

John 13:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me; and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me.

Analysis

Verily, verily introduces weighty truth. **He that receiveth whomsoever I send** (λαμβάνων, lambanōn; πέμπω, pempō)—receiving Christ's sent messengers equals receiving Christ. "Send" (pempō) is apostolic terminology; Jesus sends His apostles with His authority. **Receiveth me**—accepting Christ's representatives means accepting Christ Himself. This grants apostolic authority but also apostolic accountability.

And he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me—the chain extends to the Father. Receiving apostles → receiving Christ → receiving the Father. This establishes representational theology: the sent one carries the sender's authority. Jesus is the Father's sent One (John 3:17, 5:36); apostles are Jesus' sent ones (John 17:18, 20:21). Rejecting apostolic testimony means rejecting Christ and the Father. This grounds biblical authority—Scripture written by apostles carries Christ's own authority. The principle also warns Christ's messengers: misrepresenting Him means grave accountability.

Historical Context

In ancient Near Eastern culture, a sent messenger (שליח, shaliach in Hebrew; apostolos in Greek) legally represented the sender with full authority. Jesus applies this cultural practice to apostolic ministry. Early church debates over authority

(Galatians, 2 Corinthians) appealed to apostolic authentication. This verse grounds the canon—apostolic writings carry Christ's authority.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How should this verse shape your response to faithful preaching of God's Word?
2. What accountability does this principle create for those who claim to speak for Christ?

Interlinear Text

ἀμὴν	ἀμὴν	λέγω	ὑμῖν	ὁ	λαμβάνει	ἐάν	τινα
Verily	Verily	I say	unto you	G3588	He that receiveth	whomsoever	G5100
G281	G281	G3004	G5213		G2983	G1437	
πέμψαντά	ἐμὲ	λαμβάνει	ὁ	δὲ	ἐμὲ	λαμβάνει	
I send	me	He that receiveth	G3588	and	me	He that receiveth	
G3992	G1691	G2983		G1161	G1691	G2983	
λαμβάνει	τὸν	πέμψαντά	με				
He that receiveth	G3588	I send	me				
G2983		G3992	G3165				

Additional Cross-References

Luke 10:16 (Parallel theme): He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me.

Luke 9:48 (Parallel theme): And said unto them, Whosoever shall receive this child in my name receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me receiveth him that sent me: for he that is least among you all, the same shall be great.

Mark 9:37 (Parallel theme): Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me.

Matthew 25:40 (Parallel theme): And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

Galatians 4:14 (Parallel theme): And my temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus.

Colossians 2:6 (Parallel theme): As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him:

1 Thessalonians 4:8 (Parallel theme): He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his holy Spirit.