

To subscribe send a blank email to: eternity-dbs-subscribe@strategicnetwork.org

Read the Eternity archives at: <http://www.aibi.ph/eternity/>

Send feedback – <http://www.aibi.ph/aibi/feedback.htm>

How To Handle Stress In Ministry: http://www.aibi.ph/aibi/pastoral_stress.htm

John 15:21-25 ISV They will do all these things to you on account of my name, because they do not know the one who sent me. (22) If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have any sin. But now they have no excuse for their sin. (23) The person who hates me also hates my Father. (24) If I had not done among them the works that no one else did, they would not have any sin. But now they have seen and hated both me and my Father. (25) But this happened so that the word written in their law might be fulfilled: 'They hated me for no reason.'

We did not finish looking at Jesus teaching on persecution yesterday so we will continue with that passage today.

In today's passage Jesus makes four main points about those who persecute Christians:

1. They do not know "the One who sent me" that is God the Father. They may be religious zealots but they do not truly know God.
2. They are culpable because they have both heard the gospel and seen its works.
3. The person who hates Jesus also hates the Father.
4. Their malice is irrational "they hated Me for no reason".

The most savage persecution of Christians tends to come from other religions such as Islam, Hinduism, Paganism, some forms of Buddhism, and in the first century - Judaism. Persecution by atheists such as Communists is a rather recent phenomenon in historical terms (and some may even define Stalinism as a religion). These are all people who claim to know the definite and sure truth about God's existence or non-existence.

But Jesus upsets the apple-cart when He says that such folk "do not know the One who sent Me" (v21) and that they even "hate the Father" (v23,24). Those law-observant Pharisees who knew their Scriptures but persecuted Jesus - did not know the God they thought they knew and did not love the God they thought they loved - in fact they hated Him! For to hate Christ, who is the very exact image of God, is to hate God.

Now how do people who study the Scriptures and obey its commands as they understand them end up not knowing God - and even hating the One they are sure they believe in and love? How did Saul the Pharisee end up persecuting Christ before he was met by Him on the Damascus Road? How can someone who believes they are an ardent Christian actually be an enemy of God?

Part of the answer is they develop a strict theological framework that espouses a certain view of what God is like and that framework will not admit change or correction. Some bible-believing churches would throw Jesus out of membership for turning water into wine or being friends with a prostitute. On the other hand liberal churches would scorn Him for His belief in demons and the supernatural. Yet others would insist that He do His preaching in the church building and not on hillsides or from fishing

boats or that He should first have gone to the right seminary and that His disciples should wash their hands.

We are easily offended by Jesus because we have little real idea of what God is like. We want a God who likes our small deal, backs our little revolution and fits within our concepts. We don't want a God who will welcome alcoholics into the pews. We want a God of neat Sunday clothes and shiny bibles. That God does not exist. The God that does exist is the redeeming, welcoming, sinner-loving God of Jesus Christ.

Can a person who has prayed the sinners prayer, reads the Bible and goes to Church actually be an enemy of God? It is possible ! If their concept of God is so restrictive that it would not admit Jesus if He turned up and did the things today that He did back then. Such a person might say that the miracles were of the Devil or that Jesus was a crazy fundamentalist or be angry because He read from the wrong Bible translation. (Jesus seems to have often used the Greek Septuagint as well as the Hebrew Scriptures).

Now most of us would be shocked by Jesus and then get over it and love Him. But some would not. Some would hate Him intensely because He took away their control or got a huge following. Some would persecute Him and they would do so fiercely and irrationally and hate both Jesus and the Father. Such people do not really know God. And they are guilty because they would have heard from Jesus and seen His works and rejected them.

It is not enough to believe in one God or to know about Jesus. Annas and Caiaphas were High Priests and Judas was a disciple and they all believed in one God and knew a lot about Jesus - but they were all ultimately offended by Jesus and became enemies of God. Muslims, Jews and Bahais all believe in one God and in a version of Jesus but are offended at the Jesus of the gospels with His claim to be the only true Way to the Father. Salvation is not just a matter of believing four or forty-four spiritual laws or points of doctrine, it is about whether you personally trust Jesus like the thief on the cross did.

Now I do not want to question anyone's salvation but I do want us all to grow in our love of the true Jesus of the gospels. It is Him we must love - not our religious system. We must love someone who casts out demons, heals the sick, ministers to the poor, forgives sinners, turns water into wine, breaks the Sabbath, hangs out with tax-collectors, and preaches from fishing boats.

Blessings,

John Edmiston johned@aibi.ph

To donate online go to: <http://aibi.gospelcom.net/aibi/donate.htm>

The Life And Ministry Of Jesus The Messiah : <http://www.aibi.ph/aibi/messiah/>

A step by step journey through the life and ministry of Jesus - 25 bible-teaching articles that examine His birth, childhood, temptation, ministry, miracles, death, resurrection, ascension and Return.

Visit the Eternity Daily Bible Study Archives -

<http://www.aibi.ph/eternity/>

Study at the Asian Internet Bible Institute- Free online non-formal, in-service, bible and ministry training: <http://www.aibi.ph>