

157. The Gospel of John—15:26-16:4

The Coming Apostasy—Part 1

A message by Pastor Phil Ballmaier
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As we have been saying for the past few weeks, Jesus in Chapters 13 through 16 is giving His farewell address to His disciples (*at this point in John's Gospel we are less than twelve hours from the Cross*).

Their hearts were troubled (13:18-38)—and so He spends most of His time in Chapter 14 comforting and reassuring them by giving them many promises—a few examples would be:

- *He was going away to prepare a place for them and that He would come back to take them to that place.*
- *They would do greater works than He had done because He was going back to His Father.*
- *They could ask the Father anything in His name for the work of the Kingdom and He would make sure they received it.*
- *They would be given resurrection life and power to do the work He was commissioning them to do in His name.*
- *They would be given divine knowledge to understand all He had taught them while He was with them.*

REFLECTION: Comment on each of Jesus' reassuring promises – Do these promises reassure you?

So, He gave them these fantastic promises to comfort and encourage their hearts in His absence—but then He begins to promise them some things that were not so blessed starting with verse 18. He promises that the world would hate them and set itself against them because they belong to Him.

He told them that to be one of His disciples was to be the target of the world's hostility—that when they went into the world as **'lights'** (beacons of God's truth) they could expect the darkness of Satan's kingdom to hate and persecute them.

The implication was that the only way to escape the world's hostility was to dim or hide the light—which would be unthinkable!

Matthew 5:14-16 (NLT2)

¹⁴ "You are the light of the world—like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father.

John 15:26-27 (NKJV)

²⁶ "But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me. ²⁷ And you also will bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning.

John 16:1 (NKJV)

¹ "These things I have spoken to you, that you should not be made to stumble.

"These things I have spoken to you..."—is a reference to Chapter 15 verses 18-25.

When you've lived a life of emptiness, problems, depression, alcohol and or drug abuse, loneliness, wandering aimlessly through life without a sense of purpose and direction—and then you receive Jesus as your Lord and Savior—**a miracle takes place!**

You become a new creation and your life is radically and forever changed!

The result is you want to share Jesus with others—Jesus who is the answer to the deepest questions in life such as: "why am I here?", "what is life really all about?", and most importantly "what happens to me after I die?" Now when you go to share that 'good news' (this life changing information we call the Gospel) with your family and friends, with your co-workers and neighbors—**you naturally think that they're going to be as excited about Jesus as you are!**

Jesus wants us to know up front that that will often not be the case—that this will not be the common response you're going to get from the people of this fallen world and that you're setting yourself up for persecution!

That's exactly what Jesus wanted His disciples to know and be prepared to face—so that they didn't '**stumble**' (16:1).

The Greek word translated '**stumble**' is a word we get our English word '*scandalized*' from. It's a word that means: "to cause someone to experience anger and/or shock because of what has been said or done."

Jesus was always 'up front' with His disciples—He always presented 'the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth' to those who were thinking of following Him—so that they could 'count the cost' first. Then He went on to say something truly remarkable to them—

John 16:2-4 (NKJV)

² They will put you out of the synagogues; yes, the time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service. ³ And these things they will do to you because they have not known the Father nor Me.

⁴ But these things I have told you, that when the time comes, you may remember that I told you of them. And these things I did not say to you at the beginning, because I was with you.

The Lord Jesus is prophesying here—He's telling them how they can expect to be treated as His followers in the future.

REFLECTION: What does Jesus mean – "Count the Cost" first?

**The thing about Bible prophecy that's important to understand is that—
many times there is a *short-term partial fulfillment*
but then there is a *long-term ultimate fulfillment* as well.**

This is true with many biblical prophecies—especially with those dealing with the end times. (Reference Luke 21)

>>> Now of course the short-term fulfillment of this prophecy began a couple of months after Jesus rose from the dead and returned back to His Father in heaven. It was on the **Feast of Pentecost** that the Holy Spirit was sent from heaven upon those early disciples and the Church was born (Acts 2:1-4).

A couple of years later, Stephen became the first martyr of the Church and we read in Acts 8:1—

Acts 8:1 (NKJV)

¹ ... At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria...

At first the persecution was limited to those religious leaders of Israel who hated Jesus and His followers. Since most of those first Christians were Jews—they were immediately 'put out' of the synagogues (excommunicated) **as Jesus had predicted.**

The Jewish leadership hated these 'traitors to Judaism' and was determined to hunt down and eliminate all of those Jews who belonged to this cult called Christianity!

This led to Saul's conversion on the road to Damascus! (Acts 9:1-9)

Eventually, the persecution grew to include the Roman government when the Emperor Claudius banished the Jews from Rome in 49 AD. The Roman historian Suetonius writes that Claudius banished Jews from Rome because they were "**indulging in constant riots at the instigation of Chrestus.**"

>>> There have been many attempts to explain who Chrestus was, but a likely solution is that he was referring to 'Cristos' (Christ)—but writing some seventy years after the events, had the name somewhat mixed up.

Historian and scholar F.F. Bruce said—

"It seems that the expulsion had to do with 'dissension and disorder within the Jewish community of Rome resulting from the introduction of Christianity into one or more of the synagogues of the city.'"

However, at first it was a *religious* persecution against the Christian Church by the Jews in Jerusalem (the Jewish leadership in the Sanhedrin) who believed that Christianity was a cult and that they were "serving God" by wiping it out—

John 16:2 (NKJV)

² **They will put you out of the synagogues; yes, the time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service.**

Acts 26:9-11 (NKJV)

⁹ Indeed, I myself thought I must do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. ¹⁰ This I also did in Jerusalem, and many of the saints I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against *them*. ¹¹ And I punished them often in every synagogue and compelled *them* to blaspheme; and being exceedingly enraged against them, I persecuted *them* even to foreign cities.

>>> Now I believe that Jesus' prophecy also had another shorter-term fulfillment in mind when He spoke these words in John 16:2.

That the people of the true and living God—the Christian Church consisting of both Jewish and Gentile believers would be persecuted by another group that would begin in the early part of the 7th century—a brand new religion called 'Islam' whose followers would be known as 'Muslims'. Muslims worship 'Allah'

Who or what is Allah?

To understand Allah, we need to understand Mohammed.

>>> Mohammed the prophet of Islam was born in 570 A.D. in the city of Mecca in Arabia. He was a 26-year-old camel driver when he first heard a voice that he later considered to be a revelation from God. At first, even Mohammed himself didn't know if he was hearing from God or the *jinn*s (genies i.e., 'evil spirits').

In time (and with the help of his wife), he came to believe that he was hearing from God who was calling him to be a prophet.

The people of Mecca who belonged to his Quraysh tribe embraced him as a prophet and eventually Arabs living throughout the area including those living 200 miles to the north up in Medina considered him a prophet of Allah as well. **These people worshipped a pantheon of gods—360 gods, one for every day of the year.**

When Mohammed became their 'prophet' he basically said to them, *"This is old stuff, the Jews and the Christians are right, they're monotheists and we must create for ourselves a monotheistic god as well. And what we'll do is take the greatest of all the 360 gods we worship—'Ella he' (moon god represented by the crescent moon) and we will make Ella he our Allah."*

"Allah" is simply the name for 'God' in Arabic.

This is where Allah came from—the pagan moon god who was worshipped as a warrior god. Many people don't know that—they believe that Allah is just another name for the God of the Bible—which is absolutely false.

Allah is *not* a triune God, and he doesn't have a son! (Reference: Top of the Dome of the Rock inscription in Arabic).

But there were also 3 prominent Jewish tribes that inhabited the city of Mecca around the time of Mohammed. When Mohammed approached the Jewish people with his claim to be a prophet of God—he thought they would accept him as well.

He tried for a while to 'win them over' which is why the earlier verses of the Koran are 'respectful' and 'accepting' of the Jews (and Christians) as being "the people of the Book" (Bible).

However, when it became obvious that the Jewish people were never going to accept him as a prophet of God—he then viciously and violently turned against them.

It was then he started receiving ‘prophecies’ from Allah commanding him and his followers to kill the Jews (and Christians) who were the spawn of Satan and must be purged from the earth.

Some would argue—“Wait a minute, Muslims believe in Jesus Christ, so how could they hate Jews and Christians?”

REFLECTION: If asked, how would you explain who Mohammed is?

REFLECTION: If asked, how would you explain who Allah is?

Does Islam believe in Jesus Christ? Yes, but beware of counterfeits—their ‘Jesus’ is not our Jesus! The Jesus Christ that is coming back someday, according to Islamic teaching—is going to be a Muslim!

In 1994, Yasser Arafat was in Bethlehem in the Church of the Nativity, and he got up and made a speech and said, “Jesus Christ was the first Palestinian Muslim revolutionary.”

Did he make that up?—No, it comes from Islamic faith teachings.

>>> According to the *Hadith* (Islamic written tradition), Jesus Christ will come back to the earth the second time and kill the Antichrist in battle (who is a Jew according to Islam). He will then go up to Jerusalem and pray on the Temple Mount with 400,000 Muslim believers.

>>> Then this ‘Jesus’, will lead these Muslims, to destroy all the crosses and churches of the Christians and all the synagogues of the Jews.

>>> On that day all the “People of the Book” (Jews and Christians) will be put to death with the sword by Jesus Christ the Muslim—who is the ‘enforcer’ of Mohammed!

That Jesus isn’t our Jesus!

- But why do Muslims believe that all Christians and Jews need to be killed and removed from the earth?

Why?—Because under Islamic law the whole world must be ‘Islamized’—in other words, brought into submission to Islam before the world can have true peace (the word ‘Islam’ means submission).

The Islamic religion divides the world into two groups: *Dara al-Islam* and *Dara al-Harb*.

- **Dara al-Islam** (also known as ‘the house of peace’)
- **Dara al-Harb** (also known as ‘house of war’)

The **Dara al-Islam** is ‘*the house of Islam*’ containing all true Muslims (also known as ‘the house of peace’)—

Anyone who is *not* a Muslim belongs to **Dara al-Harb** (‘house of war’). The Dara al-Islam cannot have peace on earth until the Dara al-Harb is destroyed.

It’s not until all Jews, Christians and pagans are gone (or converted) and the whole world is Islamized that there can be peace on earth—**this is a cardinal doctrine of the Islamic religion.**

Islam is a warrior religion committed to converting the world to Islam—or killing those who refuse which is what jihad is all about. In the Islamic faith no matter what has to be done to achieve this goal and win this cause of converting the world to Islam—is acceptable.

Even if it means killing innocent women and children—it’s all acceptable because the end justifies the means for Islamic fundamentalists.

REFLECTION: Muslims believe the world must be Islamized’ – What does this mean?

Islam is a brutal, barbaric warrior faith—not a religion of peace (that’s not to say that all Muslims are brutal, barbaric people—most are not).

>>> So, Muslims, under the direction of ‘Allah’ and his prophet Mohammed began killing the Jews “*thinking they were doing God a service*”—a persecution that continues to the present day. However, the Muslims weren’t the only ones who killed the Jews thinking they were serving God—another group also believed that to kill Jews was to do God’s service.

>>> The Roman Catholic Church called for holy wars against Muslims and Jews to liberate the Holy Land from the infidels which gave rise to the Crusades.

REFLECTION: How might you explain the Islamic Jesus is not our Christian Jesus?

Author Dave Hunt—

"Inspired by Pope Urban II, the members of the First Crusade went to recover "for the Church" the land that rightfully belonged to Israel. Plundering, raping and murdering along the way, they slaughtered all the Muslims and Jews in Jerusalem when they took that "holy city" for the Roman Catholic Church. They were acting in direct violation of the teachings of Jesus who's Cross they claimed to be carrying. Not to be outdone by Islam's promise of instant Paradise for those who died in jihad, the Pope offered a "plenary indulgence remitting all punishments due to sin...to those who should fall in the war."

In the teaching of the Catholic Church, and according to Webster's Dictionary, an plenary indulgence can be defined as "a way to reduce the amount of punishment one has to undergo for sins".

The Roman Catholic Church remains basically anti-Semitic to this day.

Now, I believe that Jesus' prophecy also had a long-term ultimate fulfillment.

I believe He was ultimately speaking of another time—long after the 1st, the 7th or even the 11th centuries A.D. when the Jews would be hunted down and killed by those who believed they were serving God.

The Bible calls this time in history the "Great Tribulation Period" and the one that orders the execution of the Jews from the earth so that to obey his edict causes his followers to believe they are serving God—is of course the coming world leader we call—the Antichrist.

Matthew 24:4-25 (NKJV)

⁴ And Jesus answered and said to them [again the Lord Jesus is prophesying of future events]: "Take heed that no one deceives you. ⁵ For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many. ⁶ And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all *these things* must come to pass, but the end is not yet. ⁷ For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. ⁸ All these *are* the beginning of sorrows. ⁹ Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake. ¹⁰ And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. ¹¹ Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. ¹² And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. ¹³ But he who endures to the end shall be saved. ¹⁴ And this Gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come. ¹⁵ "Therefore when you see the '*abomination of desolation*,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place" (whoever reads, let him understand), ¹⁶ then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. ¹⁷ Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house. ¹⁸ And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes. ¹⁹ But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! ²⁰ And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath. ²¹ For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. ²² And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened. ²³ Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here *is* the Christ!' or 'There!' do not believe *it*. ²⁴ For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. ²⁵ See, I have told you beforehand [*i.e.*, "*I am prophesying this to you*"].

“Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake.” (verse 9)—the ultimate fulfillment of this prophecy being the persecution under the Antichrist (Revelation 6:9-11; 7:9-14).

You need to understand that this will be a ‘religious’ persecution by the followers of Antichrist who think that by following his orders to kill Jews (and Christians) is to serve God.

➤ **Why do they believe this?**

Matthew 24:15 (NKJV)

¹⁵ "Therefore when you see the '*abomination of desolation*,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place" (whoever reads, let him understand),

2 Thessalonians 2:3-4, 9-11 (NKJV)

³ Let no one deceive you by any means; for *that Day will not come* unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, ⁴ who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God [*the ‘abomination of desolation’*]...

⁹ The coming of the *lawless one* is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, ¹⁰ and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. ¹¹ And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie...

The **Antichrist** when he comes to power as the leader of a one-world government, will be hailed by the world as its messiah—but he will be a **false messiah** masquerading as the *true* Messiah (he comes in Revelation 6:1-2 riding a white horse.)

He will be Satan’s man—his masterpiece of deception. The devil will empower him with supernatural intelligence, charisma, and power—the power to work miracles. He will come preaching ‘A gospel’—but not the true Gospel of Jesus Christ.

It will be a false gospel—a ‘gospel’ that will contain nothing more than doctrines of demons—that together will make up the ultimate lie of the devil.

This one lie is talked about in Scripture (Romans 1:25 and 2 Thessalonians 2:11) as “The Lie!”

Not “a lie” as in one of many, but “the lie”!—a very specific lie.

A lie that goes all the way back to the Garden of Eden—the first and greatest lie the devil (the father of lies—John 8:44) ever ‘fed’ to the human race (which at this point consisted only of 2 people—Adam and Eve).

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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