

## **Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth One Verse at a Time***

Hated Without a Cause, Part 1

### **INTRODUCTION**

The end of the fifteenth chapter of John deals with the antagonism of the world toward Jesus and His disciples. In the previous chapters, Jesus has shown that He deeply loves them. Now He shows them the contrast to that love by explaining that the world is going to hate them. This balanced view is designed to eliminate a false expectation of pure bliss by giving them a realistic understanding of how the world responds to believers.

In verse 17, Jesus makes a transition from describing His love for them to describing the world's hate by saying, "These things I command you, that ye love one another." He is encouraging them to love each other sacrificially and devotedly, just like He has loved them, because they would need each other desperately. The love they had for each other would be all the love they would know because the world was going to hate them with a passion. The statements beginning in verse 18 are not only a warning about the world's hate, but also a motivation for the disciples to love each other.

It's a lonely world for some Christians because other Christians have not always been diligent to express the kind of love for other believers that Jesus Christ wants them to express. The world can be a lonely place because it doesn't accept believers. If we're true disciples of Christ, we run cross-grain to almost everything the world stands for. Consequently, the only love we have to count on and live for is the love of our Savior and fellow believers. So Jesus says to His disciples, "Men, it's going to be rough. Be sure you keep on loving each other. You desperately need each other in this hostile world."

Christians are encouraged to fervently love their brothers and sisters in Christ (1 Pet. 1:22; 2:17; 4:8). Love is the basis of our relationships within the body of Christ. We need to love each other as we minister to one another and witness to a hostile world.

Jesus introduces the subject of the world's hatred in contrast to His love, and gives four reasons for the hatred of the world.

### **I. CHRISTIANS ARE NOT OF THE WORLD (vv. 18-19)**

"If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love its own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you."

## **A. The Rejection of the World**

### 1. Explained

In this passage, Jesus anticipates that when the disciples move out into the world they're going to experience the hatred of antagonistic unbelievers. He tells them not to be surprised about that because it isn't any different than their attitude toward Him. If they are going to stand up for Christ as His followers, they should expect the same kind of treatment.

The world hates believers because they aren't a part of its system. The term world (Gk. kosmos) is repeatedly used by John. Although it has various meanings, depending on the context, it is used in John 15 to refer to the evil system of sin as it is authored by Satan and acted out by men. It is the expression of human depravity, the instinctual passion for sin that men have. That system of evil is controlled by Satan and his evil angels. Its society of wicked men have set themselves against Christ, His Kingdom, and His people. Those who follow and love Jesus Christ--those who openly declare their faith and identify with Christ by what they say and how they live--will be hated by the world because the world has set itself in opposition to everything that is Christlike.

### 2. Expressed

#### a. John 7:7

Jesus said this to His earthly brothers, who didn't yet believe in Him: "The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that its works are evil." Jesus was saying, "The world can't hate you because you belong to it. But it hates Me because I confront it with its sin.

#### b. John 8:23

Jesus said to the Pharisees, "Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world." Jesus implied that those of this world are influenced by the kingdom of hell.

## **B. The Ruler of the World**

### 1. His purposes

People living in our world who don't know Jesus Christ are part of a satanic system of evil that operates against God. Referring to His coming defeat of Satan at the cross, Jesus said, "Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out" (John 12:31; cf. John 14:30). Satan runs the world's evil system. Naturally Satan's purpose for all that he does is to fight against

Christ and God. Therefore his system reflects his evil purposes.

## 2. His persecution

It's amazing how many Christians are fooled into thinking that the world is tolerant of God and of Jesus Christ when in fact it isn't. The world's many superficial religions are the most heinous and deceptive strategies of Satan. In fact, false religion under the guise of godliness has been the greatest persecutor of the truth throughout church history. Naturally, a society of evil men guided by Satan and his demons, and set against God and Christ is going to hate those who belong to Jesus Christ. We need to expect that. If the world doesn't hate you, than maybe you don't belong to Jesus Christ or maybe you aren't living like a Christian should.

### a. 1 John 3:12

"Cain, who was of that wicked one ... killed his brother. And why killed he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous." That's why the world hates the true believer--Christians are a condemnation to their evil works. As Cain was indicted by the righteousness of Abel, so the world is indicted by our righteousness as we stand apart from it. We who have been declared holy in Jesus Christ don't belong to the world's evil system. Therefore the world hates us It's wicked ruler directs his attack against whomever belongs to God.

### b. John 17:12-15

Praying to the Father, Jesus said, "While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name; those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost .... I have given them thy word; and the world hath hateth them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil [one]." Jesus prayed that the Father would protect the disciples from Satan, knowing that his evil system would hate them just like it hated Him. The system hated Jesus Christ so much that its mounting hate finally mocked Him and nailed Him to a cross. Many unbelievers hated Him because He violated their religious system. The greatest persecutors of Christianity have always been false religions and cults--even though they often operate under the guise of godliness. Satan concentrates his efforts toward false religion because that's what captivates people's minds.

## **C. The Responsibility to the World**

God has called Christians to live apart from the system and stand for Jesus Christ.

### 1. Philippians 2:15

"Be blameless and harmless, children of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world." Paul was encouraging the Philippians, who were living in the midst of the godless Roman empire, to have blameless lives that would serve as a rebuke to its corruption.

## 2. 1 John 5:19

Here the apostle John contrasted believers with the world: "We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness." There is an absolute antithesis between the believer and the world.

## 3. Ephesians 5:11

Paul said, "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness but, rather, reprove them." The believer has the privilege, right, and duty to condemn sin. Perhaps the reason we don't feel as much of the hatred of the world as should be expected is that we aren't willing to confront the world by calling sin what it is. We're far too tolerant and easygoing. We need to confront the unbeliever face-to-face with his sinfulness. The believer who does that will be hated by the world because he openly violates the system and stands in open condemnation of it.

# **D. The Reaction of the World**

## 1. Toward Christ

Jesus often experienced the hatred of the world when He confronted it:

### a. John 5:16

"Therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay him, because he had done these things on the sabbath day." Jesus violated the Jewish religious system of the day. If you exposed a system as false, you would probably get a dramatic reaction. People hate to admit that they are not following the truth but have mistakenly placed their lives in something that is wrong. However, if a person does not adhere to a religion, he probably won't have much to be against. But false religion has always been an antagonist of truth.

### b. John 8:58-59

Jesus said to the Pharisees, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am. Then took they up stones to cast at him." Jesus violated their religious system.

### c. John 10:30-33

Jesus said to the Pharisees, "I and my Father are one. Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him. Jesus answered them, Many good works have I shown you from my Father; for which of those works do ye stone me? The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not, but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, maketh thyself God." The world can't tolerate someone who sets himself higher than they are. When you tell someone, "You're living in sin and you're going to die without God unless you repent and believe the truth," you may get a hostile reaction.

### 2. Toward its own

The world loves its own. In verse 19, Jesus told the disciples, "If ye were of the world, the world would love its own." The world finds its unity among the lowest common denominators: It revolves around such things as drinking, carousing, immorality, lying, and cheating.

The more wicked people are, the better the world likes it. Romans 1:32 says that those who have rejected God know that "they who commit such [evil] things are worthy of death, not only do the same but have pleasure in them that do them." The world glories in its wickedness. It boasts of its unrighteous deeds as if they were significant accomplishments. The world applauds wretched people because it has few moral standards for acceptance. However, when Christians confront the world with a righteous standard that exposes its wretchedness, the world refuses to listen. In fact, the wickedness of the world will only get worse because the world has no conscience. Christians are its conscience. So when we leave the world at the rapture before the Tribulation, all hell will break loose because the conscience of the world will be gone.

### **Revival--Come and get condemned!**

Christians have been called to be separate from the system and to indict it. That's why we can't sit in our lovely churches and say, "I'm certainly praying that the unsaved will come." Let's face it: The hate-filled world doesn't want to come to church to get indicted by us. Jesus didn't tell us to put up a sign outside that says, "Revival--All unsaved please come Monday through Friday and get condemned!" Rather, we must meet the people of the world outside the church on their own ground. In Matthew 5:13-16, Jesus said, "Ye are the salt of the earth, but if the salt have lost its savor, with what shall it be salted? It is thereafter good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hidden. Neither do men light a lamp, and put it under a bushel, but on a lampstand .... Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father, who is in heaven." Display your lifestyle out on a hill where it belongs so the world can see it!

### 3. Toward Christians

#### a. Explained

Christians are different because Jesus has chosen them "out of the world" (John 15:19). The verb translated "chosen" in that verse appears in the middle (reflexive) voice in Greek and implies that Jesus chose His disciples for Himself. As Christ's own, we stand in direct opposition to Satan's system because our entire manner of life is a living accusation against it. I am sure that infuriates the devil because he doesn't want any defectors from his kingdom. Consequently, he sets out to persecute us through his evil system. Satan hates the righteous as much as he hates God because they identify with the One whose power he is attempting to usurp.

#### b. Expected

If you really live for Jesus Christ, you will face the antagonism of the world. You can expect that because Jesus experienced it too. In 2 Timothy 3:12, Paul said to Timothy, "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." Generally, the world is going to hate Christians unless it doesn't know certain individuals are believers.

The early Christians were confronting the depravity of the system in their day, which was inundated with false religion. Following their example, if you know someone who's in a cult, you need to tell them in love what they are really involved in. You don't help anyone by being tolerant of sin or of false religious systems.

Knowing that the Jewish religionists were Jesus' greatest antagonists, expect people to hate being told that they have been wrong. The world hates the truth; they never want to be confronted with it, especially by people who claim to be chosen by God. Commentator Arthur Pink says that the one doctrine the world hates most is the doctrine of the sovereignty of God. They refuse to believe that God has chosen Christians to be a part of the true religion (Exposition of the Gospel of John [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980], III: 29-30).

#### c. Exemplified

One of Jesus' most devastating indictments of Israel is in Luke 4:25-30. When Jesus confronted the Jewish religious leaders with the truth of who He was and stated that they would not accept Him, their hostility erupted. Jesus was the most narrow-minded person who ever lived. Everything He said was absolutely true; anything that ever contradicted what He said was always wrong. In this particular passage, the people of Nazareth were stunned because Jesus, who grew up among them, seemed to know everything. Knowing of their disbelief, Jesus continued to explain how God had sovereignly

designed to save Gentiles and temporarily blind Israel: "I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land; but unto none of them was Elijah sent, but only unto Zarephath, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow" (vv. 25-26) God can do anything He wants to do. Although there were many widows in Israel, Elijah was sent to help a foreign widow. Being a part of Israel, recipient of the Abrahamic covenant didn't, guarantee divine blessing for every Israelite. Verses 27-30 say, "And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha, the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian. And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, and rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill on which their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong. But he, passing through the midst of them, went his way."

The world hates the sovereignty of God. The fact that Christians have been chosen out of the world and blessed by God doesn't set well with worldly people. They can't understand how non-believing people in a non-Christian nation who haven't heard about Christ can be held accountable by Him. They don't understand about the loving selection of believers by God and that all men are responsible for how they respond to Him because God has revealed Himself to everyone (Rom. 1:18-20). Therefore, expect the world to hate us. If we live godly lives, we're going to be persecuted because we are not of the world-- we don't lower ourselves to its standards.

### **Focusing on the Facts**

1. Why did Jesus give His disciples a balanced view of His love and the world's hate?
2. Why did Jesus encourage His disciples to keep on loving each other sacrificially?
3. Why is this world so lonely for some Christians?
4. We Christians need to love each other as we \_\_\_\_\_ to one another and \_\_\_\_\_ to a hostile world.
5. Why should Christians not be surprised when they experience the hatred of antagonistic unbelievers?
6. In the context of John 15, what does world refer to?
7. According to John 7:7, why was Jesus unpopular with the world?
8. Who rules the world's evil system? What is his purpose in doing so?

9. What has been the greatest persecutor of truth throughout history?
10. What did the world's mounting hatred for Jesus finally do?
11. What responsibility do Christians have with regard to the world? Support your answer with Scripture.
12. Why did the Jewish leaders try to stone Jesus in John 10:30-33?
13. According to John 15:19, how does the world respond toward its own? Where does the world find its unity?
14. If you live for Jesus Christ, standing in direct opposition to Satan's system, what can you expect to face? Support your answer with Scripture.
15. What is one doctrine of God's character that the world especially hates?
16. Why are all men responsible for how they respond to God (Rom. 1:18- 20)?

### **Pondering the Principles**

1. Ephesians 5:11 says, "Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them" (NASB). As a Christian who has been especially chosen by Christ, are you consistently living by His righteous standards? If you have participated in "the unfruitful deeds of darkness," ask God for forgiveness and the power and wisdom to resist further temptations. Maybe you have avoided participating in such deeds, but have you gone a step further and exposed them as you have encountered them? As you confront the world, you will need to do so in a spirit of love and humility. Meditate on 2 Timothy 2:24-26.

2. Are you a closet Christian? Is your life making the impact God designed for it to make on the world? Have you become like salt that has become worthless, or a lamp that has been placed under a bushel (Matt. 5:13-15)? You may recall an exhilaration to tell the world about Christ when you were first saved that has since subsided. Possibly the world has squeezed you into its mold of indifference to spiritual things, or maybe it has silenced you to avoid experiencing its persecution. Don't feel intimidated to take a stand for Christ, for the gospel is "the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth" (Rom. 1:16). The temporary persecution you may endure now will be far outweighed by the joy you will experience from leading those stumbling around in a dark world to "the light of the world" (John 9:5). Pray that God would give you some opportunities to share Christ this week, and that He would give you the boldness to speak the truth in love without being worried about the

reactions you may encounter.

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