The hatred of the world (John 15:18–16:4)

The moral universe is either submitting willingly to God's rule or are in rebellion against God. The latter is often referred to as the "world". Those who truly follow Jesus Christ have a changed relationship to God and the world. They now belong to Jesus and not to the world. The world, which is in rebellion against God and which hates Jesus, will now also hate those who follow Him. Jesus accordingly warns His disciples and instructs them concerning this.

I. ***Those who belong to Jesus should expect hatred from the world (15:18-20).***

1. *The hatred of the world toward those who belong to Jesus started with their hatred toward Jesus.*
   Hatred towards Jesus included the obvious hatred of the Jewish leadership as well as the fickle nature of the crowds, the indifference of His home town, and the disenchanted disciples who turned away from His "hard" teaching. Hatred does not always wear an ugly mask, but can even come from those who claim to believe and portray a pious attitude (*cf.* 16:2-3).
2. *The person who comes in faith to Jesus Christ changes sides.*
   Jesus has chosen His followers out of the world which means having different values, mind sets and lifestyles. His followers do not belong to the world and will not be like the world but will be hated by the world.
3. *Since "No servant is greater than his master", those who follow Jesus can expect the same treatment as Jesus, including the hatred of the world.* Cf. Matthew 10.

Though it is not a pleasurable idea, the more we become like Jesus, the more we will be hated by those in rebellion against God.

II. ***The world's hatred of those belonging to Jesus arises out of the condition of their own hearts (15:21-25).***

The world hates followers of Jesus because of who Jesus is, the One sent from God as the perfect revelation of God, with the words of God, doing the works of God.

1. *Those who hated Jesus showed that they did not know God and those who hate followers of Jesus also show that they do not know God.*
   The Jews had the Biblical revelation of God and claimed to know God but did not. The rest of the world has an adequate witness to God but suppress the truth in unrighteousness (Romans 1:18). There is hatred towards God and will hate those who are associated with God.
2. *The works and words of Jesus revealed the rebellious unbelief of those who hated Him.*
   By rejecting the signs, which the Father had given Jesus to do, people rejected both Jesus and the Father. By rejecting the message, they rejected both Jesus and God the Father, who had given Him that message. They hated Jesus and they showed that they hated God the Father as well.
   The presence of Jesus among them – including what He did and said – removed any pretense that they knew God. By hating Jesus, who revealed God, they showed their sin of unbelief. It is the heart condition of people that causes them to hate those who pursue the righteousness of God.

III. ***The Holy Spirit is the divine provision and agent in the time of opposition (15:26-27).***

In the physical absence of Jesus the Holy Spirit helps the believer and gives a continued witness to Jesus. This explains why the hatred toward Jesus did not end, when Jesus returned to heaven.

1. *The Holy Spirit will testify about Jesus as a witness to the world and to the disciples.*
   See 16:8, 13, 14-15.
2. *The disciples would testify about Jesus, empowered by the Spirit.*
   The Eleven were special witnesses to the person and ministry of Jesus (*cf.* Acts 1:21-22) and whose witness was clearly empowered by the Spirit (*cf.* Acts 1:8; 5:32). A Spirit-empowered witness is a logical conclusion to the picture of the Vine and the branches. The life of Jesus spreads through the branches by the power of Spirit and bears fruit, pointing back to Jesus.

The Holy Spirit is both our Helper when we are confronted with the hatred of the world, and He is God's agent to continue the witness of Jesus which draws that hatred.

IV. ***The greatest danger when confronted with such hatred is not death but apostasy (16:1-4).***

1. *Extreme persecution might cause a professing disciple to give up or possibly even abandon the faith.*
   The disciples were not unaware of the danger of persecution even unto death. But abandoning the faith would be worse than death, because it would show that a person had not truly belonged to Jesus.
2. *Persecution can come from those who believe they are serving God.*
   For a Jew to be cast out of the synagogue marked them as religious outcasts and removed them from any of the social. Saul of Tarsus is an example of those who would even kill followers of Jesus and believe that they were doing a service to God.
3. *Jesus's forewarning of persecution was intended to prepare His disciples.*
   Having already been told by Jesus, we can know that things have not gotten out of control. It also encourages us to practice discernment and to be on guard even from those who claim to follow Jesus (*cf.* Acts 20:29-30).

True followers of Jesus will produce fruit, showing them to be followers of Jesus, and drawing the hatred of the world just as it hated Jesus. We will need to choose whom we will fear. Will we fear God or men? Only God is worthy of our fear and only He offers true satisfaction and eternal significance. But to fear God will mark us as different than the world; and the world, who hates God, will hate those who fear Him.

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