

Why the World Hates Christians, Part 2

Scripture: John 15:17–25

Code: 43-86

We are going through the gospel of John; and I want you to look back at chapter 15 with me: John 15. And we have been taking a look at verses 17 through 25. We did that last week, and I'll wrap it up this morning for you. It's a very interesting portion of Scripture. It is one that must be understood by believers. It is one that I think today is pertinent because it tells us what to expect as believers in the world; and we are seeing it across the globe even today. It is a prophecy that our Lord gave, and it has always been fulfilled, and it is being fulfilled before us right now. The text starts in verse 17; let's pick it up there.

“This I command you, that you love one another. If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. But because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A slave is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also. But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake because they do not know the One who sent Me. If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin. He who hates Me, hates My Father also. If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would not have sin. But now they have both seen and hated Me and My Father as well. But they have done this to fulfill the word that is written in their law, ‘They hated Me without a cause.’”

One research group recently estimated that about 100 million people, who call themselves Christians, are under persecution in the world today – about 100 million. Probably a low figure. The persecution by Islam is the most open persecution against Christians. It started back in the seventh century and is still going on today in at least 41 Muslim countries. But Christians have not just been the object of Muslim hatred; Christians have been, throughout the whole history of the church, the most hated and the most persecuted people in the world, particularly true Christians. But even nominal Christians in name have been persecuted.

Christians have been persecuted by many nations and many regimes throughout history. I won't drag you through all of it; we did a little of that last time. But go back to the nineteenth century and you will find that the Ottomans massacred about two-and-a-half million Christians. Go back to the twentieth century, and it's estimated that the Soviets killed half a million Christians; and the Germans, another quarter of a million. Christians have been persecuted by the tens of thousands all over the planet, from Madagascar to Spain, from Mexico to China, from Japan to India, from Germany to Russia, from France to all kinds of countries in the Middle East.

Why is this? The simple answer is given us in the text I just read to you. Our Lord explicitly predicts hatred from the world for Christians, and He even tells us why. But it should be obvious, before we look at that text, that Christianity is hated because it is true. And the whole world lies in the lap of Satan, who is a liar.

Christianity tells you the truth about everything: the truth about God, the truth about man, the truth about sin; the truth about time, the truth about eternity; the truth about creation, the truth about consummation; the truth about hell, the truth about heaven; the truth about sin, the truth about righteousness; truth about life, truth about death, truth about the afterlife. Christianity tells the truth because the Bible tells the truth. Satan is a liar and he dominates the world kingdom, he and his demons. They are at war with God, they are at war with Christ, they're at war with the Holy Spirit, and they are at war, therefore, with the revelation of God, which is the Bible. Satan and his hosts are at war with the gospel; they're at war with the church.

We shouldn't be surprised that today in our own country, which has had a bit of a reprieve for its brief history, we shouldn't be surprised now that the place of safety for Christians, which once was part of America, is fast fading. Our sense of freedom and safety is in serious jeopardy. Persecutions of Christians will continue to escalate. We haven't yet suffered unto blood as some do across the world where we read almost daily about Christians being slaughtered and beheaded. But this is no surprise to us.

And I told you last week, when people say to me, "What do we do about the Christians being persecuted around the world?" my answer is, "Nothing, because it's exactly what the Lord said would happen." We are beginning to experience what Christians through the history of the church have experienced. We shouldn't be surprised; this is exactly what our Lord said. And, of course, He predicted it, and it is accurate, as every other thing that He said is accurate.

Now, the words that I read to you in the 15th chapter of John were given by our Lord to His 11 disciples after Judas had left to set up the betrayal. They were given to those 11 remaining disciples on the night before Jesus' crucifixion. Up to this point, the conversation had been about love. It started in chapter 13, went through chapter 14 through the first part of chapter 15, and I told you it was kind of a night of love. He was showing His love to them. He was making all kinds of lavish promises to them about joy, and peace, and the coming of the Holy Spirit; and fruitful, and blessing, and answered prayer, and all the resources of heaven would be available to them. And He was telling them that they would have the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, and they would possess everything they needed.

It was a night of love. It was a night in which He lavished them with heaven's love. He was leaving, and they were in a kind of panic about His leaving. And so He encourages them and comforts them with all these promises that come out of His love for them, and they are promises that extend beyond those 11 to all believers through all history.

But that night of love changed dramatically in verse 18. In verse 18, the word "hate" appears three times – at least three times in the English translation, twice in the Greek. And then it appears again, and again, and again, and again, through the verses that I read you. And all of a sudden, a night of love turns into a night of hate. It's a dramatic shift. The disciples who have been trying to understand all these promises of love are now confronted with the fact that while they are loved by God, they will be hated by the world.

You could sum it up by saying this: Christians are the most loved of all people by God, and they are the most hated of all people by Satan. We are the most loved by God, and therefore, lavished with all heaven's blessings. We are the most hated by Satan, and therefore, hit with all hell's worst. And we live in that world: the most loved, and the most hated; the most blessed and the most assaulted. We

have the most spiritual treasure, we are likely to have to forfeit the most earthly treasure. That's how we live. That's why Jesus said you better count the cost before you become a Christian. You will be loved by God, but you will be hated by the world. This is a prophecy of persecution.

You see, in verse 20, the word "persecute." We know what means; that is to attack with the desire to do harm to someone. And the history of Christianity is a history of persecution based on hatred. That's not going to change because Satan is the god of this world, the prince of the power of the air, who works in the children of disobedience. He manipulates his demonic force through human beings that are sinful and have not come to faith in Christ and be transformed, and so they are subjects of the kingdom of darkness, they carry out his agenda, and his agenda is to hate God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Bible, the gospel, and Christians.

And, as I've said last week, we've had a kind of reprieve in America because of the strong influence of Christianity in the beginning of our country; but that is diminishing very rapidly. Our Lord predicts then that Christians are going to be hated. They're going to be hated severely. Chapter 16, verse 2, He says "The time is going to come when people kill you and think they're offering service to God."

This is serious. You're going to be persecuted. You're going to be killed. You're going to be killed. And that's been the history of the church; many cases, the most noble, the most elevated, the most lofty, the most faithful preachers of the truth were persecuted, imprisoned, and executed. So our Lord makes a transition in verse 17 and says, "This is My commandment, that you literally keep on loving one another just as I have loved you."

Why does He say that in this context? Because this is so very important. We're all we have, folks. The world is our enemy. The world is hostile toward us. The world hates our message, hates our gospel. It hates our sanctification. It hates our influence. We are all we have, and our Lord says, "You're going to have to love each other." That's where the only true love is going to come from.

It is likely not to come from your family. Jesus said, "I bring a sword to separate people in a family." When somebody believes the gospel, they end up hating their father, their mother, their sister, their brother. There's an alien nation. Hatred takes the place of normal love. So you're to love each other, and it's to be an extensive love. He says, "Love the way I've loved you."

How had He loved them? Humbly. He'd loved them by serving their needs. He'd loved them by lavishing on them all the resources that He had. He loved them sacrificially. Verse 13 says, "Greater love has no one that this, that he lay down his life for his friends." And Jesus loved them enough to die for them. That's how we are to love. We are to love sacrificially, humbly, generously, mercifully, graciously, kindly, forgivingly.

We love each other. We have to live with each other. We are all we have in the world. There's a sense in which we circle the wagons, and the body of Christ becomes the realm in which we live and love, because it's difficult in the world. And then in this section, our Lord, starting in verse 18, gives them several reasons why the world hates us. We started last week, so I'll just review briefly.

Reason Number 1: We're not of the world. Pick it up in verse 18: "If the world hates you – " or since the world hates you, " – you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. But because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world,

because of this the world hates you.”

So, Reason Number 1 that the world hates us is we're not a part of the world. What do we mean by world? We don't mean the physical environment; we don't mean the planet, we don't mean that. Well, what does “world” mean in a biblical context. World is *kosmos*. *Kosmos* is an ordered system.

The opposite of *kosmos* in the Greek is *chaos*. *Chaos* is a disordered reality. The world is an ordered system. It is a *kosmos*. We talk about cosmology. We even talk about cosmetics, which put order where there's disorder, as you ladies all understand. So *kosmos*, *kosmos* is an ordered system.

Now, the world as an ordered system is an ordered system of evil, fallen and falling. It continues to fall. It is a system of unregenerate people controlled by Satan and demons. It is a system of lies and deception and wrong ideas, and human ingenuity, and human insight, raised up against the knowledge of God: anti-God ideas, anti-God thinking. This is the world. It is a system of satanic lies and deception, and it operates in the moral and spiritual realm.

A good definition of it, 1 John 3:11, almost a similar setting where John the apostle says to the believers, “This is the message which you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another – ” and he's going back to the text of John 15. The Lord said love one another. You're going to need to because you're all you have, “ – not as Cain, who was of the evil one. And because he was of the evil one – ” who is Satan, and the evil one is a murderer and a liar, “ – he slew his brother. And for what reason did he slay?” Why did Cain kill Abel? “Because his deeds were evil and his brother's were righteous. So do not be surprised, brethren, if the world hates you.”

Why do they hate us? Their deeds are evil and ours are righteous. That is a problem for the world. We are like a conscience to the world. So many obvious points at which you could demonstrate this in the world today. Just step up and say homosexuality is evil, as I was telling you last week, or any other sin is evil: lying is evil, deceiving is evil, greed is evil, fornication. Just go through the list of sins, and even the respectable sins, and watch the world react.

The reason they want to marginalize us, the reason they want to eliminate us from the public discourse is because they love evil and we are righteous. We have literally been transformed so that we are new creations. The old things passed away and the new things have to do with righteousness. We love what is true; we love what is right; we love what is honorable. “If you were of the world – ” Jesus said, “ – they would love you.”

You did fine before you became a Christian. Everybody accepted you; they loved you. You didn't confront them; you didn't expose them; you didn't intimidate them. They had a natural affinity for that. “But because you're not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, the world hates you.” We looked at that in some detail last time.

The world is a system of evil: that includes religion, that includes every ideology that is anti-God, anti-Scripture. It includes religion. It is atheism, which is a kind of religion that makes man God. It is theism, creating some other god that doesn't exist that is really a demon. It is polytheism, having many gods. It is poly-demonism, worshipping many demonic spirits. It is any form of idolatry, any cult, any philosophy, any psychology. Whatever is against God, whatever is against Scripture is part

of the system, and it hates God, and it hates Christ, and it hates Scripture, and it hates truth because it is run by Satan.

Back in John, chapter 3, very early in this gospel, our Lord made this clear. In verse 20 He said this: “Everyone who does evil hates the light. Everyone who does evil hates the light.” Why? He doesn’t come to the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. They hate the light. We are the light of the world. We shed light on iniquity. We pull the rock and uncover the evil underneath. We are hated because of that.

“Don’t be surprised the world hates you. I chose you out of the world.” We are now literally citizens of heaven who have been transformed. We have new natures. We love what is pure, and right, and holy, and good. We love the law of God; we love God; we love God’s people. We love truth, and we are a rebuke to the world. So, as we saw last time, the first reason they hate us is because we’re not part of the system of evil. We confront that system, we convict that system, we intimidate that system, both with our lives and our message.

Now, secondly – and this is kind of where we turned toward the end last week – the world hates us, first, because we’re not of the world, secondly, because it hated our Lord Jesus Christ. Go back to verse 18 for a minute. He says, “You know that it has hated Me before it hated you.”

And then down in verse 20: “Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A slave is not greater than his master.’” He had said that to them, no doubt, many times. You find Him saying things like that back in the 10th chapter of Matthew. But that very night, He had said that in chapter 13, verse 16: “Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master, nor is one who is sent greater than the one who sent him.” That’s axiomatic. A slave is not greater than the master or he’d be the master.

“They hated Me before they ever hated you. Just remember, I told you, ‘A slave is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they’ll keep yours also. They will treat you the way they treated Me.”

The apostle Paul said this: “I bear in my body the marks of Christ,” the end of Galatians 6. “I bear in my body the marks of Christ. All the beatings, all the whippings, all the stonings, all the thrashings that he received, all the marks of being in prison.” Those were all wounds inflicted on Paul because Christ wasn’t there. “I bear in my body the marks of Christ, the wounds of Christ.”

What he was simply saying was, “They beat me because I come in His name. They hate me because I represent Him.” It’s how it is. Jesus told His disciples, “You’re going to be persecuted, you’re going to be hated for My name sake.”

Stephen come along in the book of Acts and lifts up Christ and they stone him to death, just what they had done to Christ. They had crucified Christ. This preacher preaches Christ, they stone him to death; and in Acts, chapter 8, a wholesale persecution breaks out in Jerusalem and the killings of Christians begins; and, eventually, they get the first apostle, and then all the rest. They killed all the apostles, most likely, except for John, who was exiled to the Island of Patmos.

If you read Paul’s letters to the Corinthians, first and second letter, he talks constantly about what he suffered – just endless suffering, unending for the cause of the gospel. But there’s a very important

statement that he makes in 1 Corinthians, chapter 4. He says, “We are slandered. We have become the scum of the world, the dregs of all things.” We are considered to be scum. We’re at the bottom of the pan. We’re the residue that has to be scraped off the bottom.

Here was this man, the greatest of men who had ever lived, the apostle Paul. He was greater than John the Baptist, who was greatest man that ever lived. But everybody in the kingdom is greater than John because we’re on this side of Christ. And of all those on this side of Christ, hardly could you come up with one more faithful and more diligent and more used than Paul. And yet to the world, he was the dregs, he was the scum of the earth: scum. Why? Jesus said, “They hated Me, they’re going to hate you.”

Think about it this way: He was perfect; never sinned, never failed; never said the wrong thing, never did the wrong thing, never thought the wrong thing. There wasn’t one thing hypocritical about Him. He was absolute integrity, absolute perfection, and they hated Him anyway.

We fall far short of that. We can be hypocritical. We are struggling with sin. We think things we ought not to think, say things we ought not to say, do things we ought not to do. We bring reproach on the name of Christ. Our Lord is saying, “Look, if they hated Me, sinless, without any flaw, do you not think they’re going to hate you?”

And they’re going to have reason to because you’re not perfect. You’re going to fuel that hatred. You can’t expect anything different than what the world’s giving us. They hated the perfect Lord Jesus Christ; they certainly aren’t going to love imperfect Christians.

So our Lord says, “Expect it. It’s going to be this way. They’re going to hate you because you’re not of the world. They’re going to hate you because they hated Me. And you belong to Me, and you preach in My name, and you live in My name, and you proclaim My name, and you proclaim My truth; and they’re going to hate you the same way they hated Me. You’re not greater than your Master.”

Now, that leads us to a final thought about the source of this, and it really is behind it all. The third reason that our Lord gives here for the hatred of the world is this: one, we’re not of the world, two, they hated our Lord, and three, the world doesn’t know God. The world does not know God.

This needs to be said and understood very clearly because most people think they know God. “Oh, I believe in God. Oh, I’m a spiritual person, you know, I have a place in my life for God. I pray to God.” In spite of all those claims, by the way, notice verse 21: “All these things will they do to you for My name’s sake – ” all this persecution, hatred, “ – because they do not know the One who sent Me. They do not know the One who sent Me.”

They don’t know God – talking about religious people. I’m talking about leaders of religions. I’m talking about theologians, and priests, and pastors, and gurus, and religious figures. They don’t know God. It’s even worse than that. Not only do they not know God – go down to verse 23: “He who hates Me hates My Father also.” Go to the end of verse 24: “They have both hated Me and My Father as well.”

Here’s the condition of an unregenerate human being in the world: doesn’t know God; hates God,

hates God. People don't love God. "If you loved Me, you'd do – " what? " – you'd keep My commandments, the first of which is: 'This is My beloved Son in whom I'm well pleased. Listen to Him.'" You reject Christ and you hate God. "They don't know the One who sent Me." It's a shocking statement of reality to the religious: "You don't know God."

By the way, this was something Jesus said a lot. And, remember, He's circulating among the Jewish leaders who think that they not only know God, but they know God better than anybody else in the world. And He says to them things like this, back in chapter 7, verse 28: "He cried out in the temple teaching and saying, 'You both know Me and you know where I'm from. You know Me, I'm Jesus. You know where I came from, Nazareth. I have not come of Myself. But He who sent Me is true whom you do not know. I know Him; you don't.'" That's an indictment of the entire religious establishment of Israel: "You don't know God."

Later on in that 8th Chapter, verse 19, these Jewish people say to Him, "Where's Your Father?" He said, "You know neither Me nor My Father. If you knew Me, you would know My Father also. If you knew Me, you would know My Father also. You don't know Him, and you don't know Me."

Later on in that 8th chapter, verse 41, they say, "We have one Father: God. God's our Father." Jesus said, "If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and have come from God. But – " verse 44 " – you're of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your Father who's a murderer. Doesn't stand in the truth; there's no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he's a liar and the father of lies.

"Because I speak the truth, you do not believe Me. Why do you not believe Me?" Verse 47: "He who is of God hears the words of God; for this reason, you do not hear them because you're not of God. You don't know God. Not only do you not know God, you hate God, you hate God. You say – " down in verse 54 "He is our God."

But verse 55, Jesus says, "You've not come to know Him, but I know Him. And if I say I do not know Him, I will be a liar like you. But I do know Him. Proof: I keep His word." This is the bottom line. If you don't come to Christ for salvation, you don't know God. You are blind, and deaf, and dumb, and dead.

"The world – " 1 Corinthians 1 " – by wisdom knew not God." You can't find God on your own. When Christ comes in 2 Thessalonians 1:8 dealing out judgment and retribution, it comes on those who know not God, who know not God.

Now, I'm not saying you don't know a God exists, because that's obvious. Think about Romans 1 for a minute. "Even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God." What does that mean? They knew God as an entity; they knew God as a source; they knew God as the cause. Since the creation of the world, they could see His invisible attributes, His eternal power, His divine nature. It's clearly obvious, being understood through what has been made, and so they're without excuse. Of course, they know there is a God.

I was talking to a man, trying to explain that. He'd played saxophone for 70 years and I said, "Could you just pick up a saxophone and play it by accident?" He said, "Of course not, of course not." "Could notes arrange themselves on a page without a composer or an arranger?" "No, of course, that's

ridiculous.”

I said, “So if you can’t play a saxophone without some mental commitment and work, and you can’t see notes randomly arranging themselves on a page to play, to produce a beautiful piece of music, you certainly wouldn’t assume that the entire universe is an accident, would you?” “No.” “So – ” I said to him, “ – there has to be a God.” He said, “Of course.” So he knows there is a God, but he doesn’t know God.

By the way, in Romans 1:21, “They knew God.” It’s the Greek verb *ginsk*. *Ginsk* means to know by observation, to recognize, to realize, to perceive. Yeah, there has to be a source. There has to be somebody who made all this; that’s reasonable, that’s rational. To say nobody made it is insane. To know by observation, that’s *ginsk*: you see it, you recognize it’s a reality.

But back to John 15 when our Lord Jesus says, “You do not know the One who sent Me.” He uses the verb *oida*, different Greek verb. It means to know internally, to understand; to even appreciate, to respect, to regard with honor. “You know by observation God exists, but you don’t honor Him,” and that’s what Romans 1 says. “You don’t honor Him. You don’t know Him truly.”

So Romans 1 says, “Men became darkened in their mind, futile, professing themselves to be wise. They became fools. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie.” Romans 1:28 says, “They didn’t see fit to acknowledge God any longer.” And verse 30: “They became haters of God,” Romans 1:30. The human race hates God. They don’t know Him, and they hate Him. Why do they hate Him? They hate Him, the true God, because they love their sin, and He sits in judgment on it.

This utter ignorance of God is the condition of every human being. They’re alienated from the life of God, cut off from God all together. Ephesians 2: “They live in darkness and death.” Ephesians 4: “They’re hopeless, helpless, lost.” They talk about God, say they believe in God, have some kind of an idea about God, but it’s a devilish lie: they don’t know God.

I read this week a survey of some folks in our country by Ligonier and Lifeway, which is a Southern Baptist publishing arm of the Southern Baptist Church, and they were looking to find the biggest heresy in America – interesting survey. What would you think would be the biggest heresy in America? What they came up with was very interesting. It is a denial of human depravity. It’s a denial of human depravity.

Statistics: Sixty-seven percent of the people in this study say that everyone sins at least a little, but most people are good by nature – sixty-seven percent of people. Forty percent said, “God loves me because of the good I do.”

On the other side, regarding human inability, sixteen percent said, “People do not have the ability to turn to God on their own initiative.” Sixteen percent said, “People do not have the ability to turn to God on their own initiative.” Eighty-four percent said, “Of course they do. Basically good, do good things.” Seventy-one percent of Americans agree that an individual must contribute his or her own effort for personal salvation. Sixty-four percent of Americans agree that a person obtains peace with God by first taking the initiative to seek God, and then God responds with grace.

So summing it up, the majority said, “We sin a little, but by nature, we’re good. We do good, and

God rewards our good deeds by loving us. We have the ability to turn to God on our own initiative. And salvation involves us taking the initiative, and then God responds to us.” That is a massive lie believed by most people.

Sometimes somebody will say to me, “Why are you a Calvinist?” or, “Why do you believe in the doctrines of grace, or sovereignty of God?” It’s pretty simple; it’s really simple. It comes down to this – you ready for this: “Can a person unaided by God – a person, a sinful person, born into this world, any person? Can a sinner, unaided by God, left on his own, choose Christ, turn from sin, embrace the truth, receive the gospel, believe and be saved?”

If you say yes, then you don’t understand man’s sinful nature. If man is blind and dead and double-blinded by Satan, and cut off from God, and in the deeds of his flesh he can do no good thing, and all his righteousness is filthy rags, and no one seeks after God, and they’re all poison and corruption – if man can do nothing, then you have to be a Calvinist, because God has to invade.

This is a lie that there’s goodness in man. It’s a failure to understand God. But I think even something worse than that is, people hate God and they don’t know it – people in the public I hear people speaking positively about God: “God bless you,” talking about God – who hate God. Why do I say they hate God? Because they hate His law, they hate His moral standards, they hate the Scripture, they hate righteousness, and they are comfortable with sin and iniquity.

You hear people say, “Well, yeah, I love God and I’m a Christian, and I live this life of sin, immorality.” You don’t love God; you don’t know God. You have concocted a god who tolerates your iniquity. And when I present to you the true God who confronts your sin as sin, the hatred you have toward God is then turned on me. You can only know God by knowing Christ. He is the only way to God: “No mans come unto the Father but by Me,” He said. You can’t know God unless you come to Christ, and you can’t come to Christ and confess Him as Lord unless the Holy Spirit enables you to do it. First Corinthians 12:3, “Nobody confesses Jesus as Lord but by the Holy Spirit.” It’s a divine miracle.

You say, “Well, what can I do about it?” Cry out to God to be gracious and give you life. You don’t know God. You’re born a rebel; you’re born hostile; you’re born an enemy. You’re alienated from God, hostile in mind. Not only are you alienated from God and don’t know God, but you hate God. You might love a god of your own creation who tolerates you the way you are, but it’s not the true God. And there’s even more

Back to verse 22 for just a minute: “If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin. But now they have no excuse for their sin. He who hates Me, hates My Father also. If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would not have sin. But now they have both seen and hated Me and My Father as well.”

What in the world is He saying? Well, they hate God: we know that, He said that. “But they also hate Me.” And He’s saying, “If I had not come and spoken to them, if I had not done the works among them which no one else did, they would not have sin.”

What does that mean? They would not have sin in a specific area. It doesn’t mean general sin. Of course, all have sinned and come short of the glory of God; all are sinners. But they would not have

this one sin. And what is that one sin? It is the sin of rejecting Jesus Christ. That is the damning sin. "If I hadn't come and spoken to them, they wouldn't have sin."

You know, Hebrews 1, "God spoke, and time passed through the fathers and the prophets, as now in these last days spoken unto us by His Son." Christ is the full revelation of God. He is the full revelation of God. He's the glory of God in human flesh, so He is God's full revelation. "If I hadn't come, they wouldn't have the sin of now doubly rejecting God." They rejected God as revealed in nature, without excuse," Romans 1. "They reject God as revealed in the Old Testament. They reject me, therefore they have rejected the final full revelation of God, and they hate Me and My Father, in spite of the works that I've done."

The greatest sin is the rejection of the greatest revelation; and the greatest revelation is Christ, and the greatest sin is to reject Him. He is saying, "If I hadn't come and completely revealed God, manifest God, men would not be able to commit the greatest of all sins against that perfect revelation." That's why Acts 17 says it was a time in the past before Christ came where God overlooked sin. It doesn't mean that it didn't matter to Him; it meant that there was a kind of tolerance of God because Christ hadn't come.

"But now – " says Paul on Mars Hill in Acts 17 " – God commands all men to repent because He has revealed Christ." And Hebrews 10 puts it this way: "Of how much severer punishment in hell will the person be thought worthy who has trampled underfoot the Lord Jesus Christ and His sacrifice." To hate God is to be doomed to hell. To hate God in the full revelation of Christ is to bring upon yourself an eternal judgment of far greater degree, far greater degree. Christ came and revealed God in a way He'd never been revealed before. Sin in man reaches its apex when they reject Christ.

We have a nation here of people who have been exposed to the story of the Lord Jesus Christ, they've been exposed to the gospel, and there is massive rejection of Jesus Christ, and that is the most serious sin any human being will ever commit. So there is the prophecy of our Savior, that as the world hates God, it hates Him and it hates us because we belong to Him. All that hatred is inexcusable. It's inexcusable to hate God, Romans 1. It's inexcusable to hate Christ, John 15. But they did, and they do.

So how do the 11 disciples handle this in the dark that night on the way to the garden where Jesus is going to be arrested and executed? How are they going to respond to this? Are they going to say, "The whole plan has come apart. God doesn't have the power; Satan has won"? What is their response? This is overwhelming. Not only are they going to kill Christ, but they're going to kill us, they're going to hate us.

There's one more reason, one more statement Jesus makes very important. There's the fact that they hate us because we're not of the world, they hate us because they hated our Lord, they hate us because they don't know God. But fourthly and very important, they hate us to fulfill scripture. They hate us to fulfill scripture; and not just this scripture. Look at verse 25: "They have done this to fulfill the word that is written in their law." Psalm 69:4, "They hated me without a cause."

Psalm 69 is a Messianic psalm. It's a psalm that looks forward to Messiah, to the coming of Messiah. Many things in Psalm 69 about Christ are indicated in the New Testament. The New Testament writers go back to Psalm 69. But Psalm 69:4 says this of Messiah: "Those who hate me

without a cause are more than the hairs of my head. Those who would destroy me are powerful, being wrongfully my enemies.” God anticipated the hatred, God anticipated that they would hate His Son, God anticipated that they would kill His Son, and that was part of His redemptive plan. Killing Christ was in the plan of God. Hating Christ was prophesied. Killing Christ was prophesied – Isaiah 53, Psalm 22 specifically.

But listen to the sermon of Peter on Pentecost, Acts 2:22, “Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, as you yourselves know – this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death. But God raised Him up. By the plan of God, you killed Him. Hating Jesus was in the plan.” Hating Jesus was in the plan.

In chapter 4 of the book of Acts – I won’t read it – verses 23 to 31, they say exactly the same thing, exactly the same thing. It is within the purpose of God that they hated Christ and killed Him. Verse 28: “They did what God’s hand and God’s purpose predestined.” So men – ” He’s saying to the apostles, “ – this is not the end of the plan, this is the plan, that they would hate Me without a cause.” Right on schedule. It was necessary that He be hated, that He be crucified, to bear in His body our sins on the cross.

I’m sure the disciples are looking at each other wondering, “How do we survive this? How do we survive this? How are we going to fulfill the promise of verse 16, to go and bear fruit that remains eternally? How are we going to survive? How are we going to be used?” Answer: the last two verses of the chapter, “When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me, and you will testify also, because you’ve been with Me from the beginning.”

How will they overcome the persecution? How will they overcome the hatred? By the power of whom: the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit. And so by the power of the Holy Spirit, believers have gone into the world since these first apostles and literally turned the world upside-down, and the gospel has spread across the world. The Lord has given us the ministry of reconciliation. Persecution comes; it’ll always be there. Hatred will always be there; but so will the power of the Holy Spirit to accomplish the purposes of God to gather His church.

Father, we are grateful, again, for the truth of Scripture: so profound, so powerful, so rich. Help us, Lord, to understand how it is in the world for us. Help us to rise above in the triumph that is Christ. We always triumph in Christ Jesus. In the world, we will have tribulation, but You overcame the world. Father, give us opportunity, even in a world that hates us, to preach Your truth, to proclaim the gospel. Whatever may come our way of rejection and persecution, may we continue to be faithful and do what 1 Chronicles 16 said that we read earlier: “Preach to the peoples of the world; take the truth of salvation to the nations.”

Lord, continue to gather your church through believers, even in the midst of persecution. Build Your church, and help us always to remember the wonderful words of our Lord Jesus in the beatitudes when he said, “Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great.”

You have promised to reward Your persecuted and faithful servants with eternal blessings. May we be faithful and look forward to that. These things we ask in our Savior's name. Amen.

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