



Offense

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Everyone has experienced an offense at one time or another during his or her lifetime! We all can remember at least one experience of unjust, unprovoked pain inflicted upon our soul by some thoughtless individual. It is easy to recall how some person or group of people have insulted, slandered, or falsely accused us! Perhaps we fully expected someone to come through for us in an obvious time of need; instead, they totally ignored our silent cries. During these dreadful times of real or imagined betrayal we experienced suffering! In this lifetime, it is natural and predictable that humans will get offended.

Offense is the natural negative human tendency especially during an hour of difficulty! Offense is so common that James wrote, "*in many things we offend all. If any man offend not* in word, the same is *a perfect man*" (James 3:2). Since everyone is not perfect offenses do exist in this world.

Common though it may be, the Word of God issues some powerfully frightening warnings regarding the sin of offense! The Bible identifies "offense" as something that must be eliminated completely, "if thy right eye *offend* thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee" (Matt 5:29); and "if thy right hand *offend* thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee" (Matt 5:30). These expressions of total rejection pointed at the sin of offense seem pretty severe; this is especially true considering the fact that offense is such an ordinary experience among humans! If offense is that disgraceful, then we better be sure to understand its powerful consequences! We will need to unravel offense both as an offender and the offended!

Let's look to Jesus; he is our best example especially whenever we reflect on significant issues! Jesus went to be baptized; therefore he sought out John at the River Jordan, "Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. 14 But John forbad him, saying, *I have need to be baptized of thee?*" (Matt 3:13-14). John preached, "he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire" (Matt 3:11). Therefore it is natural that we find John understandably confused with



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Jesus' request, "***I have need to be baptized of thee and comest thou to me?***" The reason that John so protested was that he was keenly aware of Jesus' mission.

The words that John chose to use on that occasion prove that he well understood Jesus' destiny. He said, "***I have need to be baptized of thee!***" From his youth John recognized Jesus' assignment! Before we study the baptism of Jesus, let's take a closer look at the miraculous events surrounding the birth of both of these extraordinary individuals; we will discover some surprises through these events.

The first Chapter of Luke provides the only Biblical account of the special events surrounding the birth of both Jesus and John the Baptist! Mary was engaged in an incredible conversation with the same angel who had earlier visited Zacharias (*John the Baptist's father*). Mary had just finished telling the angel that she had never known (*had intercourse with*) a man; so, how could she possibly become pregnant? The angel answered, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. 36 And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son ***in her old age***: (*John the Baptist's mother*) and this is ***the sixth month*** with her, who was called barren. 37 For with God nothing shall be impossible. 38 And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her. (*The angel had just told Mary that she would bear the Messiah in her womb; her first natural reaction was to verify Elizabeth's condition!*) 39 And Mary arose in those days, ***and went into the hill country with haste***, into a city of Juda; 40 And entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elisabeth. 41 And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost: 42 And she spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. 43 And whence is this to me, that ***the mother of my Lord*** should come to me? (*John the Baptist's mother was somehow supernaturally made aware by God that Mary's unborn child would become the Messiah! Reread verses 39-41; you will discover that those verses say nothing about Mary voicing the details of her pregnancy! There were no telephones pagers or fax machines in 4BC!)* 44 For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. 45 And ***blessed is she that believed***: (*Elizabeth even supernaturally knew what was required of Mary!*) for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord . . . 56 And ***Mary abode with her about three months***, (*Therefore, deducing from what we learned earlier (Elizabeth's sixth month – see vs. 36), we realize that Mary stayed to help Elizabeth until the birth of John the Baptist.*) and returned to her own house. 57 Now Elisabeth's full time came that she should be delivered; and she brought forth a son. 58 And her neighbours and ***her cousins*** heard how the Lord had shewed great mercy upon her; and they rejoiced with her. 59 And it came to pass, that on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child; and they called him Zacharias, after the name of his father. 60 And his mother answered and said, Not so; but he shall be called John. 61 And they said unto her, There is none of thy kindred that is called by this name. 62 And they made signs to his



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father, how he would have him called. 63 And he asked for a writing table, and wrote, saying, His name is John. And they marvelled all. 64 And his mouth was opened immediately, and his tongue loosed, and he spake, and praised God. 65 And fear came on all that dwelt round about them: and all these sayings were noised abroad throughout all the hill country of Judaea. 66 And all they that heard them laid them up in their hearts, saying, What manner of child shall this be! And the hand of the Lord was with him. 67 And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied, saying, 68 Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, 69 And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David; 70 As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began: 71 That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us; 72 To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant; 73 The oath which he swore to our father Abraham, 74 That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, 75 In holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life. 76 ***And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways*** . . . 80 And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his shewing unto Israel” (Luke 1:35-80).

Now let’s notice some very important concepts about these special children: (1) the cousins, Mary and Elizabeth were both miraculously impregnated within six months of each other; (2) Elizabeth’s condition became a powerful sign and her words of supernatural knowledge became a confirmation that Mary could hold onto in faith as she believed for her own child; (3) Mary spent the final trimester of Elizabeth’s pregnancy in Elizabeth’s home; (4) John the Baptist leaped in the womb of Elizabeth at the sound of Mary’s voice; (5) Zacharias, who had become unable to use his voice because he did not believe the angel in the first place prophesied, ***“And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways.”*** Given all of these highly unusual and miraculous bonding events, we must recognize that John the Baptist and Jesus must have intimately known each other during their early years? Shouldn’t we expect that the parents of both of these special boys would have spent a great deal of time teaching them of these miraculous events and guiding the boys into each of their interwoven destinies? The answer to both of these questions must be a resounding and absolute, **“YES!”** Our job at this point is to try our best to understand the relationship that these two special boys surely must have shared!

Hopefully we have a deeper understanding of the unique relationship between these two individuals, now let us move to the events of the baptism of Jesus. We have already read that John expressed hesitancy at Jesus’ request, “And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: ***for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness***. (This is an important aside that is necessary in order to explain that last phrase of Jesus. What most Bible students fail to recognize about the baptism is that if Jesus were to become a priest the law required that a priest would be inducted into office at thirty years of age, “From thirty



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years old and upward until fifty years old shalt thou number them; all that enter in to perform the service, to do the work in the tabernacle” (Num 4:23). It would have been important also that Jesus fulfilled the whole law, “These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that **all things must be fulfilled**, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms” (Luke 24:44). Now, remember that Zacharias was serving in the sanctuary at the altar of incense when the angel visited him with the news of his son (John the Baptist). Therefore, since Zacharias was a priest, John the Baptist likewise became a priest at age 30. Since Jesus was not of the tribe of Levi, according to the Law he could not become a priest according to Levitical standards; nevertheless, at age thirty John the Baptist performed an acceptable cleansing ceremony (baptism) over Jesus that in effect authorized him to become a priest, “Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, **Thou art my Son, to day have I begotten thee.** 6 As he saith also in another place, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec” (Heb 5:5-6). So Jesus was cleansed that He might become a priest; as we have just read in the Book of Hebrews, He was made a priest under the order of Melchisedec.)

Now, returning to the baptism passage, “then he suffered him. 16 And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and **he (John the Baptist) saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him (Jesus):** 17 And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matt 3:13-17). John the Baptist actually experienced the wonderful opportunity to see the Holy Spirit during the baptism of Jesus! John also heard the voice of God! The Bible portrays John as the witness of the Messiah! The Apostle John wrote concerning John the Baptist, “There was a man sent from God, whose name was **John.** 7 The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe” (John 1:6-7). John well knew the special commission of the Messiah.

Thirty years after their mothers experienced those supernatural events, we find Jesus answering questions sent from John by two of his disciples, “as they departed, Jesus began to say unto the multitudes concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind? 8 But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? behold, they that wear soft clothing are in kings' houses. 9 But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? yea, **I say unto you, and more than a prophet.** 10 **For this is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.** 11 Verily I say unto you, **Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist:** notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. 12 And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force. 13 For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John” (Matt 11:7-13).

Now that we have reviewed John's commission, let's investigate the Messiah's mission. The opening verses of Luke Chapter four teach us that Jesus was tempted by the devil in the wilderness for forty days after the Baptism of John. Immediately after the temptation



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He came into Galilee in the power of the Holy Spirit, “And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read. 17 And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, 18 The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me **to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, 19 To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.** 20 And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. 21 And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears” (Luke 4:16-21). In that short passage, which took place early in the ministry of Jesus, He identified His own mission from the Father by quoting from the prophet Isaiah, “The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; 2 To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD” (Isa 61:1-2). Prior to the events of Jesus’ baptism, both Jesus and John would have known, understood, and probably often talked about Isaiah’s prophecy!

You should probably be wondering by now, “What does all of this have to do with offense? In what way could the individual missions of Jesus and John the Baptist relate to offense?” The Apostle Paul prayed for Christians, “That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and **without offence** till the day of Christ” (Phil 1:10). Paul essentially taught through that passage that our Christian walk can only be accomplished successfully “without offense!” But that does not answer our question. How does offense relate to the story of Jesus and John the Baptist?

Notice the Biblical narrative, “Now when John had heard **in the prison** the works of **Christ**, (Notice this passage specifically uses the term, “Christ” instead of “Jesus!” Since it uses the term, “Christ” meaning “**the anointed one**,” this means that John heard from his disciples while he was in **prison** that his cousin, Jesus, was performing the works of the Messiah!) he sent two of his disciples, 3 And said unto him, **Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?**” (Matt 11:2-3). Now we must realize that this is a ponderous question to be asked of Jesus especially coming from John; the reason it is so weighty is that John already knew who Jesus was! Remember that John came “**to bear witness of the Light**” (John 1:7). John’s question actually became an expression of his doubt! John wondered how those messianic signs that Jesus was performing could actually be happening! John realized that the Messiah’s mission included, “the **opening of the prison** to them that are bound!” (Isa 61:1). John must have wondered, “If the Messiah is able to perform all those other signs, why would his own cousin have not done something to set him free!” After all, John had done everything he was supposed to accomplish; he earlier had said, “Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, **I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him.** 29 He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the



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bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled. 30 **He must increase, but I must decrease**” (John 3:28-30). John had humbled himself in deference to the Messiah; nevertheless, John was still in prison and in fact he was condemned to death! Why?

In order to understand, we must carefully review Jesus' response, “Go and shew John **again** (The word again implies that there must have been some previous event!) those things which ye do hear and see: 5 The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them” (Matt 11:4-5). Jesus actually sent John's disciples with the message that He was indeed the Messiah! Through that message of the signs, Jesus confirmed to John the Baptist that He was the Messiah! Nevertheless, John somehow became offended (we will see proof of his offense in just a minute!) John must have lamented that Jesus had done nothing to release him from his imprisonment! John knew Jesus' mission, “to proclaim **liberty to the captives**, and the **opening of the prison** to them that are bound!” (Isa 61:1) Like all of the Jews of His time, John probably expected the Messiah to immediately take over the government! Most Jews of that time had preconceived ideas concerning how the Messiah would function! Whenever preconceived notions are unfulfilled, people often become offended!

This may seem severe; nevertheless, because John did not believe in Jesus to act in his behalf he actually limited Jesus' ability to respond to his situation. Remember that the Scripture in another place says, “**he could there do no mighty work** . . . 6 And he marvelled **because of their unbelief**” (Mark 6:5-6). Unbelief limits what Jesus can do for us!

The problem is that whenever we are offended at God or we are operating in unbelief, we actually stay or hold back the hand of Jesus from performing on our behalf! If you would like to review an example that supports this statement notice the following passage of Paul and Silas who were sent to prison, “And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they **cast them into prison**, charging the jailor to keep them safely: 24 Who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks. 25 And **at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them**. (They did not get depressed and send questions to the Apostles concerning why Jesus allowed them to be beaten and cast into prison. Instead, Paul and Silas knew that Jesus was the Messiah and they were sure that he would save them; out of their unshakable faith they began to sing praises unto God!) 26 **And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened**, and every one's bands were loosed” (Acts 16:23-26). Is Jesus a respecter of persons? Would he act in behalf of Paul and Silas and not on behalf of John the Baptist? No! The thing that stopped Jesus from working on behalf of John the Baptist was John the Baptist's unbelief that reflected his offended attitude! Whenever someone becomes offended his or her thinking is naturally affected in a negative way.



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John actually questioned if Jesus was truly the Messiah because offense always causes our thinking to get off track. Notice Jesus’ words during that exact event, “Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see: 5 The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them. And ***blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me***” (Matt 11:4-6)! Jesus added that final phrase because of John’s offense!

Job recognized the all-powerful nature of God; therefore he asked the question, “Who hath hardened himself against him, (*God*) and hath prospered?” (Job 9:4). This means that it is impossible for anybody to get mad at God and expect His blessings! Oh no, you do not need to get mad and express your anger directly toward God; you can merely have offense toward another person, “he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, ***how can he love God whom he hath not seen?***” (1 John 4:20)! Whenever we hang on to our offense against a brother it becomes an offense against God, “These things have I spoken unto you, ***that ye should not be offended***” (John 16:1). Whenever we hold on to our offense, we are in opposition to God! Paul wrote, “herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience ***void of offence*** toward God, and toward men” (Acts 24:16). What about you? Have you ever become offended with God or some other person?

One of the biggest problems is that an offended person continues to ask unanswerable questions such as: “Is all of this for real?” “Why did God allow this awful thing to have taken place in my life?” “How could all of this possibly be true?” A person offended with someone else, ultimately is offended at God too; after all, didn’t God see the situation? This is the reason that, “***A brother offended*** is harder to be won than a strong city: and their contentions are ***like the bars (prison bars) of a castle***” (Prov 18:19)! The problem is, when we become upset with God, who, pray tell is there left that can help us? Job’s concept is compelling, “Who hath hardened himself against him, (*God*) and hath prospered?” (Job 9:4). We cannot harden ourselves against God and not pay for it, even if we do not realize that we have hardened ourselves against God! Offense in our heart against anyone actually places us behind our own prison bars! How can the physical bars be broken when the offended person is clinging to the imaginary bars in his unforgiving mind!

When we are not treated the way that we should have been treated; it becomes a hard pill to swallow! When we don’t understand the answer to why we have been mistreated, other questions become hard to understand as well! Pretty soon, we are confused and in offense!

We never want to fall into offense because; the ultimate outcome of offense will be our head on somebody’s platter! Offense restricts faith from properly functioning; instead, it is only the source of more questions without answers!

Who has offended you? Who is blocking your blessing? Who is holding you back from making an advance in the Lord? If you are harboring any offense against anybody, even if small, then you are leaving yourself open to a dangerous situation! Get rid of offense, “if



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thy right eye **offend** thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee” (Matt 5:29); and “if thy right hand **offend** thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee” (Matt 5:30).

If somebody has offended us and we cling to that offense then there are unspoken questions left deep in our heart; “Why hasn’t God done something about this? Doesn’t God realize that I didn’t deserve this? I thought God was supposed to answer prayer?” Jesus could have asked these same questions! Instead, Jesus said, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34). The Father and the Son have already forgiven the most egregious offense against anybody on this earth; therefore, there is nothing else that can cause offense! Since Christians are “dead with Christ” (Rom 6:8), they need to realize that it is impossible for dead men to get offended!

What about John the Baptist? Surely his offense at Jesus cannot doom him to an unspeakable future? After all, didn’t Jesus say, “Among them that are born of women **there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist**: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he” (Matt 11:11). No! John represented the end or conclusion of the Old Testament era, “The law and the prophets were **until John**” (Luke 16:16). This means that John was the last or end point of the Old Testament era! Since that time the Kingdom of God is preached and faith is now an added ingredient in the heart of the believer! Faith in Jesus was the reason that Paul and Silas could be beaten and bound and still believe. Their faith caused them to sing praises at midnight! Because they believed in Him they were kept from all offence!

God predetermined that the Jews would experience offense in Jesus, “As it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a **stumblingstone and rock of offence**: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed” (Rom 9:33). Since Jesus declared that John the Baptist became the person representative of the end of the Old Testament era, we can conclude that he was representative of the entire Jewish nation. Are the Old Testament Jews including John the Baptist lost forever because they did not believe in Jesus? Paul explained, “But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, **hath not attained to the law of righteousness**. 32 Wherefore? Because they sought it **not by faith**, but as it were by the works of the law. For **they stumbled at that stumblingstone**” (Rom 9:31-32). Israel stumbled; does their stumbling mean they are forever lost? Notice Paul’s exact words concerning Israel, “Have they stumbled that they should fall? **God forbid**: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy” (Rom 11:11-12). As a matter of fact Paul reveals that, “**all Israel shall be saved**” (Rom 11:26).

We all have experiences where someone has insulted, slandered, or falsely accused us! Perhaps we fully expected someone to come through for us and instead they totally ignored our needs! Neither of these phony situations are truly reasons for us to live in offense! Scripture teaches that we cannot expect God’s blessings while we are in offense, “if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that **thy brother hath ought against thee**; (is offended) 24 Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; **first be reconciled to**



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thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift” (Matt 5:23-24). Simply stated, it is improper for us to even attempt to present gifts to God unless we are reconciled with our brothers! We are to be careful not to give offense, ***“Give none offence***, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God” (1 Cor 10:32). Obviously we should make every attempt to never offend another!

Beyond offending others we are not to become offended either; instead, we are to forgive, “Forgive us our sins, for ***we also forgive everyone who sins against us***” (Luke 11:4) NIV. In this lifetime, it is natural and predictable that humans will get offended. However this is not an excuse to get offended; you are not in the natural, “***the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God***: for they are foolishness unto him” (1 Cor 2:14). We are not natural but supernatural, “grieve not the ***holy Spirit of God***, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. 31 Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: 32 And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, ***forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you***” (Eph 4:30-32).

The following Scripture should identify every single one of us, “Great peace have they which love thy law: and ***nothing shall offend them***” (Ps 119:165).

NOTE: Next time we will reexamine another couple of offhand statements that Jesus made with regard to John the Baptist, “And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force” (Matt 11:12); and “The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it” (Luke 16:16).