
Day 1

Learn: Prayerfully read John 15.18-21. The apostles could expect hostility from non-believers, because they aligned with Jesus, whom the world hates. The world is in rebellion against God, mired in spiritual darkness, following Satan. Jesus embodied the light of God's revelation and spiritual life, but people loved the darkness and hated the light, because their deeds were evil [1.4; 3.19-20; 7.7]. If believers are like those in the world, then the world will love them as one of its own, but if believers are like Christ then they will draw persecution. Even the apostles were once part of the world, unbelievers in rebellion against God. But Christ chose them out of the world *for himself* [as the verb form suggests]. This is true for believers today also: we were in sinful rebellion against God, but now that he has given us spiritual life and the Holy Spirit, we can be in relationship with him and useful for him. Earlier in this conversation, Jesus taught that a slave is not greater than his master, to convince the apostles they should humbly and sacrificially serve each other as he had served them [13.16]; now he said this again to show that they must bear persecution just as he did. Some people would respond in faith to Christ and then would honor the teachings of his apostles, but those who rejected Christ would reject the teachings of the apostles too.

Reflect: In what ways should Christians obviously stand out from non-believers? Try to list five to ten ways; then evaluate yourself in these areas.

Day 2

Learn: Prayerfully read John 15.22-25. Jesus was not saying that people would have had sinless perfection if he had not come to teach and do miracles. He was saying that before he came, the gospel promise was somewhat vague so people might offer the pretext that they did not understand; but his coming brought clarity to the supreme choice every person must make: believe in Jesus as the Son of God and Messiah-savior from God the Father, and thus align with him and the Father; or reject that revelation because of a sinful heart and thus remain in rebellion against God and his king. Those who loved and believed in God the Father responded in faith to Jesus' teachings and miraculous signs relating to prophecies, and ran to his light; those who did not were choosing to hate God and Christ. Rejecting Jesus is the ultimate sin, because to commit this sin means to reject the only cure for sin, the only way back to God.

The term "the Law" could refer to the books of Moses [Genesis – Deuteronomy] or [as here] it could refer to the entire body of Jewish scripture [our Old Testament]. The quotation is from Psalm 35.19 or Psalm 69.4. David wrote both about his life. The promised Messiah-savior was prophesied to also be the ultimate Davidic king [God's permanent king descended from David and heir to his throne]. For this reason God placed prophetic hints about the Messiah in the life and writings of David. David had enemies who hated him only because he was God's chosen representative, and the same was true for Jesus. Jesus was a Jew talking to eleven Jews, and all the people to whom Jesus was referring as followers or persecutors were Jews. This hatred and persecution was anticipated and condemned in their own Jewish scriptures.

Reflect: Jesus described a stark contrast in reactions: those who did not love him in faith and obedience would hate him and even hate his followers. So what do you make of people who are merely dismissive toward you or lukewarm about Jesus? What do you make of people inside the church who never grow or show fruitfulness? How might they hate Jesus in their own ways? or be antagonistic to passionate followers of Christ in their own ways?

Day 3

Learn: Prayerfully read John 15.26-16.4. Now Jesus taught how the apostles should respond to the persecution they could expect. When Jesus would have God the Father send the Holy Spirit to indwell believers [after Jesus ascended to Heaven], the Spirit would testify to them about the truth regarding Christ. The apostles then must testify about Christ through their teaching, lifestyle, and writing of the New Testament, since they had witnessed and experienced Christ from the start of his ministry and they would be enlightened and empowered by the Holy Spirit. English translations are a little soft on the command in 15.27: it is *not* "you will testify"! It is "you are testifying" or "you testify" or "you must testify" [as in NIV, NLT]. They *must* continue to testify about Christ, to carry out the gospel mission, even though that will encourage persecution. *[Continue on to the next page!]*

Therefore, Christ wants to prepare them for persecution. He told them these things so they would not *fall away* from him [see 6.61 for another use of that verb]. When Jesus returned to Heaven, they would face the persecution he had been facing, and he did not want them to be confused, disillusioned, or doubtful; he wanted them to stand strong in faith and obedience. They would face temptation to turn away from Christ; they would face persecution as they got thrown out of the synagogues; they would face death as the Jews who hated Jesus would think it would serve God to kill them. There is irony here: those killing would think they were making an offering to God, but it would be those sacrificially dying for the cause of the gospel who really would be making an offering. Jesus said “an hour was coming”; this would be after he left, but his use of this language theologically ties this persecution to his “hour” that had just arrived for his arrest, beating, and murder. His hour would be the supreme example of his persecution, the moment when persecution would shift to them, and the climactic hour which changed history by clarifying the gospel and providing for the salvation of the faithful and condemnation of those in rebellion.

Reflect: Empowered by the Spirit, and enlightened by the Spirit, the writings of the apostles, and our experience of salvation and sanctification, we too must testify to the truth about Christ, and we too can expect that to bring us some rejection and persecution. Think of those who give you the most difficulty; is there anything they have in common? How can you continue to witness for Christ in the face of that hostility or difficulty?

Day 4

Learn: Prayerfully read John 16.8-11. Scholars differ on how to translate and interpret this. The Greek verb in 16.8, ἐλέγχω [eh-LENG-khoh] can mean expose, legally convict, convince, reprove, punish; so which is the Holy Spirit doing to the world? English Bibles mostly split between “convict” [legally convict or reprove?] and “prove the world wrong” [expose?]. Based on context, word usage, sentence structure, and theological considerations, I think the most likely interpretation is that the Spirit is reproofing, or rebuking, the world. He rebukes the world concerning sin, because people do not believe in Jesus, and thus turn away from God and his offer of salvation and cleansing from sin; he rebukes the world concerning righteousness, because Christ’s sacrifice, resurrection, and ascension prove his absolute righteousness, which people reject and from which they deviate; he rebukes the world concerning justice/judgment, because people follow the world’s ruler, Satan, who killed Christ and whom God has condemned through Christ’s victory in the crucifixion and resurrection. All three rebukes relate to Christ and each other.

Reflect: Do you understand why the secular, non-believing, world will always be not just neutral, but anti-God and anti-Bible in nature? If the world is such and the Holy Spirit rebukes it, why do Christians [even seminaries] desire so much to be accepted by the world and to prosper in worldly affairs? Why are Christians immersed in accumulated comfort and wealth and entertainment, and so little involved in missions, evangelism, and Bible teaching?

Day 5

Learn: Prayerfully read John 16.5-7, 12-15. The first word in 16.6 is “rather” or “instead” [“but” is too vague]. The apostles had asked where Jesus was going, but now they were not; *rather* they were consumed with grief and silent. Jesus had said that his going would benefit them, because he would make provision for their eternity in God’s house. Now he said another benefit was the coming of the Holy Spirit, the helper/advocate who would empower them. Jesus had to die and rise to make provision for the New Covenant promises that come with the indwelling Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit would glorify Christ, because Christ is the focal point of all revelation, in that he is the supreme revelation *about* God, the supreme revelation *given by* God, and the supreme revelation *we need to come to* God. The Holy Spirit would receive revelation from the Father and Son and disclose it to the apostles. This would be the whole truth about Christ. This would include revelation about what was to come: first to interpret [after the fact] what was about to happen to Jesus; second, to envision elements about the coming judgment and kingdom.

Reflect: We receive the Spirit’s revelation about Christ through the New Testament writings of the apostles, which the Spirit then reinforces directly [see 1 John 5.6; Romans 8.16]. Pray that you would understand the *whole* truth! All the references to the Spirit teaching, guiding, testifying, say the Spirit will reveal something about Christ or our relationship with him. While the Spirit might help us make day to day decisions, his main purpose is to help us relationally know, understand, and bear witness for Christ. Do you rely on him more for that or for worldly things? How could you depend on the Spirit more in the way scripture describes?