

"THE WORLD CANNOT HATE YOU..." (John 7:7)

By Lee Moses

These were the words of rebuke spoken by Jesus Christ to His unbelieving brothers. It is difficult to conceive that Jesus' own flesh and blood, brought up under the same roof as He, did not believe He was the Messiah (verse 5). Yet the Lord's manner of rebuking them is similarly remarkable. One has to wonder exactly how much offense was taken at this simple statement. Consider how insulted the most popular girl in school would be if she were told, "There is nobody who does not like you."

Yet the context indicates that this was indeed a rebuke, given by the Lord to address error in the lives of His brothers. As such, any living today whom the world cannot hate likewise stands in need of correction. Should One Desire the World's Hatred?

It is perfectly natural for each human being to desire the friendship and approval of other human beings. As our Creator said Himself, "*It is not good that the man should be alone*" (Genesis 2:18). As such, it would be very unnatural, against the goodness of God's creation (1:31), for a human being to desire to be hated by other human beings.

The Lord commands His people to be a positive influence upon the world (Matthew 5:13-16). Paul stated that one of the reasons the Thessalonians were to keep his commandments was in order "*that ye may walk honestly toward them that is without*" (1 Thessalonians 4:12). Prerequisite to one's becoming an elder in the Lord's church is that "he must have a good report of them which are without" (1 Timothy 3:7). While one can positively influence another who dislikes or even hates him, the effectiveness of that influence will be greatly lessened. People are more generally motivated to emulate and enjoy the company of those whom they love than those whom they hate. In this sense, being hated by the world even hinders one from serving the Lord's purpose-to seek and to save the lost (Luke 19:10). Such things should cause one to avoid being hated by the world-when possible (compare with Romans 12:18).

God Himself never desired the enmity of the world, if He did, would He express disappointment and disgust at the world's sin, (see Genesis 3:13ff; Isaiah 1:4; Matthew 7:23). Would He have had a desire for reconciliation? (Isaiah 1:18; 1 Timothy 2:4). Would He have given His own Son to obtain a reconciliation that most would reject? (John 3:16; Acts 13:46; Romans 5:8). When Jesus spoke of being hated by the world, He was not speaking of a desire that one must have, but of a capacity that must exist.

Whom Does the World Hate? The world could not hate Jesus' brothers-"But me it hateth" were the words the Lord immediately added (John 7:7). Why would the world hate Jesus, the compassionate Son of God, the Savior of all humanity, and the fulfillment of the great promise of God to bruise the head of Satan? Jesus knew the answer: "*Because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil.*"

People generally do not enjoy being told or shown that they are wrong, even when it is for their benefit. Yet this is what Jesus did. Jesus was the light of the world

(John 8:12; 9:5); and this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God (John 3:19-21).

Seeing that *"the whole world lieth in wickedness"* (1 John 5:19), "the whole world" was rebuked by Jesus. Jesus did this through preaching the truth. And as Christians are to be *"the light of the world"* (Matthew 5:14; compare with Ephesians 5:8; Philippians 2:15-16), they are to preach the truth and rebuke sin: *"But all things that are reproved are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light"* (Ephesians 5:13).

The world hated Jesus for preaching the truth and thus rebuking their sin. Certainly the world climate has changed since the first century, but is it that much more favorable to true Christianity? We live in an age in which peace has been struck between atheists, Jews, and professed "Christians"; a peace based upon the premise, "We can agree to disagree, just don't tell me I'm wrong." But because sin is ever present, Christians are compelled to bear with unrelenting zeal the sword that Jesus sends into the earth (Matthew 10:34). Christians are compelled to be distinct from a world of sin, yet, *"If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you"* (John 15:19). Do you strive to please your Lord in your conduct? Do you stand up for truth? Do you oppose wrong? If so, *"Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you"* (1 John 3:13).

Where Do Your Affections Lie? Since the world hates those who reprove the world's evil works, all must make a choice: Do we desire the world's affection or God's favor? One cannot seek both: "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? *"Whosoever therefore will ('desires to . . . planning accordingly') be a friend of the world is the enemy of God"* (James 4:4). Not only can one not seek both, one cannot have both. As Paul said, *"If I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ"* (Galatians 1:10). Whether we desire the world's affection or God's favor hinges upon where our own affections lie.

There is no doubt as to where Jesus' affections lay. While He had compassion on the multitudes of lost humanity and always sought their good (Matthew 9:36), His loyalty was to the Father and to the truth (John 8:28-29). The Pharisees and Herodians were trying to deceive Christ through flattery, but certainly spoke truth when they said, *"Neither carest thou for any man: for thou regardest not the person of men"* (Matthew 22:16).

Yet in the religious world, and even in the Lord's church, there is an increasing regard for the persons of men over the will of God. Churches' efforts are directed toward erecting large gymnasiums and providing social functions to attract people, rather than toward pricking sin-laden hearts with the truth. Churches poll their neighborhoods as to

what they would like in a church, and give them what they want, regardless of whether it is according to truth. Contrast this approach with that of our Lord, Who apparently never read Rick Warren's Purpose-Driven Church or other such drivel, intended to bend the church of the Lord to the will of the world.

If our affections lie with the Lord, pleasing men cannot be our primary goal. As Jesus told the highly-esteemed Pharisees, *"Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God"* (Luke 16:15). If we are seeking to please men, it will compromise our purity and truthfulness (1 Thessalonians 2:3-6). Jesus warned, *"Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets"* (Luke 6:26).

Are we "strangers and pilgrims" in the world? (Hebrews 11:13; 1 Peter 2:11). Those who are not at home in the true church will be at home in the world. But those who are not at home in the world will be at home in the true church-and in heaven. Do we savor the things of God or of men? (Matthew 16:23). That is, do we insist upon the hard truth, or do we rather choose the easy way, avoiding persecution and the reproach of men? (Compare with 4:8-9). To His apostles Jesus gave this warning and assurance which should resound for us today: *"And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved"* (10:22).

Conclusion

Jesus gave His brothers a memorable rebuke when He told them, "The world cannot hate you." However, this was directly related to His brothers' lack of faith in Him. After His resurrection, at least some of them believed in Him (Acts 1:14; James 1:1; Jude 1). Was the world later able to hate Jesus' brothers? Read the book of Jude! Its firm stands against sin and false doctrine could never be palatable to the world. And according to Josephus, Jesus' brother James was stoned to death. The world could not hate them when they lacked faith, but that certainly changed once they gained faith. If the world cannot hate you, it could be related to your lack of faith.

The hatred of the world is not a goal for which one should ever seek. Neither God the Father nor Jesus ever desired to be hated by the world, but by reproving its sin, the world's hatred was assured. But if your affections lie with the Lord in a life of obedience to Him, the world's hatred is nothing to fear, as the Lord's favor is assured. As He said, "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you" (John 15:18).