

On the night before His crucifixion, knowing what was coming and loving His disciples, Jesus prepared them for those coming events including the fact that He would leave this world and leave them in it. In this preparation (John 13–17) a particular emphasis is placed on the “world” and the relation of the disciples to it. We, too, are in the world and need to know what it means to live as a follower of Jesus Christ in that world. Humanity is divided into those who are of the world by birth and those who have been taken out of the world by being given a new life, a new birth which places the believer in the family of God. But that kinship with Jesus means being hated by the world, a fact which believers should know and understand.

**I. Followers of Jesus should know that the world hates Jesus.**

Whether as a statement or a command, the force of verse 18 is that disciples of Jesus should know that the world hates Jesus. Cf. Matthew 10:25. To understand this better, two questions need to be answered.

**1. Who or what is the world?**

- a. The term “world” has a broad sense with various aspects and nuances, which may or may not receive emphasis in a particular context. It can mean the created universe, the earth (cf. John 21:25), or mankind on the earth (John 7:4). But often it has reference to fallen, sinful mankind (cf. John 1:29) or even all of that which belongs to man apart from God (cf. 1 John 2:15–17). See also John 1:10; 3:16–17, 19; 6:33, 51.
- b. The hatred of the world toward Jesus can be seen in its refusal to accept Jesus (John 1:10–11), their selfish desires (John 6:26), identifying Him with Satan (Matthew 10:25), and their delivering Him to death.

**2. Why does the world hate Jesus?**

- a. The world hates Jesus, because they do not know God (v. 21). Unregenerate man does not know God and therefore hates the One who is the Image of God, Jesus Christ.
- b. The world hates Jesus, because they choose not to heed what Jesus said (v. 20; Matthew 7:21–27).
- c. The world hates Jesus, because they do not want their evil deeds exposed (John 3:19; 7:7).

Not only does fallen, unregenerate humanity hate Jesus, the ruler of this world, Satan, drives all things in this world to oppose Jesus.

**II. Followers of Jesus should expect to be treated by the world as the world treats their Master, Jesus.****1. Why should followers of Jesus expect this treatment?**

- a. Expect this treatment because followers of Jesus no longer belong to the world (15:19). Believers have been chosen out of the world and been given new life which makes them different. They are outsiders to the world.
- b. Expect this treatment because by principle a slave is not greater than his lord (v. 20). Believers have been bought with a price and belong to God. Because of who Jesus is (v. 21) and the believer’s association with Him, believers will be treated like Jesus.

**2. Why does it help to know this?**

- a. He told His disciples these things so that they would be strengthened in their faith and not stumble (16:1–4). Persecution when it comes confirms the word of Jesus and fits into what is expected (cf. Acts 14:22; 1 Thessalonians 3:2–4).
- b. He told His disciples these things so that their joy would be full (John 15:11; 17:13). Persecution for the sake of Jesus shows that the believer is not a friend of the world (v. 19), but rather belongs to Jesus, which is a reason for joy.
- c. He told His disciples these things that they might have peace (John 14:1, 27; 16:33), which is a work of the Spirit in the believer’s heart.
- d. He told His disciples these things in order to encourage their love for one another. (See John 15:17 and the greater context; the contrast is seen in James 4:4.)

These are the only two possibilities for any person: either to be a friend of the world but an enemy of God or to be a follower of Jesus but an enemy of the world. Those who truly follow Jesus have accepted Him for who He is and what He has done in providing a perfect and totally sufficient sacrifice for sin.

Feeling foreign in our cultural context does not mean that a person is suffering for being a follower of Jesus Christ. However, it can remind us that a believer is a spiritual outsider and should indeed be different than sinful, unregenerate humanity. To be joined with Jesus Christ will result in being treated like Jesus was and is treated. The Christian should not despair at that, but rejoice at being a child of God. Be thankful when God gives us peace, but be alert against a level of comfort that indicates being a friend of the world.

***Questions for further thought and discussion:***

- To what extent do Christians expect the world to hate Jesus?
- In what ways does the world hate Jesus?
- What dangers exist, if you do not expect persecution from the world?
- Do you experience or expect persecution as a follower of Jesus? Why/why not?
- What distinguishes properly fitting into our culture from wrongfully becoming friends with the world?