

# Christ and the World

F. A. Hughes.

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In his writings John refers to "the world" well over 100 times, the word being mentioned in his gospel alone over 70 times. The majority of these references take account of the world as a system controlled by Satan who is twice mentioned as its "prince" (John 14: 30; John 16: 11). It has been pointed out that it was not until men had refused God's overtures of grace, and had rejected His Son in whom that grace was so wonderfully set forth, that this title was given to Satan. Referring to him as such the Lord says he "hath nothing in Me." In His walk, His life, His words, His deeds, and indeed in His precious death there was no point of contact. Of no other person in the world could this be said. As Jesus moved to the cross these precious words came from His holy lips — "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me. But that the world may know *that I love the Father*; and as the Father gave Me commandment, even so I do. *Arise let us go hence*".

"Obedience to His Father's will,  
And love to Him did all fulfil."

The world is viewed by John — in its entirety — as that which "lieth in wickedness" (it might read, "in the wicked one"), and thus we can understand his writing "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2: 15). James also is very searching as he writes "Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?" (James 4: 4).

If John refers so often to the world he also refers over 100 times to the Father, and it is of the utmost importance to see the way in which he stresses the moral distance between them. Let one verse suffice — "For *all* that is in the world . . . is *not* of the Father . . ." (1 John 2: 16).

John has much to say both as to our Lord's position in relation to the world, and also of His links with the Father. Either of these thoughts would furnish us with an inexhaustible study.

John's gospel records the world's rejection of the Lord much earlier than the other gospels. In Chapter 1 we read "He was in the world and the world knew Him not. He came unto His own (what belonged to Him), and His own (people) received Him not." The Gentile world, albeit wise in their own estimation (cf. 1 Corinthians 1: 21; 1 Corinthians 2: 6-8) were totally ignorant as to who was here; whilst His earthly people, who from the Scriptures should have recognized the One in their midst, completely rejected Him. *This attitude of the world is unchanged*, and we, as those who through grace love the Lord Jesus, do well to squarely face up to the truth of it. The first word "own" in John 1: 11 might be rendered "own home" and in fact is so translated in John 19: 27. Refused His rightful place amongst His own people — He yet had an abode to which He would invite the two disciples who asked "Master, where dwellest Thou?" His home was ever in the bosom of the Father's love.

In His holy Person the Lord Jesus was not of this world — He was ever morally apart from it. Three times we hear Him saying — "I am not of the world," including that striking word to the Jews, "Ye are from beneath; I am from above, ye are of this world; I am not of this world" (John 8: 23). His kingdom was "not of this world" (John 18: 36); the world hated Him (John 15: 18); and He is no longer seen by it (John 14: 19). But although unrecognized and refused the world has been greatly affected, and that for good, by His coming. He brought the love and grace of God into a scene of hatred and strife; in Him the light of heaven shone in the midst of utter moral darkness; He came as Saviour and

not yet as Judge (John 3: 17). He came to "bear witness to the truth" in a world dominated by one who is a liar from the outset. In His Person He manifested the "way" to the Father, the *truth* as to the Father, and was Himself "that eternal *life*" into which He would introduce those who received Him.

If rejected in this world — He was ever adored in heaven. Whilst revealing heavenly things in His pathway of lowliness here, rejected and despised of men — He was always the centre of that heavenly scene above. "The Son of Man which *is in heaven*" (John 3: 13). Does not such a verse bespeak the Deity of His holy Person! Perfect Man — the Sent One of the Father; the Object of eternal worship and of the Father's affection (John 17: 24) — God's beloved Son.

Thankfully we recall that there were those who *did* receive Him! "But as many as received Him . . . them that believe on His Name" (John 1: 12). Of such He could say "I have chosen you *out of the world*" (John 15: 19); "the men which Thou (the father) gavest Me *out of the world*" (John 17: 6); "they are *not of the world*" (John 17: 14). This then is the position *morally* of those who "believe on His Name." As to their bodies they are actually still "in the world" and as such they are the special objects of the Lord's love (John 13: 1). "He loved them unto the end" — that is — a definite point or goal was in view. Would this opening remark of this most wonderful discourse connect with the closing remarks of the same? — "Father, I will that they also . . . be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory" (John 17: 24). What an end to which His love would conduct us!

Wonderful indeed is the portion of those who "have believed on His Name;" who have been given by the Father to the Son. Their attachment to Christ may call down upon them the same hatred which the world accorded the Lord (John 15: 18), but how blessed indeed are the immense privileges accruing even at the present moment from association with Himself. We are loved by Him, and as responding to that love we are the objects of the Father's affection (John 16: 27). We are indwelt by the Holy Spirit — "Whom the world cannot receive" (John 14: 17); we are held secure from every enemy by the "Father's hand" (John 10: 29); an abode in the "Father's house" has been made ready for us; it has been the joy of the Lord to declare to us the "Father's Name," to communicate to us the Father's words and the Father's commandments, and to make known to us the blessedness of the Father's will. These are precious and abiding things which are completely unknown in the world, but which, by the Spirit, are the present enjoyed portion of the lovers of Jesus. How immense are the glories filling the sphere into which grace has brought us, and in which the Spirit of truth delights to engage us with the things of Christ! "*All things that the Father hath are Mine; therefore said I, that He shall take of Mine, and shall shew it unto you*" — the wealth of the *Father's things* centred in the *Son*, and displayed to our redeemed hearts by the *Holy Spirit*. Abiding, eternal blessings — calculated to satisfy our hearts both now and for ever. As in the present enjoyment of such privileges we shall surely heed the exhortation of the apostle, "Love not the world, neither *the things* that are in the world."

Beloved brethren, let us consider for a moment the cost at which these precious matters have been secured to us. Three times in his gospel John refers to the lifting upon on the cross of the Son of Man. In John 3 we see His death as a necessity for our being delivered from the consequences of sin, and that we might be introduced into the realm of eternal life — a realm in which "heavenly things" may be known and enjoyed and where the Father's love is the satisfying portion of our hearts — displacing the passing things of this world. In John 8 testimony is given as to who He is in His Person — the "I AM" — presently rejected by the nation — but in a future day to be recognized in His glory — then alas! too late for the blessing for those who had seen and rejected Him. In John 12 — He is "lifted up *out of the earth*" (New Trans.) — the absorbing Object of all who have been attracted to Him "out of the world." J. N. Darby refers most touchingly to this verse as follows:- "It is a Saviour rejected, suffering, dying, who has left the world for ever, a Saviour ignominiously rejected, driven away, cast

out by the world . . . it is He who is the attractive refuge of those who would flee from the world that has rejected Him."

"*They* are not of the world even as *I* am not of the world." Twice these words come from the lips of our Lord; in between He prays to His father "keep them from the evil." He gave His life to this end as we read in Galatians 1, "Who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father" (verse 4).

Rejected by the world, received up in glory — may He, where He is crowned with glory and honour, be the ever-absorbing Object of our affections.

In peaceful wonder we adore  
The thoughts of love divine,  
Which in *that world* for evermore,  
Unite our lot with Thine.