

154. The Gospel of John—15:18-25

Hated Without a Cause-Part 3

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At this point in John's Gospel, we are about twelve hours from the Cross.

Jesus is using the little time He has left with His disciples to teach them some final lessons about ministry—as they would be taking over for Him after His death, resurrection and return to His Father.

One of the lessons He wants to drive home to their hearts is the hatred they would face from the world as they go into it serving God and preaching the Gospel.

In this passage the Lord gives them 3 reasons *why* the world would hate them so vehemently—

- **The World Hates Christians Because We Are Not of the World**
- **The World Hates Christians Because It Hates Jesus**
- **The World Hates Christians Because It Does Not Know God**

1. The World Hates Christians Because We Are Not of the World—verses 18-19

“If you were of the world, the world would love its own” (verse 19)

The bottom line is that those people who belong to this fallen world system will always love those who are like them—because darkness loves darkness. Those who belong to the kingdom of darkness will always hate and persecute those who belong to the Kingdom of light because—the light exposes the darkness:

Ephesians 5:8-13 (NKJV)

⁸ For you were once darkness, but now *you are* light in the Lord. Walk as children of light...¹¹ And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose *them*. ¹² For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. ¹³ But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light.

2. The World Hates Christians Because It Hates Jesus

John 15:18, 25 (NKJV)

¹⁸ "If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before *it hated you*...²⁵ But *this happened* that the word might be fulfilled which is written in their law, '*They hated Me without a cause.*'

Look, it's no use trying to figure out why so many unsaved people hate you, want nothing to do with you and even persecute you. Don't torture yourself trying to figure it out ("what did I do to them?")—Jesus already told us the reason—the world will hate us because it hated Him and we represent Him in this fallen world.

So, either you're going to accept that 'going in' and love them with God's love, pray for them, and try to win them to Christ—or you'll mistakenly try to win them over to yourself as *friends*.

Trying to be friends with the world is not only misguided—it's ungodly and forbidden by God—

James 4:4 (NKJV)

⁴ Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

It's just human nature to want people to like us—even when it comes to unbelievers. And because of it, many Christians believe they can be a '*friend of Jesus*' while at the same time be a '*friend of the world*' also—in other words, reach the world by making friends with the world.

Love the people of this fallen world enough to try and reach them for Jesus—but do it because you're *His* friend and not because you're trying to be *their* friend. And so that brings us to the third reason Jesus said the world would hate us—

3. The World Hates Christians Because It Does Not Know God

John 15:20-21 (NKJV)

²⁰ Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant 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. ²¹ But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know Him who sent Me.

Everyone born into this world are born children of Adam—which means they are born fallen sinners separated from God. Or to use the language of Jesus here in John 15—they do not *know* God.

But understand that God wants unbelievers (sinners) to know Him and has "*gone out of His way*" to reveal Himself to them so that they would come to know Him and be saved. (1 Timothy 2:4)

The Greek word translated '**know**' is a word that means to know "*perceptively or with understanding*". Sometimes it is translated with the idea of *seeing* something with spiritual perception and understanding—

John 20:8 (NKJV)

⁸ Then the other disciple, who came to the tomb first, went in also; and he saw and believed.

The Greek word used of John "**and he saw and believed**" means "*to see and understand*." In other words, John saw and *understood* why the tomb was empty (Jesus had risen) and he believed.

It is the same Greek word used in John 15:21—"they do not know Him who sent Me."

The implication by Jesus, which becomes an *indictment* of the unbelief of the Jewish leadership (Scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, and Chief Priests), was that they didn't know God—because they didn't want to know God!

"What do you mean? Weren't these very religious men?! So how can you say they didn't know God?" (I didn't say it, Jesus did!) Jesus said numerous times over the course of His earthly ministry—that the Father had sent Him to declare spiritual truth to a world in darkness (spiritual and moral darkness)—but also to reveal God to fallen man—in truth!

John 1:18 (NKJV)

¹⁸ **No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.**

No one has seen God in all of His fullness and glory—primarily because, no one can look upon God in that way and live! (Exodus 33:20)

Besides God is *invisible* and therefore cannot be seen with our human, physical eyes. Yet Paul the Apostle said of Jesus (Colossians 1:15) that—“*He is the image of the invisible God...*”

The word ‘**image**’ was used of an image made by impression as when Caesar’s image was stamped on a coin. Paul is telling us that God the Father “*stamped*” His image on human flesh in the Person of Jesus Christ—which meant that Jesus was the exact manifestation of God in human form.

This allowed man to see what God was like—God is Spirit and is therefore invisible but through the incarnation—the invisible God became a visible flesh and blood man!

John 14:9 (NKJV)

⁹ Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father..."

Remember, in our study of Revelation (1:5) we read of Jesus that He was—“**A faithful witness.**” In a court of law, a *witness* testifies to what they have seen.

Jesus having been in heaven with the Father—came to earth and testified to the people of this world on behalf of His Father. Jesus faithfully declared, first with His life and then by His words—what God was like. You see, the Jewish people had gotten a warped understanding and impression of God over the years—and Jesus came to set the record straight! (And yes of course to die for our sins!).

This was the fulfillment of John 1:18—“**No one has seen God at any time**”—yes, in all of His glory—but also no one has seen God—up close and personal” as Jesus had now declared God to the people of this world.

John 1:18 (NLT2)

¹⁸ No one has ever seen God. But the one and only Son is himself God and is near to the Father’s heart. He has revealed God to us.

Jesus Christ has revealed the invisible God to mankind in a way we could have never come to know or understand Him through our *human* logic and reason. Christianity claims to be a *revealed* truth—a revelation is something that is made known to us by God.

It is something that would be impossible for us to know through our own human *logic* or *intelligence* or normal *thought processes*—it is knowledge that comes through divine input.

Many centuries ago, Job asked the question—“*Can a man by searching find God?*”

The question was rhetorical—the answer of course is no!

The Bible says that God is Spirit who lives in the spirit realm—spirits can interact with those in the physical realm—but man, being physical, is trapped in the physical realm.

Because man is physical and God is Spirit—there is no way a physical human being trapped in a box we call the “4-dimensional physical universe”, can, through the use of techniques like: visualization or Transcendental Meditation—‘poke a hole in the box’, climb out and find God!

I don’t care how much he meditates or contemplates his naval saying “Ooommm!”

No matter how sincere a person is and how hard he tries, he is incapable of reaching beyond the boundaries of the physical, *natural* realm he finds himself trapped in and therefore is incapable of knowing or understanding anything about the *supernatural* God.

One pastor has said,

“We can’t expect the bug in the bottle to understand the little boy that put it there anymore than we can expect the natural man with his natural capacities to understand the supernatural God—unless that God chose to condescend and reveal Himself to man.”

Folks, that is exactly what God did—**He revealed Himself to man!**

There are 2 kinds of revelation that God has given mankind that reveal Himself to us—

A. General Revelation

1. The Creation—Outward Revelation

Romans 1:20 (NKJV)

²⁰ For since the creation of the world His invisible *attributes* are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse...

Psalm 19:1-3 (NKJV)

¹ The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork. ² Day unto day utters speech, And night unto night reveals knowledge. ³ *There is* no speech nor language *Where* their voice is not heard.

2. The Conscience—inward revelation

Romans 2:12-16 (NKJV)

¹² For as many as have sinned without law will also perish without law, and as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law ¹³ (for not the hearers of the law *are* just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified; ¹⁴ for when Gentiles [unbelievers], who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, ¹⁵ who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves *their* thoughts accusing or else excusing *them*) ¹⁶ in the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my Gospel.

Now general revelation, as powerful as it is, can only go so far in revealing God to a person. It can prove the existence of God—it can give us some general information about Him (He is a God of power, wisdom, beauty, and morality). And as wonderful as that information about Him is—it isn’t enough to save us.

So, in addition to general revelation God also gave us “*special revelation.*”

B. Special Revelation

Special revelation is God’s revelation of Himself in *Scripture.*

This is where God gets “*up close and personal*” with us by introducing Himself to us, telling us His name and giving to us personal information about Himself that we couldn’t learn from creation or conscience.

It is also in the pages of Scripture that God tells us about the nature of man—his fallen condition, sin, righteousness, salvation, and judgment—as well as other important subjects like: the first coming, the second coming, the kingdom age, the eternal state, heaven and hell—all spoken to us through special revelation.

Old Testament scholar Gleason Archer puts it this way:

“How then can we know God or His will for our lives? Only if He reveals Himself to us! Unless He Himself tells us, we can never know for sure the answers to those questions which matter most to us as human beings. At this point it is important to observe that the Bible presents itself as the written revelation of God. This purports to be a Book in which God gives us the answers to the great questions which concern our soul, and which all the wisdom and science of man are powerless to solve with any degree of certainty.”

Francis Schaeffer, referring to God, wrote, “*He is there, and He is not silent.*”

Hebrews 1:1 (NKJV)

God, who at different times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets...

The Old Testament revelation came at different times and in various ways—it was God’s progressive revelation to mankind. Scripture is *progressive* revelation in the sense that it goes from partial to complete—from the *limited* disclosure of God to the *full* disclosure of Himself to man (on this side of glory).

The word “*spoke*” in Hebrews 1:1 is the Greek word ‘apokalupto’ and it means to “*unveil something that was previously hidden.*” That’s what revelation is—it’s the act by which God makes Himself known to us and without which there could be no knowledge of God.

One pastor put it well—

“Here we are on this little planet, trapped on Earth, bound by time and space sensing deep within ourselves that somewhere out there, there is some kind of intelligent Being Who created all of this. We call Him God, but we haven’t got any way to attain any information about Him. Satan has told us that there are many roads that will lead us to this God, so man has invented one religion after another in the hopes of reaching God—but these are nothing more than philosophical systems of faith that come from the mind of man. Whereas the Bible says that God at various times and in different ways spoke...”

Of course, the ultimate example of special revelation that revealed God to man more fully and completely than anything He had previously given was—***the incarnation***.

We could say with absolute certainty that—the *culmination* of special revelation was the incarnation!

The incarnation was the climax, the summit—the highest revelation of God to mankind that allowed us to see the invisible God in a way we had never seen Him before in all the years of limited revelation He had previously given to us.

Some of the ways God had revealed Himself to us in the past include, prophets, angels, dreams, and visions—but by far the greatest *revelation* was the incarnation. It was through the incarnation that God took the revelation of Himself from—*limited* disclosure to full disclosure by invading the ‘box’ in the Person of Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 1:1-2 (NKJV)

¹ God, who at different times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets [Old Testament], ² has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds...

John 1:1-3, 14 (NKJV)

¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made...¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

So, man has no excuse for not knowing God—unless he himself chooses not to know God. In that case, the revelation of God given to man if rejected or ignored—will not save him but only serve to condemn him!—

Romans 1:18-20 (NKJV)

¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, ¹⁹ because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown *it* to them. ²⁰ For since the creation of the world His invisible *attributes* are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse.

We often think that a person doesn't believe in God because they lack information and all we need to do is provide the missing information and 'viola'—people would automatically get saved! But in reality, the truth is that often the problem isn't in their head—it's in their heart! (Psalm 14:1)

They *willfully* reject the knowledge they have about God (general and special revelation). The reason so many refuse to commit themselves to believing in God is because—then they would have to acknowledge His authority over their life—and they can't handle the thought of that!

So, they either have to do away with God altogether (atheism) or recreate for themselves a god who is consistent with the lifestyle they want to live which is idolatry!

For the person who wants to live in sin they really only have two choices—

1) *Believe in God and live with the guilt of disobedience (but that feels lousy) or*

2) *Do away with God altogether—no God no guilt!*

However, it's really not that easy rejecting the existence of God because there are those two 'pesky' witnesses that testify constantly to His existence—the creation and the conscience!

One final point—yes, the Bible says, "*The fool says in his heart there is no God*" (Psalm 14:1)—but the greater fool is someone who *does* believe in God but then lives like He doesn't exist!

They will incur the greater judgment!

If you would like to know more about what it means to be a Jesus-follower— please, reach out to us. It would be our greatest privilege to lead you into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

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