

Hated by the World

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Our passage continues to explain the meaning of union with Christ. So far, we've seen we are united with him by his Spirit to experience *peace*; we are united with the vine to receive abounding *joy*; and we're united in friendship to enjoy his *love*. Love, joy, peace, and *that's* where many of us would like to draw the line. No trial. No hardship. But Jesus insists being united with him also means *being hated by the world*. Love, joy, peace, and *hate*? His blessings come with a burden. Let's consider the *content* of the hate, the *cause* of the hate, and the cure for hate. The content, the cause, the cure.

The Content of Hate

"If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you" (15:18). Hate is a strong word. If I hear one of my kids say, "I hate you," I tell them we don't use that word to express our dislike. Use a different word. Should *Jesus* be using a different word? If you're investigating Christianity, you may hear this and think, "I don't hate Christians. I might not agree with them on everything, but I don't *hate* them." So what kind of hatred is Jesus talking about? Perhaps it's the extreme kind? Over a million Christians killed for their faith in 2000-2010. That's 100,000 a year, so this certainly applies to them but what about the rest of us? Well, it's important to point out that, up to this point, the disciples' experience of hatred hasn't been physical. Not a drop of blood shed, yet. But they have been snubbed by friends and family, some put out of the synagogue, mocked and hotly debated by the Pharisees. This hatred marginalized them within their culture. You're not welcome in the mainstream. When Jesus says the world hates you, he is referring primarily to the world's *system*, its way of seeing things, a cultural viewpoint that privileges certain ideologies. What's our system like? Our system accepts most ideologies, except exclusive ones like Christianity. In response, Rod Dreher has called for the *Benedict Option*, which essentially says the modern West is in "the new dark ages" and that those who want to lead a traditional life of virtue will have to form countercultural communities. That like the Benedictine monks, we shouldn't put up a fight but withdraw, hunker down and create long lasting institutions that promote our beliefs and morals. There are several problems with this position. One is that cultivation of virtue isn't the main point of Christianity. Someone in our church was sharing the gospel with a co-worker and the co-worker responded by saying: "If we all followed the teachings of Jesus the world would be a better place." What would you say? It seems accepting...but is it true? Yes, and no. Yes, if we all followed Jesus teaching the world would be better but no because not a single one of us can fully do that, Christian or not. Jesus taught that humanity is flawed, sinful, out of sorts with God, and the only way to be sorted out is seek reconciliation in Jesus, not in imitating Jesus. The ultimate point of Jesus' teaching isn't to make the world a better place, but to make us right with God, which in turn makes the world a better place. But when we insist on being true to this message, dislike suddenly flares into hatred and we are called bigots, anti-intellectual and the like. Now, sometimes Xns are bigoted, and so are non-Xns, both need Jesus. But here Jesus is addressing unwarranted animosity. Why the hate? Jesus says it's because he's taken you out of this world: 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" (19). What's he saying? Jesus is saying when we turn to him for salvation, we are

in a sense, *taken out of the world*. We gain citizenship in another country, become members of a different family. When he chooses us or lifts us out of this system we stick out, are different, marked by otherworldly status. The result? People hate. In the Harry Potter spin-off, *Fantastic Beasts*, Newt is from another world. He is a kind, helpful, fantastic beast-loving magician, capable of extraordinary things. Mary Lou, on the other hand, is from this world, where she has formed the Salem Society to campaign against magicians. She passes out leaflets denouncing them as *dangerous*. There is a fundamental disjunction between their two worlds, Newt's world and Mary Lou's world. Mary Lou sees Newt as a threat to her way of existence. As a Christian, you've been taken out of this world—you've seen fantastic things, and you're different, changed—but you also live in this world. So people may see you as a threat to their world, their system, their way of living. Your exclusive devotion to Jesus tells them you've seen something they haven't. They lack something. And we don't like that feeling. So there's pushback. Jesus says be prepared for the pushback: no servant is greater than his master. Just as I am persecuted, so you will be persecuted. The way they respond to my words is the way they will respond to your words. Some will accept. Many will reject. There's no getting around it, if you love me you'll be hated by the world. So: Are you hated? Are you willing to be hated? Or are you so in love with the world there's not enough of Jesus on you to hate? In conversations, do you back off of Jesus' exclusive claims? Or do you just avoid talking about Jesus altogether? This *hatred* acknowledges extraordinary social, cultural pressures to *not* talk about *Jesus*.

Cause of Hate

Next, Jesus reveals the cause of hate: his message and his authority. His **message**: "If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have been guilty of sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin" (22). What's the message? That there was no sin or guilt before he came? Clearly not, "*for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given*" (Rom 5:13). Jesus is saying, now that I am here, you are inexcusably aware of sin. My message tells you something you don't see about yourself: that you don't measure up, that you're disjointed from the Father, *and* you are so bad, so flawed, that I'll have to suffer your punishment to get you right with God or you will suffer it yourself. In essence, You are not who you think you are. You think you're smart, a pretty good person, successful but you're a miserable failure. And we don't like to hear that—the truth. This week I could tell my wife was bothered, so I asked her to tell me why. She reluctantly told me that something I said made her feel slammed. Being the humble, loving husband I said, you're so right please forgive me. No, that took about 15 minutes. Instead, I protested and told her that was her fault; deployed some defenses, and said she wasn't seeing things right. We don't like to be confronted with our faults. We instinctively excuse ourselves. Jesus says, there is *no excuse*. Nothing stands up in court with God. *That message* arouses hate. Second, his **authority**: "But all these things they will do to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me" (21). The reason people will oppress you is on account of Jesus' name. What's in a name? One's character. When I say, Mother Theresa a certain character comes to mind. Her name represents her. Throughout the Gospel of John, Jesus takes the name, I AM: "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am." "I am" is a translation of Yahweh, the name of the Creator God, meaning "I exist because I exist." By taking this name, Jesus claims not only to have existed before Abraham, but to co-exist with Yahweh. Twelve times, he makes this authoritative claim. Each time, Jesus places himself into the identity of the

omnipotent Creator. Which is why Jesus says, “[Whoever hates me hates my Father also](#)” (23). So when he says they’ll persecute because of my name, he’s saying [they resist his authority](#). Why? Because it definitively challenges our views. We want to judge and scrutinize and privilege our viewpoint. But he says that’s not possible. The I AM confronts individualistic authority with his *own name*. If Jesus message says, [you are not who you think you are](#). His name says, [you need me and only me](#). A friend with secular commitments recently asked me if I was writing another book. I told her I was, and she asked what it was about. I told her its called *Here in Spirit* and its essential message is that instead of finding our identity in a disembodied state of what others think of us or problems at work, being “there in spirit,” our true identity is found here, in the present, by being remade by the Spirit of God who gives us faith in Jesus Christ. It’s a book about how walking with the Spirit of God affects everything from the culture we make to the God we worship. She responded by saying, yeah we need to hear that message about being more present in the moment.” She used her opinion to redefine and reinterpret my truth, lopping off half of the book. Because of his name, we can’t do that with Jesus. We can’t just take the moral parts of his message we like. Because of the authority that backs up the whole message. I AM. Either he is or he isn’t God. That’s his teaching. His teachings don’t just make the world a better place; it confronts our place in the world: inferior, flawed, sinful, hell bound. Famed atheist and magician Penn of Penn & Teller says, “[If you believe that there’s a heaven and a hell, and people could be going to hell or not getting eternal life, and you think that it’s not really worth telling them this because it would make it socially awkward...how much do you have to hate somebody to not proselytize?](#)” Turns out “the world” isn’t the only system that knows how to hate. Refraining from evangelism isn’t love; it’s hate. So what’s the cure?

The Cure of Hate

Jesus says, “[But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me](#)” (26). The cure of hate, both ours and theirs, comes through the Holy Spirit. How? Since Jesus left, we need a Helper to come from outside of this world. We need an independent witness to the way things really are. When a jury is selected, candidates can be dismissed for any number of reasons for partiality. To get an impartial view, the true view of ourselves, we can’t rely on our perspective. We need a witness to *the truth*, from the outside, *who can see things the way they really are*. The word for bear witness means to testify. The Spirit stands up to testify about the truth concerning Jesus. What does he say? That though we are more hateful than we want to admit, in Christ, we are more forgiven & loved than we can imagine. The Spirit [bears witness about me](#), not better morals, or being more present, ME. [You need me and only me](#). The cure has to match the diagnosis. If you came down with cancer and the doctor prescribed aspirin, you’d object. You’d insist on the right course of medicine. Sin is God-resisting disease, and Jesus the I AM is the only cure, [an exclusive cure for an exclusive disease](#). Our job is to testify to this good news. To tell others. The Spirit puts the gospel *in* the heart; we put it on the mind. The Spirit of glory, the Helper has come to work through *your witness*. Why? To convince people that, though they don’t belong in God’s world, they can belong in God’s world, that though we aren’t who we think we are, Jesus wants make us into into someone wildly better, [that we need Jesus and only Jesus](#). *Jesus threatens our world to give us a much greater one. Endure the hate to give away the cure.*