

If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of sin. Now, however, they have no excuse for their sin. He who hates Me hates My Father as well. John 15:22-23

Relevant Studies—“24!”(Before the Cross)

Lesson Eight—Does the World Hate You?

“If the world hates you keep in mind that it hated Me first.”—this is a tough lesson to teach! Do I want to talk about the inevitable hatred that is and will always be directed toward the true Church of Jesus Christ? Not really. Nobody wants to be persecuted or rejected because of his or her faith. Yet in this passage, Jesus teaches us to expect to be hated and rejected by the world. By “the world” the Bible is referring to the system of the world. The system of this world hates anything that is counter to its philosophy. You see, Jesus is not talking about our friends and family, but a system that really is not about people at all—an invisible world. God loves people but does not love the world’s organized society that is without Him and is controlled by God’s enemy, Satan (the prince of this world).

Remember, “the world” is not people. “The world” is a system that intertwines the enemy’s paradigms of religion, society, and philosophy which are hostile to God.

We often keep our faith to ourselves with the excuse of not wanting to offend others with a private matter—but we are deceiving ourselves when we use this excuse. Often the truth is—we hide our faith, in order to be accepted by the world. By doing this, we are denying the faith we claim as central to our lives—by not revealing our faith in Christ, we are actually also deceiving those whose acceptance we desire so much!

Although Christians don’t deliberately invite rejection by being obnoxious or offensive, they in fact often say and do things that cause discomfort or embarrassment. Much of the “persecution” that is directed toward a believer is simply due to a lack of the fruit of the Spirit flowing through his or her life, actions, and speech. We must live our Christianity among the world by evidences of the fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. So, although it is true that the hatred of the world is a price the believer pays for friendship with Jesus Christ, we must all draw the distinction between persecution for Christ’s sake and rejection that comes because the Christian is truly obnoxious and offensive.

Day One—The Reality

1. Read John 15:18-27.
2. Jesus had just finished talking about love, and then He goes into a very serious discussion about the world’s hatred toward Christians. Give an example of when you believe you were being persecuted by the world for being a follower of Christ.
 - a. How did you respond to the hostility at the time?
 - b. What do you think you might do differently today (if anything)?
3. Read Colossians 4:5-6. Have you ever noticed how Christians are often stereotyped on television and in movies? Of course, some of this is because many Christians tend to parrot one another with “buzz words” and clichés. How can we learn to speak and act without developing this “herd” mentality? Christians use a lot of these “buzz words”, and the world knows them, hates them, and uses them to mock the very things for which we stand. If a Christian is portrayed on TV, he/she is usually politically a very far right, self-righteous person who uses these “buzz words” in every sentence. After reading Colossians 4:5-6, how can we be an influence in the world where we are not a cliché or stereotyped as a hateful or weird Christian? Use any example you choose.
4. Read 1 Peter 3:15-16. Can Christians be liked by people in the world without compromising their convictions? Explain your answer with an illustration.

Days Two and Three—The Reason the World Hates Believers

1. Read 1 Peter 4:3-4 and explain why you believe the enemy hates Christians so much.

2. Read John 6:2, 26-27. The world and those living in its system hate believers because they do not know and understand the true God. The world’s followers see God as a force or power that fulfills all their earthly desires and dreams—as a Supreme Force who protects and provides no matter what a person’s life is like. Do you now, or did you ever think of God for what He does for you more than who He is? Explain. (Be honest with this question—even with yourself.)

3. Have you ever been disappointed or angry with God because He failed to do what you thought He should or you had asked Him to do? Explain. (You may remember answering a question like this when we talked about “asking in His Name”, but I want to address it from a different angle in this lesson.)

4. When God fails to fulfill the desires or dreams of a person in the world, that person becomes very angry with their perception of who God is and refuses to ever consider Him again. When that happens they become even more hostile toward Christians because of their anger and disillusionment with God. Consider this scenario: You are witnessing to a person who is angry with God because He has allowed someone he/she loved to die. What steps do you need to take in helping this lost person become a follower of Christ?

5. Read Philippians 2:12-16. In order to be a light in this dark world, what kind of lifestyle do you need to lead? List everything you see in this passage.

Pattern comes from the root word “schema” which means the schemes, the fashion, the outward form, or the appearance of a man or woman who lives by the world’s standards. For example: a person who looks and acts differently at work than at home or at a social event. This schema always changes or differs throughout his/her life.

6. Read Romans 12:2. Considering what you read in the gray box above, what did Paul mean by conforming to the pattern of this world?

7. Read Philippians 2:3-11. How is this different from a Christian who “conforms to the pattern of this world?”

Days Four and Five—The Servant and the Master

1. Read John 15:20-21. As you read this passage does it make you wonder if you really want to follow Christ with all your heart? Explain.
2. If we are followers of Christ, then what is Jesus saying to us through the words He spoke to His disciples in this passage?
3. Read Philippians 4:4-7. What is this verse saying to you regarding your place here in this world?
4. Read John 13:16. What was Jesus saying in light of what He had just done for His disciples?
5. Read John 15:20 and 1 Peter 2:21. Jesus spoke of something different here than He had spoken about in John 13 (above). What is this difference?
6. Read Philippians 3:10-11. Would Paul’s prayer here be anything like you would pray? Explain.

