RK Hughes.

"People fall away when they do not get the marriage they hoped for, or the healing or prosperity they felt ought to be part of their lives. They need to live out this beatitude: blessed is the one who is not offended by Me." Jesus helps us put everything into perspective as we trust and obey.

JESUS' TESTIMONY - John the Baptist ministered in the wilderness, wearing a garment of camel's hair and a leather belt, eating locusts and honey. Scores of people went to hear him and be baptized by him in the Jordan river, as they confessed their sins. He was a larger-than-life figure who powerfully preached God's Word from the Old Testament, pointing to Christ.

In Luke 7:23-30 Jesus says of him, "*What did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, more than a prophet. This is he of whom it is written, 'behold I send My messenger before Your face, who will prepare Your way before You.' I tell you, among those born of women none is greater than John. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.*" Remarkable!

JOHN THE PROPHET - In Luke 1:15 God said that John would be filled with the Holy Spirit from the womb, as he came in the spirit and power of Elijah, as prophesied. In Matthew 11, Jesus said John is the Elijah who was to come, and that none are greater than John. Ranking with Elijah, Isaiah, Ezekiel, and all the others, John the Baptist was the last of the Old Testament prophets.

"John is not just any prophet, he is the prophet the whole Jewish community had been waiting for, thousands of years, to announce the breakthrough of the kingdom of God," notes Hughes. Now that Christ has come, "*you must be born again from above by the Holy Spirit*" (John 3:3).

JESUS THE CHRIST - "John lived on the other side of the cross, resurrection and ascension," observes RC Sproul. "John was the greatest prophet but he came to point to the greatest person, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is exalted at the right hand of God, reigning as Lord of lords."

Those baptized by John in repentance of sins were prepared to receive Jesus as "*the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.*" But religious leaders and those who refused to repent considered themselves too righteous for John's baptism, and rejected Jesus as Christ. "Their own attitude shows that God was justified in requiring their repentance," notes Sproul. "Here is the conflict between sinful human pride and God's grace" as they rejected God's purpose.

YOUR JUDGMENT? - John 3:34 says "*whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.*" What's your response? Is Jesus the promised Christ of God? "Those who reject the counsel of God refuse to avail themselves of the door of repentance," notes JC Ryle, "and there are thousands of persons called 'Christian' who are doing the same thing today." Many of them sit in church pews.

Many people go through religious motions, but have never been born again by the Holy Spirit. Are they stumbling over false expectations about Jesus? Will they humbly receive what God says about Him in the Scriptures, repenting and believing in Jesus as the Christ, Lord, Savior?

TRUST & OBEY - As John the Baptist referenced a few paragraphs from Isaiah 40 about "*waiting on the Lord*" he could not have known that God would work out His salvation over the next 2,000 years and more. Christ has come, has inaugurated His kingdom, and at the right time He will come to consummate it. "*Behold I am coming soon, bringing My recompense with Me. Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book,*" says Jesus in Revelation 22.

Meantime, be born again with Christ's spiritual life. Be filled with the Holy Spirit, and be His witnesses, sharing the good news as you trust and obey - waiting on the Lord, the One! □