

# The World Will Hate You (John 15:18-16:04)

Expository Lessons from the Gospel of John

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## I. Background for the Farewell Discourse

- a. As we resume in the text, it is the Thursday night, the night before Jesus is to be crucified.
  - i. Jesus has had his Last Supper with the disciples, at which (we know from **Matthew, Mark and Luke**) He instituted the Lord's Supper with the bread and the cup.
- b. After dinner has ended and Judas has departed, but before Jesus and his disciples cross over to the Garden of Gethsemane (where Jesus will be taken prisoner), Jesus gives a lengthy and very significant talk to the apostles.
  - i. The passages we will cover in this lesson are part of that "Farewell Discourse", which we find in **John 13:31-17:26**.
- c. In our last lesson we discussed Jesus teaching regarding those He would call His friends.
  - i. He said, "You are my friends if you do whatever I command you."
  - ii. We want to be real friends of the real Jesus. Many today create an 'imaginary friend', a Jesus who does not command them to do anything!
  - iii. Jesus added what He called "My commandment" here, that we love each other as He loved us. That means laying down our lives for our friends: true sacrifice on our part, not just warm feelings.
- d. In this lesson we will continue that teaching of Jesus, from where we left off.

## II. Now World Will Hate You (Read John 15:18-16:4)

- a. Summary of the passage: expect to be hated and persecuted by the world.
  - i. Jesus gives a few reasons why they should expect to be persecuted.
    1. Because Jesus was hated, and His followers should expect to be treated the same way He was treated.
    2. The world loves its own. If they are not of the world (but have been chosen out of the world), the world will hate them.

3. Jesus was hated because He testified about the sin of the world. Those who hate Him in reality hate His Father as well.
  4. Religious people, even members of their own religion (the Jews) would hate them and put them out of the synagogue.
    - a. They will mistakenly believe that persecuting and even killing Jesus' disciples is offering service to God.
    - b. They will do this because they are religious but do not know God.
  5. Jesus is telling them this now, before He dies, for two reasons:
    - a. So that they will be prepared and recall this warning by Jesus when it happens.
    - b. Because He will be leaving them shortly.
  6. Jesus also quotes from **Psalm 69**: "They hated me without reason."
- b. Other places where Jesus taught about His followers being persecuted.
- i. In the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount.
    1. "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you." (**Matthew 5:10-12**, NKJV)
      - a. We are blessed if persecuted for righteousness sake.
        - i. Need to make sure this is coming *because we are being righteous!* I have seen Christians being opposed because they (we) were being obnoxious, rude, sloppy, lazy, unreliable, not honoring their parents, etc.
        - ii. When we think we may be facing persecution, we should first ask ourselves: *why* is this person angry with me? What is the *real reason*?
          1. Because of my own sin? or
          2. Because of some unrighteousness on my part?

- b. We should rejoice; have a great reward in heaven.
- c. This is nothing new: happened to the prophets as well.
  - i. Consider what it says when Israel was rebelling against God's commands and about to be taken into captivity in Babylon. God repeatedly sent prophets, who spoke the truth and called people to repent. However, those prophets in return were abused and despised. Read **2 Chronicles 36:23-24**.
  - ii. Jesus described this in the Parable of the Tenants, where God's servants (His prophets) are badly treated, and then His Son is killed. (**Matthew 21**)
- ii. In Sermon on the Plain, in **Luke 6** (similar)
  - 1. "Blessed are you when men hate you, and when they exclude you, and revile you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of Man's sake. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy! For indeed your reward is great in heaven, for in like manner their fathers did to the prophets." (**Luke 6:22-23**, NKJV)
  - 2. "Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for so did their fathers to the false prophets." (**Luke 6:26**, NKJV)
    - a. Popularity is a sign that is commonly found among the false teachers (who say what people want to hear, not what God wants said).
    - b. If we are walking faithfully with God and obeying His commands, we *should not* expect that the world will stand up and applaud us!
- iii. In the Limited Commission in **Matthew 10**, when Jesus sends out His disciples throughout Israel.
  - 1. Read **Matthew 10:16-38**
    - a. His disciples are being sent out as sheep among wolves. (Jesus describes the world as "wolves" – not a safe place!)
    - b. The Holy Spirit would help them in their hour of trial, giving them the words to speak.

- c. Jesus warns that even family members would rise up against other family members out of hatred, even putting them to death.
  - d. “You will be hated by all for My name’s sake.” However, they must *endure to the end* to be saved.
  - e. The student (them) would be treated like the master (Jesus). If they killed the Master, *what will they do to the students?*
  - f. If we confess Him, He will confess us; if we deny Him, He will deny us.
- iv. In Jesus’ warnings about the end (perhaps end of the world, or end of Jerusalem) in **Matthew 24**.
- 1. “Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name’s sake. And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. But he who endures to the end shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.” (**Matthew 24:9-14**, NKJV)

### III. Record of Persecution and Martyrdom in the New Testament and from Early Church History

- a. We learn of the fate of many of those mentioned in the New Testament, from what we find in the Bible and early historical accounts (see Eusebius’ *Ecclesiastical History*, and other ancient historical sources as discussed in *The Martyr’s Mirror*):
  - i. John the Baptist – beheaded by Herod, for addressing his illicit marriage to Herodias, his brother’s wife (**Matthew 14, Mark 6**).
  - ii. Stephen – stoned to death in Jerusalem at the city gate (**Acts 7**)
  - iii. James the apostle, son of Zebedee – beheaded in Jerusalem (**Acts 12:1-2**)
  - iv. James “brother of the Lord” stoned and beaten to death with clubs in Jerusalem
  - v. Barnabas, companion of Paul – burned to death in Cyprus
  - vi. Paul- beheaded in Rome under Nero

- vii. Peter – crucified in Rome under Nero, head downward
  - viii. Andrew – crucified in Patras, Achaia (Greece)
  - ix. Bartholomew – tortured, beaten, beheaded in Armenia
  - x. Thomas – burned and speared to death in India
  - xi. Matthew (Levi) – nailed to ground and beheaded in Ethiopia
  - xii. Simon the Zealot – crucified in Persia
  - xiii. Matthias – tied to a cross, stoned and beheaded
  - xiv. Luke – hanged in Greece
  - xv. Antipas (martyr mentioned in **Revelation 2:13**) – burned inside a bronze ox in Pergamum, Turkey
  - xvi. Timothy – stoned to death in Ephesus, Turkey
  - xvii. These Christians were not simply killed; many *suffered violent deaths*, for proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom of God throughout the Roman Empire, the East, and Africa.
- b. Early Christian writers from the second century who wrote about martyrdom (quotes below are taken from article on ‘Martyrs, Martyrdom’ in *Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs*, ed. by David Bercot).
- i. Irenaeus, bishop of the church in Lyons, in Gaul (modern-day France), writing c. 180 AD:
    - 1. “The church does in every place, because of that love which she cherishes towards God, send forward at all times a multitude of martyrs to the Father. In contrast, all others not only have nothing of this kind to point to among themselves, but even maintain that such witness-bearing is not at all necessary.”
      - a. Source: Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, found in Ante-Nicene Fathers vol. 1, p. 508.
      - b. Here, Irenaeus points out that no other religions or philosophies, other than the Christian church, had adherents who were willing to die as martyrs rather than renounce their beliefs.
    - 2. Tertullian, a Christian writer from Carthage in North Africa, writing c. 197 AD, addressing his pagan critics:

- a. “The more often we are mown down by you, the more in number we grow. The blood of Christians is seed.... For who that contemplates it, is not excited to inquire what is at the bottom of it? Who, after inquiry, does not embrace our doctrines? And when he has embraced them, who does not desire to suffer so that he may become a partaker of the fullness of God’s grace, that he may obtain from it complete forgiveness, by giving his blood in exchange? For [martyrdom] secures the forgiveness of all offenses.”
  - i. Source: Tertullian, *Apology*, found in Ante-Nicene Fathers vol. 3, p. 55.
  - ii. This is a very famous quote from Tertullian, “the blood of the Christians is seed”. He points out that when pagans saw Christians willing to give up their lives for Christ, it drew many to want to learn more about the Christian faith.
- c. In the West (within the Roman Empire) persecutions continued on and off right up until the time when Constantine became emperor, almost 300 years after the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus.
  - i. Eusebius, bishop of the church in Caesarea and early church historian, wrote about some of this persecution in his classic work, *Ecclesiastical History*. Below are some quotes from near the end of time of persecution in the Roman Empire, taken from Book 8 of *Ecclesiastical History*. These particular accounts are of things that happened during Eusebius’ own lifetime.
    1. From Eusebius’ *Ecclesiastical History*, Book 8, chapter 8, “Those who suffered in Egypt”:
      - a. “And such, too, was the severity of the struggle which was endured by the Egyptians, who wrestled gloriously for the faith at Tyre. But one cannot but admire those that suffered also in their native land, where thousands, both men, and women, and children, despising the present life for the sake of our Savior’s doctrine, submitted to death in various shapes. Some, after being tortured with scrapings and the rack, and the most dreadful scourgings, and other innumerable agonies, which one might shudder to hear, were finally committed to the flames; some plunged and drowned in the sea, others voluntarily offering their own heads to the executioners, others dying in the midst of their

torments, some wasted away by famine, and others again fixed to the cross. Some, indeed, were executed as malefactors usually were; others more cruelly, were nailed with the head downwards, and kept alive until they were destroyed by starving on the cross itself.”

2. From book 8, chapter 12, “Of many others, both men and women, who suffered in different ways”:
  - a. “Why should I now mentioned the names of others, or number the multitude of men, or picture the various torments of the admirable martyrs of Christ; some of whom were slain with the axe, as in Arabia; some had their limbs fractured, as in Cappadocia; and some were suspended by the feet, and a little raised from the ground, with their heads downward, were suffocated with the ascending smoke of a gentle fire kindled below, as was done to those in Mesopotamia; some were mutilated by having their noses, ears, and hands cut off, and the rest of their limbs, and parts of their body cut to pieces, as was the case in Alexandria? Why should we revive the recollection of those at Antioch, who were roasted on grates of fire, not to kill immediately, but torture them with a lingering punishment? Others, again, rather resolved to thrust their arm into the fire, than touch the unholy sacrifice; some shrinking from the trial, sooner than be taken and fall into the hands of their enemies, cast themselves headlong from the lofty houses, considering death an advantage compared with the malignity of these impious persecutors.”
  - b. “... Others at Pontus, endured torments that are too horrible to relate. Some had their fingers pierced with sharp reeds thrust under their nails. Others, having masses of melted lead, bubbling and boiling with heat, poured down their backs, and roasted, especially in the most sensitive parts of the body. Others, also, endured insufferable torments on their bowels and other parts, such as decency forbids to describe, which those ‘generous and equitable judges’ [*sarcasm*], with a view to display their own cruelty, devised as some preeminence in wisdom, worthy of their ambition. Thus constantly inventing new tortures, they vied with one another, as if there were prizes proposed in the contest, who should invent the greatest cruelties.”

3. From book 8, chapter 14, “The morals of the persecutors”:
  - a. (Note that in the text that follows, Eusebius is referring to events that took place during the reign of Maxentius, an especially evil Roman emperor who ruled 306-312 AD. Maxentius was defeated by Constantine at the famous battle of Milvian Bridge in 312. Constantine stopped persecution of the Christians in the Roman Empire; his ascent to the throne understandably was much appreciated by Christians. However, the rise of Constantine directly led to other two problems: the beginning of mingling church and state in the West, in the Roman Empire; and suspicion/persecution against Christians in the East, in the Persian/Parthian Empire.)
  - b. “Why should I mention the degrading and foul lust of the man [*referring to Maxentius*]? Or why mention his innumerable adulteries? There was not a city that he passed through in which he did not commit violence upon females. And in these he succeeded against all but the Christians. For they, despising death, valued his power but little.
  - c. “The men bore fire, sword, and crucifixions, savage beasts, and the depths of the sea, the maiming of limbs, and searing with red-hot iron, pricking and digging out the eyes, and the mutilations of the whole body. Also hunger, and mines, and prisons; and after all, they chose these sufferings for the sake of religion, rather than transfer that veneration and worship to idols which is due to God only. The females, also, no less than the men, were strengthened by the doctrine of the divine word; so that some endured the same trials as the men, and bore away the same prizes of excellence. Some, when forced away, yielded up their lives rather than submit to the violation of their bodies.”
- ii. It is no wonder that the Christians were so relieved when Constantine came to power and ended this terrible persecution and embraced Christianity.
  1. Many Christians concluded that God raised up Constantine *to rescue* the Christians from their enemies.
  2. Unfortunately, this led some to embrace the Roman government and even to align the church with it. Christians in the West ended up violating Jesus’ teaching on establishing a



*spiritual kingdom* that would be separate from the kingdoms of this world.

- d. These accounts of persecutions that heroic martyrs had to endure remind me of some stirring passages in the New Testament:
  - i. “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?” (**Romans 8:35**, NKJV)
  - ii. “Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ’s sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.” (**1 Peter 4:12-13**, NKJV)
  - iii. (Speaking of the great men and women of faith in the Old Testament, who also were hated and persecuted) “They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented—of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth.” (**Hebrews 11:37-38**, NKJV)

#### IV. What About Persecution Today?

- a. Christians today are still the most persecuted religious group in the world.
  - i. Source: recent study (May 2019) by UK’s Foreign Office. Discussed in RT report on “*Crosstalk: Christianity, the Forgotten Persecution*”  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gi5ek0zrEzI>
- b. Think about that. Why are we persecuted? Christ taught:
  - i. Love everyone, even your enemies.
  - ii. Don’t steal, don’t even covet.
  - iii. Submit to governing authorities, pay taxes.
  - iv. Don’t lie or cheat.
  - v. Help those who are poor.
  - vi. Don’t use violence; don’t even retaliate, no fighting in wars.
  - vii. Don’t get drunk.
  - viii. No sex outside of marriage; be faithful to spouse, good parents to children; children obey parents

- ix. Highest moral and ethical code.
- c. We are hated because we are not of the world.
  - i. We don't value and live for the things of this world.
    - 1. Christians are called to reject: love of money, power, fame, pleasure, awards, prestige; illicit sex.
    - 2. We are simply following the example of our Lord and Master. Jesus rejected all the glories of the kingdom of this world when Satan offered them to Him (**Matthew 4:8-10**).
  - ii. We point out that what the world is doing is sinful and will send people to hell. We bring light of truth and call people to repent of sins.
    - 1. Greed and materialism
    - 2. Idolatry (putting things over God)
    - 3. We submit to government, but will not obey
    - 4. We call people to repent of immoral lifestyles (promiscuity, abortion, adultery, remarriages after divorce)
- d. Many people want to present a version of Christianity that appeals to the world. Church leaders can emphasize to unbelievers how becoming a Christian can *improve their lives*.
  - i. Help marriages, strengthen families, service projects
  - ii. Many Christians think that by "doing it the right way" they can avoid persecution. They believe that somehow, we can "finesse" things so that unbelievers will applaud our wonderful lives, and *the world will love us*.
  - iii. However, *this is not going to happen*. Paul wrote:
    - 1. "Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived." (**2 Timothy 3:12-13**, NKJV)
- e. After Constantine, everything switched. Christians tolerated in the West (Rome) but persecuted in the East (Parthia, Persia).
  - i. Satan tests Jesus' followers in two ways:
    - 1. Today in the West (US, Europe), Satan is hitting the Christians with luxury, the testing of the third soil in the Parable of the

Sower: the “cares, riches and pleasures of this life” (**Luke 8:14**).

- a. (Regarding the seed sown among thorns) “...and the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.” (**Mark 4:19**, NKJV)
  - b. This has been happening for some time in the West.
2. However, in contrast, in the East (much of Africa, Middle East and Asia) Satan is testing Christians with the test of the *second soil of the same parable*: severe persecution.
    - a. (those sown on rocky soil) “and they have no root in themselves, and so endure only for a time. Afterward, when tribulation or persecution arises for the word’s sake, immediately they stumble.” (**Mark 4:17**, NKJV)
  3. Satan may switch things up, as he did during the fourth century of Christianity. At that time, the severe persecution in the West changed under Constantine, and the Western church was then tested by luxury and alliances with the state.
    - a. Meanwhile, things in the East (Parthian empire) switched also as a time of tolerance was replaced by persecution.
  4. Things appear to be changing rapidly in the West (US/Europe)
    - a. One politician running for President of the US speaks of “extremist groups” within Christianity (meaning groups that are not bowing down to the things that are popular to the world and this politician’s lifestyle choices).
    - b. There is a target on our backs, even here in the US. Get ready for persecution of Christians to re-emerge in the West.