

Kingdoms in Conflict - Part 1

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[0:00] John chapter 15 beginning at verse 18 into chapter 16 verse 4.! Jesus speaking. If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you.

! If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you.

If they kept my word, they will also keep yours. But all these things they will do to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me.

If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have been guilty of sin. But now they have no excuse for their sin. Whoever hates me hates my father also.

If I had not done among them the works that no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin. But now they have seen and hated both me and my father.

[1:16] But the word that is written in their law must be fulfilled. They hated me without a cause. But when the helper comes, whom I will send to you from the father, the spirit of truth, who proceeds from the father, he will bear witness about me.

And you also will bear witness because you have been with me from the beginning. I have said these things to you to keep you from falling away.

They will put you out of the synagogues. Indeed, the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God. And they will do these things because they have not known the father nor me.

But I have said these things to you that when their hour comes, you may remember that I told them to you.

That is the word of our glorious Lord. Thank you, Lord. Thank you, Lord. Please be seated. I'd like to thank my dear brothers for giving me a respite.

[2:26] And Brother Chris Blackman and Brother Charlie Davidson, thank you, brothers, for standing and preaching the word of God so ably and so grateful that we are blessed in this church with many gifted preachers.

And I feel rich. The well-respected missionary now gone to Jesus, Leslie Newbigin, spoke of something that he called unbearable tension.

He said that because we as Christians are outsiders in this life. Our faith often comes into conflict with the world around us.

Sometimes our choices are relatively straightforward, though trying, but still pretty straightforward. Such as we believe human beings are created in the image of God and that our life begins in utero, in the womb, making things like abortion on demand, murder, and an act of sin against the image of God.

That's pretty straightforward. Since we are fully pro-life, then life outside of the womb is also sacred.

[3:54] And so the sin of partiality, as James calls it in his book, in the form of preferential treatment of the rich over the poor or of one ethnic group, racism, over against another, is also a sin against God's image in all people.

Praise the Lord that Jesus came to save sinners. Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord. Because even those who commit those sins are not beyond the grace of God. But there are many others.

We face some difficult choices today as well, some very terrible and difficult choices. The answers sometimes are clear, and sometimes they're clear but not easy.

And sometimes they're not as clear as we would like. Should we attend our child's same-sex marriage to maintain relationships with our children?

That's not easy. I have my opinion on that one. And my opinion is no. But that's still not easy. And may God give us grace, however you choose.

[5 : 13] But you want to honor Jesus more than anything else. These all exist. All these issues exist. And more. They're political issues, sexual issues, economic, scientific, ethical issues.

We as believers will be on one side and the world will be on the other. And so we as believers many times find ourselves to be outsiders to the prevailing wisdom of the world.

And let's be honest. No one likes to live in that kind of tension. No one wants to live as an outsider. I mean, we want to fit in.

And so what we do is we try to, we are tempted to resolve these tensions between ourselves and the world. Because we want to fit in.

But we know things. You know, there's some things you can't unsee and unknow.

[6 : 20] If you are a follower of Jesus, you know some things. That others don't want to believe, but you can't unknow it or unsee it.

Forgive me, but we're kind of like the teenagers in the hit TV show Stranger Things. Okay.

Don't laugh. I know some of you have watched it. I saw it every season, by the way. It's a really funny show.

It's based in the 1980s. The best music ever. Okay. Rock and R&B, hip hop, everything was great. These kids, right?

You know, middle schoolers save the world. I mean, cut me a break. I mean, yes, this is great. These kids, they know there are creatures in another world that they call the upside down.

[7 : 20] They know these creatures want to destroy our reality. But the problem is these kids are the nerds.

They're the geeks. They play role-playing games like Dungeons and Dragons back in the day. They tend to be very smart and techie. But they're considered weird.

And the other groups pick on them. The jocks and the pretty people pick on them. They bully them mercilessly, even viciously at times, because they don't fit.

But here's the thing about these kids. They're committed to saving the world. Even though they don't fit, they're committed to saving the very people who don't like them and treat them so badly.

These kids are fighting a life and death war, but the people in their town of Hawkins think they're just weird, liars, and maybe even dangerous.

[8 : 22] And there are few people who do know the truth. They're the military. But they want to use these creatures and use their powers for their own military purposes. And so they hunt the kids too.

They want the power of the upside-down creatures. You see, you've got two worlds in conflict. One hates the other and wants to conquer it. Back to the real world.

We talk about the upside-down kingdom, don't we? The kingdom of God is the upside-down. In other words, we see things so differently sometimes from the world that it looks like we're upside-down.

We don't fit. These worlds collide, light and dark. What's our posture to be? How are we to engage a world sometimes that looks at us as weird, liars, bigoted, and at times look at us as even dangerous?

How are we to respond to the conflict? When these two kingdoms meet, what should we expect?

[9 : 41] What should we expect? And how are we to respond in a way that honors our king, the king of the upside-down, the king of the kingdom of heaven? How are we to respond to honor him?

This passage really speaks to these things. I think. But let's look at the context. Now, if you're using a pew Bible, and I hope you have a Bible with you, but if you're using a pew Bible, page 902.

I want you to turn there. Make sure you have that in front of you. Because the context is fascinating. Okay? First, the most immediate context to our passage, it says that people, this is verses 9 through 17 now.

We've been stuck. We said it a while ago. That people who abide in Christ, who live lives dependent upon Jesus, and that last section, who are full of the self-sacrificial love of Christ, will be hated.

People who love like Jesus loves are not welcome in the world.

[10 : 54] The greatest virtue in the kingdom of God, which is love, does not always warrant respect. Not because of love per se, but because of its reflection of Jesus.

And since God is love and Jesus is the son of God, it becomes a rejection of God himself. The creator of the universe is being rejected.

Jesus is the embodiment of the love of God in human form. That's striking. Because we are so encouraged.

And if we are full of the spirit of God, if we've met the love of Jesus, his love is pouring out of us. And yet that very thing will be conflicted with the culture around us.

That blows my mind. But there's another connection, too, which I want to make sure you have your Bibles in front of you. It goes back to chapter 14. Jesus spent good time preparing his disciples.

[12 : 04] Remember, he's preparing his disciples for his leaving. He wants to be clear with them. He wants to give them some last words, some marching orders. Make sure they understand what's about to happen. And he's not going to be here.

And he wants his disciples, including us, to know how to live, how to respond, how to do life without his physical presence. He ends his lessons in the upper room, it seems.

And in chapter 14, he ends his lessons there. And so chapter 15, we know that he's on his way to the Garden of Gethsemane. But look how chapter 14 ends.

It ends with some very striking words. Verse 30, I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming. He has no claim on me, but I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father.

Rise, let us go from here. And that's chapter 15. They're walking, it seems, towards the Garden of Gethsemane, where Jesus will be arrested. Chapter 14 ends with the Lord's prediction of Satan's coming.

[13:13] Meaning his impending arrest, trial and execution. And his determination to go all the way for the Father. He's going to the cross so that the world might know that he loves the Father.

Not just that he loves us. That's true. But Jesus' concern is that the world knows that he loves the Father, even to the point of laying down his life.

He wants that to be very clear. Amen. This becomes a natural connection to where we are in chapter 15.

While he speaks of the world's hatred. It's the work of the prince of darkness. This hatred that he's describing in our passage I just read.

It's the work of the prince of darkness who has no claim on Jesus, and so he hates Jesus. He has no hold on Jesus. He can't control Jesus. He has no end with Jesus.

[14:14] To the first part of chapter 15 tells us how we are to continue Christ's work. How to continue his work while he's no longer with us.

And now he says how his disciples will be treated. And how we will function and cope with that treatment. While he's gone physically.

You can say the rest of the book of John shows us how we who follow Jesus in his kingdom do not fully fit in the world. We don't fit.

So the big point for today, I think that's all I'm going to get to. Hatred comes from the world. Hatred.

Not. We love you. So glad you're here. Jesus says hatred. From verses 18 to 25, the word hate is repeated eight times in the ESV.

[15:23] He keeps saying hate. And now we can't ignore that. He when whenever God repeats himself, brothers and sisters, we better stop and pay attention.

So in those seven or eight verses or so, he keeps repeating the word hate. Hatred. You know what hatred is. A dislike. An intense dislike.

Passionate dislike. To feel an extreme aversion for or extreme hostility towards something or someone.

It's to detest. We toss the word hate around too easily. I hate vanilla ice cream. Really?

I hate broccoli. Don't tell my wife I said that. Oh, she's here. I thought you would. But you. Never mind. We very easily say we hate someone.

[16:27] I've heard people say I hate the president. I don't care who the president is, by the way. I've heard it. I've heard it every year. Every president. I've heard people say I hate the president. I don't care who. I've heard it. Really?

I hate you. That's a powerful word. Because anything we hate, we can dis.

We can dis. Anything we hate, we can disregard. We don't have to look at it. We don't have to give it time of day or them time of day.

And if we're not careful, anything we hate, we can hurt. So hatred is a very strong word. And I'll caution you the use of it.

Jesus says hatred is coming from the world towards his disciples. If, I mean, wow. People full of love.

[17:28] Verse 18. If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. And then he goes on. Now, listen.

Because we, because we're human beings, no one wants to be hated. I mean, let me just see your hand. Which one of you wants to be hated? And before you raise your hand, we have psychiatric professionals here to help you.

Who wants to be hated? Nobody wants to be hated. And when you find that someone dislikes you or hates you, if possible, you want to do something about it.

You know, you want to relieve the tension, right? You don't want to walk, live in that with them. You want them to like you and love you, if possible. But certainly like you a little bit. And there's several ways that we can go about trying to resolve the tension between the world and Christ's disciples.

There's several ways we can do it. I'm thinking about the book, *The Joyful Outsiders*, which I do come in to use. Nifty little book. The first thing we can do and easiest is to assimilate.

[18:41] Right? Right? If we change our views, become conformist outsiders, because we're still Christians, but we conform.

If we do that, we'll relieve the tension. If we come, you know, just assimilate. Change your views. Go along the get along.

That's one way to relieve the tension. Or we can try this. We can withdraw from the world. Live separate but equal lives. Do everything Christian.

Christian grocery stores. Christian bowling. Christian everything. Right? Look at some of these mega churches. They create an entire community where you don't have to leave the church grounds.

Christian everything. Christian theme park. Christian Disney. I mean, whatever. You know that's an oxymoron.

[19:42] Anyway. We call that the cloistered outsider. Close the vine. Close the windows. Don't let the world in.

As if sin is not in our hearts. Anyway. That's it. And in your children, by the way. But that's another story. That's another thing. And by the way.

The cloistered people. The cloistered. One more thing. They longed for the good old days. When Christianity was the favorite faith. They long. They long.

They talk about the good old days. I wish the good old days. You know. When everything was closed on Sunday. And we could talk about. We prayed in schools.

And we had Bible reading in schools. Now this is Chattanooga. We still have some of that actually. Praise the Lord. I think. So we can be cloistered.

[20:40] But there's another way. We can. We can go on the offensive. Another way to deal with the tension. Is to kick booty. Go on the offensive.

Attack the world's choices. Attack the world's sins. Mobilize whatever non-violent weapons at our disposal. We can become the combative outsider. Can I tell you something?

The Jews. And Jesus day. Tried all of them. Let me give you some names. The Herodians.

All of these are spoken of. Except one group is spoken of in the New Testament. In the Gospels. The Herodians. They were the assimilationists. They started working with King Herod. If you can't beat them. Join them.

Okay. They were the assimilationists. Another group was called the Essenes. They're not mentioned in the New Testament. But they were there. The Essenes.

[21:41] They were the withdrawal type. They were living in a compound. Okay. A drawing from the world. We get the Qumran scrolls from these guys. No.

If you don't know what that is. Don't worry about it. Then we have what we call my boys. These are my boys. The Zealots. Yeah. They fought guerrilla warfare baby.

They were the men. There was a group of the Zealots called the Saqqari. It means the dagger men. They carried daggers in their cloaks. I'm not making this up, y'all.

And their job was to kill those who were traitors and go after officials. So they were the by any means necessary group. All right.

Then there were our favorites. The Pharisees. The Pharisees. They tried to resolve the tension by longing for the good old days. But they did it in a self-righteous way.

[22 : 41] They wanted to bring back the good old days when God was honored. The law was kept. And a Davidic king ruled. They thought if we get the people to keep the law, God will bless us.

Now all of these were ways that the Jewish people sought to deal with the tension. Because they were living in two worlds. They were the people of God living in the Roman world.

And the Roman world hated them. And they wanted to get rid of the Romans. By any means they couldn't. They wanted to get rid of them. But they tried to relieve the tension. And these various groups tried these ways to relieve the tension.

Here's the thing. Here's the thing. Or as my Jamaican family would say, here's the thing. Jesus didn't join any of them. He didn't join the Essenes.

He didn't join the Pharisees. He didn't join the Zealots. He didn't join any of them. But then what does that mean? Jesus lived in the tension.

[23 : 55] He didn't try to ease it or make it go away. He lived in the tension. He lived as an outsider. In other words, he walked in the kingdom of light because he was the light.

While living within the kingdom of darkness. Let me say it again. He walked in the kingdom of light as the light. While living within the kingdom of darkness. He lived in both worlds.

At all times. At all times. And we are his disciples.

As I said before, the word hate is used eight times in the ESV here in these phrases. But here's another thing. The word world is used five times. Hate and world.

Hate and the world. Hate and the world. So we need to be clear then about what the Lord means by the world. He's not talking about the earth.

[25 : 05] The word is cosmos. That's where we get our word cosmos. It can mean. It can speak of a complete. Orderly.

Harmonious system. Jesus is speaking. He talks about the world. He is speaking of a system. system. And this system.

Among fallen people. It's among fallen humanity. This system is in direct opposition to Christ and his kingdom. It is a disordered and sometimes ordered invisible system in which people live that leaves God out.

Leaves God out of their will. Out of his. Out of their will. Their thinking and their concerns. And is ruled by Satan and sin. It becomes visible in what people love.

What people value. How people make decisions. What we say we believe. How we behave. And is really revealed in the worship of false gods.

[26 : 19] Jared Packer in his book God's Word says it this way. The world denotes sinful humanity. Sinful mankind. In the mass. In the mass. Solidly given to unrighteousness.

And moral disorder. And ungodliness. And solidly hostile to the truth of God and the people of God. He used the word solidly twice.

Firmly. Hostile. Paul will call it the kingdom of darkness. And you see that in Ephesians chapter 2. This is 1 through 3.

He's talking to the Ephesian Christians. And he's telling them. Hey. I want you guys to know the power of God in your lives. That's how he ends chapter 1. I want you to know the power of God.

He's praying for them. That they'll know the power of God in their lives. And then he shows them how they know the power of God. That's what chapter 2 is about. That's how it begins. It's showing how the power of God impacts those of us who are living in darkness.

[27 : 23] And so he says this. And you were dead in your trespasses and sins. In which you once walked. Following the course of this world. System. Following the prince of the power of the air.

That's the devil. The spirit that is now at work and the sons of disobedience. Among whom? Among this mass of humanity. We all. Notice that all. We all once lived in the passions.

That word is lusts of the flesh. Carrying out the desires of the body. If it feels good, do it. And the mind. Whatever I can think of. And imagine that my mind is of cesspool.

I just want everything. And were by nature. By nature. By very nature. By birth. By nature. Children of wrath. Like the rest of mankind.

And he says, you were there. And that's where the power of God met you. Because the thing he says next is this. But God. That's the next thing he says.

[28 : 27] But God. Being rich in mercy. Because of his great love for which he loved you. Made you alive again. In Christ Jesus. By grace. You have been saved.

Hallelujah. So the point being is that. You look at the world. But understand. You're worldly. That's where he felt. That's where he got. That's where you lived.

That's where you were born. That's what you breathed. Your habits and attitudes came out of the world. Hostile to God. But the gospel came.

The good news. The king of kings came. The glory of God. And the grace of God was revealed from heaven. And we were made alive.

The power of God raised you from the dead. Hallelujah. Man. That's good stuff right there. Man. I wish I had wrote it.

[29 : 24] Man. Satan's called the God of this world. He's called the one who blinds. In 2 Corinthians 4.4. He blinds the minds of unbelievers.

Keeping them from seeing the glory of Christ. No one wants to be hated.

But that's where we are hated. Hated. Here's the problem.

That's not really the problem. At least I don't think so. Here's the problem. Many Christians spend their lives trying to get the world to love them.

That's the problem. That's the problem. Now listen. Now be careful. Don't run away with this.

[30 : 21] My job as a Christian is to make the world hate me. Woo! I'm going to be nasty. I'm going to be obnoxious. I'm going to call to everybody. You're going to hell.

You're going to burn. I mean, you know. It's not our job to make the world hate us. I want you to notice something about that entire passage. Here you go. This is free. No charge for this. Jesus says the world hates us.

He never says we hate the world. I'm talking about people now. About people.

So we got to be careful because we fall for that too. We fall for that too. I've seen it. You ain't got to say amen. I've seen it. We Christians hate the people in the world.

And Jesus never said that. We're not the people of hate. We're the people of love.

[31:22] Now that love has teeth. But we're people of love. It's not love, love, love. No, it's love. It's holy love. God's love. But the world hates us.

And it's not your job to make the world love you. If you do this, if you try to do this. I say I'm just clearing some ground today. So I'm just.

If you seek to get the world to love you. You want everybody to be your friend. You want to fit into every group. Every group.

Teenagers. We think about teenagers. We think about how they want to fit in with the cool kids and everything. But I'm not talking about them. We know that. I'm talking about you. Big people.

We try to fit into groups and movements and political groups. We fit in. And we shouldn't fit. Because we shouldn't fit. We shouldn't fit. Because it's of the world.

[32:23] That's Babylon. People. I don't care. I don't care how much the world says is with you. It's still Babylon. I got to get through to somebody out there.

Are you listening on the. Whoever you are. I don't care what political. I don't care if the world says listen. We are with you. We are with you in this movement.

We're going to help the poor. We're with you. We're going to. We're going to do. Down with abortion. We're going to. Down with this. But there's still the world with you. Do you understand?

And you can't trust the world. I'm not saying you should just diss them. I'm saying don't go native. Remember what I talked about before?

Even though we may be aligned. We're not in agreement. The world will walk with you and be aligned with you. Yeah. Power to the people. Yeah.

[33:26] Do the right thing. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. But there's no real agreement. Because you're seeking to glorify Jesus. And the world is seeking to glorify itself. And so even though you're walking together.

At some point. Listen. If you really stick out. If you abide in Christ. And you don't try to compromise. At some point the world is going to say.

Hold it. Hold it. I thought. We thought. You would. Hold it. Hold it. Because the world is always Babylon. That's it.

It's all. It's like the tale of what is it. What is it. I don't remember the exact image.

So you got to help me out. But the tortoise. And the scorpion. Scorpion says. Hey. Take me across the lake. Scorpion says. You're going to sting me.

[34:25] Scorpion says. No. I'm not going to sting you man. It's all good. You're doing me a solid. I'm with you man. We both want to go across. I'm going with you. So he said. Okay. Come on. Halfway over.

The scorpion stings the turtle. Got him under the underbelly. You're under the shell. You know. And the turtle as he's dying says. Why did you sting me? He said.

I'm still a scorpion. What do you expect? The world is still a scorpion. You may be riding together for a minute. But understand. The system isn't your system.

It's not your system anymore. You're not part of the system. And eventually. Be careful. It's going to. I'm trying to help somebody. I don't know who you are.

We don't want to be hated. But we don't want to. But we can't compromise. Clear biblical teaching. On sex. Sexuality. Marriage. Ethics. We can't compromise.

[35:25] Clear biblical teaching. In order to fit in. Family. It may. We're trying to make our lives easier. Jesus didn't call us to easy. That's not Christianity.

Christianity is not the easy life. Just study a little bit of church history. And you'll find out the people of God. Is not easy. It's not supposed to be. Because we're in the world.

We're in it. But not of it. Right? John 17. We'll get there. We want to. We want to. Avoid the charge. Of being bigoted.

Of being abusive. Of being. Not with it. Not cool. Not. You know. Whatever it is. We want to avoid these charges. And Jesus says. He's telling you. The world hates you.

Because it hates me. And then we try. Then God forbid. God help us. We try to place Jesus. On the same level. With other religious groups. And other religious leaders.

[36 : 22] We start compromising that. Oh yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Well Jesus works for me. But you know. Every role leads to God. When you hear Christians say that. You should just.

Go run over and hug them. And say stop. Stop. Don't say that. Don't believe that. Even more. No.

All roads don't lead to God. Most roads lead to disaster. And death. And destruction. Only one road leads to God. Jesus told us. I am the way.

The truth. And the life. And no one comes to the Father. But through me. You can't get more narrow than that family. Our road is the narrow road.

The narrow faith. Truth is truth. That's what we believe. And we can't back up on it. Not even for a second. Not even for a second.

[37 : 18] He's worthy of any inconvenience. And worthy of any persecution. Worthy of any uncomfortableness. He's worthy of it. So the world's not our friend.

Everything the world says isn't wrong. Don't get crazy. Everything the world says isn't wrong. It's called common grace. Sometimes the world gets things right. But it's not for the glory of Jesus.

It's right. So. This world system.

There's another name for it. Peter talks about Babylon. Revelation. Babylon. The system is anti-Christ.

It has to be because it's in darkness. And Jesus tells us clearly in places like James chapter 4 verse 4. Not to make friends with the world.

[38 : 32] Now we're going to talk about that. What that means. But let's understand what he says. First of all. He doesn't mean you can't be friends with worldly people.

With people in the world. How are you going to win them? But he's talking about the system. You can't make friends with the system. You can't compromise.

You can't give in to the way of thinking. The way of living. The way of. You know. You can't give in to the viewpoints. Of the system of darkness. In order to get along.

Can't do it. Why can't we do it? Because Jesus. Is on the outside of that.

Jesus says. The world hates me. And therefore will hate you. That's the tension. That's the living of the outsiders within.

[39 : 49] The system. It's almost like we're. We're not. We're not undercover though. Here's the thing. We're not undercover. We're not spies.

Seeking to infiltrate. No. We're not undercover. Now. My persecuted brother and sister. Has to do things a little differently. So let's. Let's. Let's. In other countries. I'm not talking about them.

I'm talking about us in America. We. We're not undercover. Let your light. Let your light. Let your light. So shine before men. That they may see your good works.

And glorify your father. Which is in heaven. If I. Am a follower. Of him. Who is called the light of the world.

If I know him. Who is the light of the world. If he. If the light of the world lives in me. That light is meant to shine. Is meant to be seen.

[40 : 45] So no. We're not secret. Secret agents. We're not double oh seven. Or double. Double oh oh. That's me moral. We're. We're in the world.

And we are walking. In the midst. We are loving. In the midst. We are. Speaking of Jesus. In the midst. Of the hatred.

And that's okay. That's exactly where Jesus wants you. Right in the middle. Of the hatred.

That's not all bad news. Sometimes. Even the world will say good job. But don't get. But don't get. But don't get. Don't get cocky. And don't get satisfied.

There are people who will be brought out of the world. They'll see Christ in you. And they'll be drawn to you. Amen. Hallelujah. Hallelujah. So it's not all bad news.

[41 : 56] But. There is a conflict. Going on. Because the world hates. What is not like it. And if you're hated.

Rejoice. Because it just means that maybe. Maybe. Maybe. Maybe. Maybe. You're not of the world. And Christ is shining in you. And it's okay. That's why we need each other.

That's why we need the gathering of the saints. So we come together. As like-minded followers of Christ. To encourage and strengthen one another in Jesus.

And be made strong in the word and sacrament. And prayer. That's why you need the church. Because this is the embassy.

Of the kingdom of heaven. In the world. You're safe here. Because you're with your family.

[43 : 10] And here you'll be equipped to go back into the world. And encourage and strengthen. To love your neighbor as yourself. To love those in the world who hate you.

Who may hate you. You don't love the system. You love the people. To that by God's grace. They may be brought out of darkness. Into the marvelous light.

Just like you were.