

Exegesis

Vs. 18-19 – Jesus says, “If the world hate[s] you, ye know that it hated me before *it hated* you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.” With this, we begin the next major section in the Farewell Discourse (vs. 18-16:4a). And as you’ll no doubt notice, this portion is the polar *opposite* of the last one, for the Lord moves from talking about the topic of *love* (cf. 15:17) to unpacking the issue of *hatred*. Thus, the mood of Jesus’ sermon shifts considerably. It moves from addressing the disciples’ relationship to the Godhead—i.e., how ought they view themselves in relation to God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—to dealing with their connection to the world—i.e., how ought they view themselves in relation to the *unbelieving* world. In fact, the term “world” shows up a staggering *six times* in two verses. And, in a word, the connection between believer and unbeliever is *hateful*; it is one of *aggression*, not *affection*. The Greek word translated as “hate” is **μισέω** (*miséō*), and it shows up a total of *twelve* times in John’s account, with *seven* of those instances being found in this section alone: vs. 18 (2x’s), 19, 23 (2x’s), 24, 25. The simplest and most obvious conclusion we can make from this next section is this: *followers of Jesus will be hated by all those who do not follow Jesus*.

Though to be clear, this hatred does not arise because the apostles were particularly unlikable; quite frankly, they could claim no responsibility for it.¹ The one to blame was *Jesus*, for he says that *he* “chose [them] out of the world, therefore the world hates [them].”² By following the Son of God, the disciples became aliens; as Jesus was a stranger in his own country, so would his followers be as well (cf. 1:11). In their connection to the True Vine, the believer will experience love without equal (vs. 13); this is true. But no less true is the fact that, because of this very connection, they’ll also experience hate “without a cause” (vs. 25). The apostles used to be “of the world” but now they’ve been chosen “out of world;” yet because they remain “in the world” (17:11), a disciple will be hated *by* the world.³ The world loves its own, but it has only *hatred* for any comrade who’s betrayed the cause. From the perspective of a world in open rebellion against God, a sinner who repents is no better than the Savior who saves.⁴ Christians

¹ Morris (1995), p. 602, quoting Ryle, “It is not the weaknesses and inconsistencies of Christians that the world hates, but their grace.”

² Klink (2016), p. 655, “This verb [“chose” **ἐκλέγομαι** (*eklegomai*)] was used to describe the works the disciples would perform [cf. vs. 16]; here it is used to describe the people they would become.”

³ Klink (2016), p. 654.

⁴ Carson (1991), p. 525.

are not persecuted because of who they are as individuals but because of who they identify themselves with.

The N.T. (particularly the Book of Acts) and over 2,000 years of church history testify to the reality of Christian persecution.⁵ Love (especially for enemies) distinguishes Christianity from all other philosophies and religions (cf. 13:35).⁶ But, contrary to what one might think, this radical kind of love is the catalyst that sparks countless hate crimes aimed at Christians. As Morris says, "It is not without its significance that the disciples are to be known by their love, [and] the world by its hatred."⁷ When a community's sinfulness is exposed by the True Light (cf. 1:9), the darkness will vehemently oppose his advances, often using deadly force.⁸ And just as Cain killed Abel "because his own deeds were evil and his brother's righteous" (1 Jn. 3:12), so has the world killed Christians. God's love leads men to repentance (Rom. 2:4), or else it leads them to violence. They either become the children of God, endeavoring to save others, or they remain children of Satan, where murdering is the family business (cf. 8:44).

At this point, an intriguing contrast can be made between Jesus' address to his disciples here and his response to his brothers in chapter seven. After his brothers ridiculed him, the Lord said, "The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil" (7:7). Though the world would soon learn to hate Jesus' disciples, according to him, it did not hate Jesus' own brothers, at least not initially.⁹ Why? As the Lord pointed out, "the world...love[s]...its own" (15:19). Because Jesus' brothers didn't believe in him and because they didn't see him as anything more than their older brother, they ended up hating and mocking him. So, when he said that a Christian's family members would be turned into opponents (cf. Mat. 10:21-22), Jesus spoke those words from *personal* experience.

Yet, though his entire family deserted him, save for his mother (cf. 19:26-27), the Lord built for himself a new one (cf. Mar. 3:31-35). In fact, the disciples shared a closeness with the Lord,

⁵ This does not ignore the atrocities that have been done in the name of Christianity throughout the years—e.g., the Crusades, the witch hunts in 17th century New England, how slavery was supported by many churches during [the Civil War](#), and how many evangelicals opposed [the Civil Rights movement](#), etc. Without a doubt, the Church will have much to answer for. However, by and large, Christians have been persecuted more than they've been the persecutor. In fact, according to a [Pew Research article published in 2020](#), Christians experienced harassment in more countries in 2018 than any other world religion. Christian persecution is both a historical fact and, as Dr. E. U. Ochab puts it, "[part of a global phenomenon](#)" that has reached the modern age.

⁶ Köstenberger (2008), p. 464, "The Qumran community stressed love within the brotherhood but "everlasting hatred for the men of the pit" (1QS 9:21-22)."

⁷ Morris (1995), p. 602; Köstenberger (2008), p. 461, quotes J. R. Michaels as saying something similar.

⁸ Carson (1991), p. 524, "If the union of believers with Jesus constitutes a community of love, that community stands over against the world."

⁹ As is well known, James later becomes a believer (cf. 1 Cor. 15:7; Gal. 1:19) and considering Ac. 1:14 and 1 Cor. 9:5, Jesus' other brothers likely did as well.

which was foreign to the Lord's own siblings. During his earthly ministry, Peter, Andrew, James, and John came to know Jesus *better* than "James, Joses, Judas, and Simon" (Mar. 6:3). And, rest assured, that kind of relationship to the Son of God is the *only thing* that will sustain the believer when everyone, including their own family, turns their back on them. As Carson rightly points out,

"Following Jesus cost something (cf. Lu. 9:57-62; 14:25-33) and may cost life itself. Yet not following Jesus means one is siding with a lost and hateful world. To warn prospective disciples of these unyielding realities serves to discourage spurious conversions and to foster true ones, just as Jesus told these things to the first disciples in order to ensure stability until the time of faith truly dawned (cf. 16:1)."¹⁰

All true disciples live in the world with their eyes wide open, knowing full well that they dwell in hateful territory. That following Jesus could, quite literally, cost them *everything*. However, even though they understand they will be hated, those who follow Jesus do not become hermits, isolating themselves from the world. Such followers become evangelists, endeavoring to save the world (cf. 4:38; 17:18; 20:21).¹¹ They may even work towards winning some lifelong adversary, hoping an old foe may become a new friend (cf. 15:13). Thus, would-be-disciples beware; there is no other way to follow Jesus. Though you will likely be hated for it, following Jesus means loving the enemy, possibly even dying for the enemy.¹² A true believer loves the world while being hated by the world.

¹⁰ Carson (1991), p. 524.

¹¹ Kruse (2017), p. 376.

¹² Keener (2012), 2:1018, quotes Israeli scholar David Flusser as saying, "Christianity surpasses Judaism, at least theoretically, in its approach of love to all men, but its only genuine answer to the powerful wicked forces of this world is, as it seems martyrdom."

VIDEO DESCRIPTION

Deep Dive: The Gospel of John | Week 60 | John 15:18-19

SPEAKER: Ben Hyrne, Pastor

Tonight, Jesus will say, “If the world hate[s] you, ye know that it hated me before *it hated* you.” And with those words, we’ll begin the next major section in the Farewell Discourse (vs. 18-16:4a). And as you’ll no doubt notice, this portion is the polar opposite of the last one, for the Lord moves from talking about the topic of *love* (cf. 15:17) to unpacking the issue of *hatred*.

But how can this be? How can a religion known for its love be so widely hated? When a community’s sinfulness is exposed by the True Light (Jn. 1:9; 3:19), the darkness will vehemently oppose his advances, often using deadly force. And just as Cain killed Abel “because his own deeds were evil and his brother’s righteous” (1 Jn. 3:12), so has the world killed Christians. This is why Christianity is the most widely harassed of the world religions. God’s love leads men to repentance (Rom. 2:4), or else it leads them to violence.

However, even though they understand they will be hated, those who follow Jesus do not become *hermits*, isolating themselves from the world. Such followers become *evangelists*, endeavoring to *save* the world (cf. 4:38; 17:18; 20:21). Thus, would-be-disciples beware; there is no other way to follow Jesus. Though you will likely be hated for it, following the Son of God means loving the enemy, possibly even *dying* for the enemy. A true believer loves the world while being hated by the world.

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