

“Man Against Christ”

February 9, 2014

Text: John 7:10-13

Satan has set himself in opposition against Jesus, & Jesus is opposed to Satan—a truth that every believer knows/understands.

The Apostle John wrote=> *“The devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to **destroy** the works of the devil”* (I Jn 3:8).

Christ & Satan are mortal enemies, locked in an eternal war that will ultimately end in Satan being thrown into the lake of fire/brimstone, to be tormented there forever.

He’s fully aware of this, & yet he is so dominated by his own sinfulness, that he compulsively continues to oppose X.

It was the devil’s hatred of God’s Son that drove him to stir up Herod against the infant Jesus, attempting to kill Him.

In Rev 12, Satan is pictured as a dragon standing before a pregnant woman (Mary—as the representative here of all Israel), waiting for her to give birth, so that he can devour her child—Jesus.

So this war between X and Satan is a timeless battle, w/ eternal implications.

It isn't surprising that the devil is X's implacable enemy, but it does surprise us to read in Scripture how fervently man hates our Lord, joining w/ Satan to set himself against Jesus.

When X came to earth, people acted out their hatred of Jesus=>

- * They took Him to the brow of a hill and attempted to kill Him by throwing Him off the cliff.
- * They tried to stone Him for saying=> "*Before Abraham was born, I am*" (Jn 8:58).
- * They also tried to destroy X's reputation w/ slander, calling Him a=> "*a gluttonous man and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners*" (Mt 11:19).
- * When a paralytic believed in Jesus, X said=> "*Your sins are forgiven*" (Mt 9:2), to which the scribes/Pharisee reacted by accusing Him of blasphemy.

But man's opposition to X goes way beyond any/all of that.

Jesus said (Mt 12:30)=> "*He who is not **with** Me is **against** Me; and he who does not **gather** with Me **scatters**.*"

Anyone/everyone who has not committed himself to X is part of Satan's evil world system, allied w/ him against X, scattering rather than gathering w/ Jesus.

Someone=> "I'm just a regular Xn, not what you would call a devout Xn. So really, I neither gather/scatter."

But X said that if you're not a gatherer, you *are* a scatterer.

Jesus didn't leave any room for a middle ground.

Those who gather w/ X are fully committed to Him.

He compared their faith in Him with eating His flesh & drinking His blood, spiritually.

In Lk 9, He said=> *“If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me. / For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it”* (9:23-24).

Deciding how we are going to align our souls w/ regard to Jesus is an all-or-nothing proposition.

People live their lives in opposition to Jesus w/o even knowing it.

They assume their indifference to Him is, for all practical purposes, almost as good as believing in Him, & really becoming a true follower of His.

Their indifference to Him is actually hatred, minus the involvement of high intensity emotions.

It's not a strongly emotional hatred, but a resolute opposition.

There was nothing in Jesus' person that should cause anyone to hate Him.

* He had no apparent *rank* that might stir up anyone's envy.

Sometimes people do hate others who seem superior to them, out of envy over their riches/positions/titles.

But Jesus had none of that.

If anything, He seemed below most others, not even having a place of His own, where He could lay down at night.

His clothing was not that of a nobleman, but the simple garments you would expect of a carpenter's son.

* People might also have hated Jesus if He had exercised *authority* over them.

We resent traffic tickets because they are an imposition of someone else's rules on us—rules that we may not feel should be strictly applied in our own case.

Not only are we considered guilty—we're going to have to pay a steep price for our "guilt."

There's something in most of us that resents that kind of heavy-handedness.

But Jesus, at His 1st advent, didn't come in power/authority as a King, imposing His will on other men.

He certainly did have the power to do so—calming the sea w/ a word, & driving demons out of people at will.

But instead of wielding His authority in an authoritarian way, He was humbly merciful/gentle/kind.

This was even true when people had violated God's Law.

E.g. He told the woman caught in adultery, "*I do not condemn you, either. Go. From now on sin no more*" (Jn 8:11).

* People might also have hated Jesus if He had been a *hypocrite*.

But He was so sincere/consistent in the way He lived His life, no one could have shown Him to be hypocritical.

When the high priest tried to find witnesses against Jesus, only false witnesses could be found, & they contradicted each other so badly, they invalidated their own testimony.

Because there had been no hypocrisy or double standards in Jesus' life, no legitimate witnesses existed who could testify He had ever failed to obey/uphold the Law, either in its spirit or its letter.

As God incarnate, He was w/o variation or shifting shadow. So He was w/o sin, w/o guilt of any kind, & totally w/o hypocrisy.

In today's text, we will find 3 ways in which men's hatred of Jesus manifested (and still today manifests) itself=> malice, slander, and indifference.

*** Malicious Hatred**

In our last text, Jesus' brothers had urged Him to go w/ them to the Feast of Booths in Jerusalem—He had declined & refused to do so.

Not that He didn't intend to go to the feast, but rather, it was God's will that He delay going there, till later in the week. So the brothers had gone on ahead, prob. in one of the typical massive Jewish caravans in which such pilgrims traveled to the feasts.

Meanwhile, a few days had passed, and Jesus knew that the time God had ordained for His departure had now arrived.

[John 7:10-11]=> *“But when His brothers had gone up to the feast, then He Himself also went up, not publicly, but as if, in secret. / So the Jews were seeking Him at the feast and were saying, ‘Where is He?’”*

“The Jews” is a term John consistently uses to refer to Jewish religious leaders, not to the Jewish people generally.

Jesus went up to Jerusalem secretly, to avoid the Jewish leaders’ hostility towards Him.

As we saw last time, it was indeed God’s plan that they arrest/kill our Lord eventually—but not yet.

Jesus Himself would cause that to happen 6 months later, at the Passover Feast the following Spring.

But if X’s natural brothers had had their way, they’d have ushered Him into Jerusalem at the present feast w/ great fanfare, shouting “Hosanna” to Him as the Messiah, hoping that others also would join their cause.

They seem to have had their own carnal ambitions/plans, possibly hoping to profit from being known as the brothers of Messiah.

But Jesus’ purpose was simply to do His Heavenly Father’s (not His brothers’) will, & that according to God’s time-table.

There were undoubtedly scribes/Pharisees/religious-leaders watching as the Galilean caravan arrived in Jerusalem, hoping to catch/capture Jesus as He entered the city.

Since chapter 5, they, in their hatred for Him, had been waiting for the opportunity to trap/kill Him (5:18).

While still in Galilee, He had been under Herod Antipas' jurisdiction, providing Him some protection.

But the Jews of Judea hoped that Jesus would come to Jerusalem for a feast, & they'd be able to kill Him when He did.

This was no secret, since verse 25 says that even some of Jerusalem's residents were saying=> *"Is this not the man whom they are seeking to kill?"*

This was undoubtedly one of the main reasons Jesus had avoided the large caravans, determined to travel w/ no one but His own Apostles, & thus to slip quietly into the city.

You can almost hear the annoyance in the chief-priests' voices, as they kept asking, *"Where is He?* [lit. "that one"—a term of disdain]."

They felt certain Jesus must be there at the festival, being a devout Jew, but they hadn't been able to spot Him, & that must have frustrated/irritated them.

Verse 14 will tell us He didn't arrive until *"the midst of the feast"*—halfway through these week-long festivities.

He came as merely 1 of the Jewish pilgrims/participants in the feast, not as the Messiah, or even as a great rabbi/teacher w/ a large retinue of followers/disciples.

Nor did He attract the Jewish leaders' attention by
cleansing the Temple, as He'd done during His first
visit there after establishing His own ministry.

He'd cleanse it again just before His death.

But not this time.

**Did the religious leaders have any legitimate reason for their
malice/hatred towards Jesus? Absolutely not!**

They had every reason to adore/worship Him—to sit at His feet
and learn the answers to many of God's mysteries.

* E.g. He was the living fulfillment/explanation of all those
sacrifices they had offered—the Lamb of God who
would atone for sin once/for-all.

* He was the One who would take away their people's
sin—the real meaning behind all the scapegoats they
had released into the wilderness hundreds of times
before.

* He was the reality of which the Ark of the Covenant was
merely an object lesson—Man's 1/only meeting-
place w/ God, where our sins can be propitiated, and
God's wrath satisfied.

* He was the eternal reality behind the brazen serpent in the
wilderness, who would take away the sting of death
& heal man's soul, as sinners looked to Him by faith.

If they had just been willing to listen, Jesus could have taught
these religious leaders truths Abraham had wanted to know.

Truths angels had sought for, & prophets had looked for in their own inspired writings, but had never found.

But they refused to listen to Jesus, because He contradicted all their own false/legalistic perversions of Scripture, exposed the hypocrisy of their own lives, and represented in Himself an image of the Messiah they were unwilling to accept.

* **Malicious Slander** (a 2nd manifestation of man's hatred of X)

[Verse 12]=> *“There was much grumbling [mumbling and muttering] among the crowds concerning Him; some were saying, ‘He is a good man’; others were saying, ‘No, on the contrary, He leads the people astray.’”*

Notice first John's use of the plural form “crowds.”

I.e., more than 1 crowd.

Groups of people from all throughout the Near East had converged on Jerusalem for the Feast of Booths, as they did each year.

They all seemed to have an opinion about Jesus, no matter what part of the world they came from.

Some of these Jews slandered Jesus outright, claiming that He was a deceiver, who led the Jewish people astray.

In all likelihood, this group had been influenced by their local religious leaders in Jerusalem, who hated Jesus.

Ultimately, their view would become the standard, generally-accepted Jewish opinion of X after His resurrection.

The Babylonian Talmud, a central text of rabbinic Judaism w/ 2 parts, dating from the 3rd & 6th centuries respectively, said Jesus was executed on Passover Eve, because He was a deceiver, who practiced sorcery, & led Israel astray.

So the original slander of those who hated Jesus during His earthly life became canonized in rabbinic Judaism.

And still today most Jewish people hold to this view so firmly, they angrily object to any suggestion that Jesus was the Messiah, as being intolerably offensive. So offensive, in fact, they even replace B.C. (before X) in historical dates, w/ B.C.E. (before the common era).

Others at the feast expressed the view that Jesus was a good man.

That was true, as far as it went.

Jesus was indeed a morally good Person—unselfish/true, the kind of person most people would consider good.

From a Jewish p.o.v. that also meant Jesus kept/obeyed the Law diligently.

But in reality, X obeyed God's Law perfectly—something those people could never have discerned, or even imagined.

E.g. Jesus Himself pointed out, that the 6th commandment isn't fulfilled by merely not murdering other people. It requires man to not even hate anyone, in his heart.

The 7th commandment entails more than refraining from physical adultery—it's not even lusting. Jesus had never lusted, hated, had a deceptive thought, or committed any other sin in His heart.

Jesus lived a perfect/sinless life, in every sense of the word. He is God & the Law describes God's own character, a moral silhouette of God, that matches Jesus' character perfectly.

So the people who judged Jesus to be a "*good man*" probably saw goodness in all that He said/did, but they had no concept of just how-high/how-deep His goodness actually went.

The ultimate truth about what kind of man Jesus actually was, is found in what the Bible teaches about Him.

But even before the Bible was written, one only needed to examine His life in order to answer the question about what kind of Man Jesus really was.

What kind of Man heals people's diseases, gives sight to the blind (something no one else can do, or has ever done), opens deaf ears, and brings dead people back to life? Certainly not a deceiver; but not merely a good man either. Only a Man who is God in human flesh could ever do such wonderful things for His fellow men.

Still today, what kind of Man brings prodigals back to God?

What kind of Man reforms lives ruined by sin, and brings mankind to a better state of being? Only a God-man.

If there was nothing in X's life which might justify slanderers calling Him a deceiver, was there anything in what He taught that would do so?

Not if it's telling people to treat others as they wish to be treated.

* Nor if it's teaching that we should love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us.

* Nor if it's declaring the Good News that every man/woman can be saved by God's grace & live forever w/ Him in heaven, simply by believing in X as his/her Savior.

* **Malicious Indifference** (a 3rd manifestation of man's hatred of X, in addition to malicious hatred & malicious slander)

[Verse 13]=> "*Yet no one was speaking openly of Him for fear of the Jews [the Jewish leaders].*"

Until the Sanhedrin pronounced its official verdict about Jesus, most Jews were unwilling to take a public stand on His being the Messiah, or even on His good character.

Even those saying Jesus was a good man were quietly muttering it.

They wanted to wait until it was clear which direction the political winds were going to blow, before they said much about Him openly.

Each of them knew that if his own conclusion conflicted w/
that of the religious leaders, he would prob. be
excommunicated from the synagogue.

That would effectively ban him from Jewish life/society.

Religious intimidation played a key role in what many Jews
believed, making their beliefs merely religious
preferences.

When fear of what the authorities would say prevented the people
in verse 13 from stating publicly that Jesus was not only a
good man, but God's Son and their own Savior, it simply
proved that they were not Jesus' disciples.

Jesus' true disciples were exceptional, in that their faith in Him
was strong enough to overcome religious intimidation.

Knowing that not being "*with*" X was the equivalent of
being "*against*" Him, they had made up their minds
what they believed, & were prepared to remain
faithful to their Lord in spite of the risks.

I.e., Jesus had methodically turned their religious
preferences into deep, hardcore convictions.

**When it comes down to it, faith that is merely a preference
(not a conviction), is actually useless/unsaving faith.**

Jesus told us all, as His followers=> "*What I tell you in the
darkness, speak in the light; and what you hear
whispered in your ear, proclaim upon the housetops*
[i.e., be very public about your faith in Me]. / *Do not*

fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Mt 10:27-28).

If a person’s faith does not reach the level of a conviction, he hasn’t really entrusted his life/soul into Jesus’ hands.

He hasn’t truly believed in Jesus, which means he is still operating in the power of his old/depraved self, the inheritance of his sinful nature.

Whether/not he realizes it, he hates God because of that nature, & lives in constant rebellion against God.

As Paul says in Romans 3=>

- * He is not righteous
- * He does not understand spiritual truth
- * He does not seek for God
- * His throat is an open grave, breathing out the stench of death (3:10, 11, 13).

His indifference is really just a self-protective cover for his malice toward God, which protects him from having to face it.

Unwillingness to stand for X (as the Apostles did), & not giving in to intimidation (as the mutterers at the feast did), are signs of spiritual indifference.

When a person has no real convictions about Jesus, he will allow intimidation to change his beliefs, because they’re really just mild religious preferences at best.

He may even have some positive feelings about Jesus, but the pressure of intimidation will prove him to be an indifferent scatterer, rather than a true gatherer w/ X. This is why Jesus so fervently asked His disciples on a couple of occasions=> *“Who do you say that I am?”* (Mt 16:15), & compelled them to think carefully about their answers. He knew how important it was that their hearts/minds form the steadfast conviction that He was the X, the Son of God, come to earth to die for their sins; That when X’s enemies eventually killed Him, they would actually be trying to kill God, committing deicide—a malicious act of murder against God Himself (the worst imaginable sin). Once that was straight in the disciples’ minds, their faith would be totally resistant/impervious to intimidation, by the religious authorities.

Every one of us here can make direct application of these truths to our own hearts/souls.

Suppose you say, “I’m not aware of any hatred/opposition in my heart towards Jesus X, but neither can I say I love Him.” Then I must assume you are indifferent towards Him, and your indifference is really just veiled hatred. I have to suppose, that if you could really be honest w/ yourself, you’d discover that deep down in your heart there is hostility toward X, which lies hidden there.

There are only 2 possible responses to Jesus—hatred/love—and indifference certainly isn't love.

- * It's a means of whitewashing and wishing away unpleasant/unwanted feelings, so we don't have to face their implications/consequences.
- * It is ignoring the hatred in our hearts, by masking it, so we ourselves won't notice it, or feel alarmed by it.
- * It is an avoidance technique, which Jesus Himself will someday brush aside, exposing the true condition of our hearts, as we stand before Him in judgment.

If I've just described you, let me challenge you to ask yourself honestly, Why do I hate Jesus X?

What has He done to me, that I should hate Him?

Has He ever hurt me?

If you are able, by the power of the H.S., to plunge that deeply into the depths of your own soul, you'll prob. come away confused, unable to answer your own question, "Why would I hate X, like this?"

You will realize that Jesus has never done anything at all to hurt you, only things to bless you, out of His love for you.

So where does this malice/resistance/resentment come from?

Ans: From the fact that He is perfectly good, you are not, and His perfection is the standard against which God will someday judge you, & determine your eternal destiny.

If somehow that realization can cause you to come out from behind your indifference & honestly face your hatred of X—good!

Maybe now, by the power of the H.S., you'll be in a position to weep over it, and repent of it.

Then you can come to X, asking His forgiveness, and begin to love Him as you should.

Suppose, on the other hand, that you are truly a born-again Xn.

Brother/Sister, you have great reason to love Jesus X.

Before He invaded your heart, cleansed/forgave your sin, you had a malicious hatred for Him, that would have forever destroyed your soul in the misery of hell.

But now He has, by His H.S., drawn you in love, to Himself.

Praise God for His grace/goodness, in your life.

However a Xn who no longer hates X, but has come to love Him, can become angry w/ Jesus, over circumstances in his life, engaging in the spiritual equivalent of a temper tantrum.

I can tell you from personal experience, a believer like that
will have no peace until he humbles his heart, admits
he's in sin, repents of it, & asks X's forgiveness of it.
But when he prays as David did, the peace of God will rain down
on him like a refreshing summer shower.

David prayed=>

*“Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast
spirit within me.... // Restore to me the joy o Your
salvation, and sustain me with a willing spirit”
(Psa 51:10).*

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1. It isn't surprising that the devil is Christ's implacable enemy; but it does surprise us to read in Scripture how fervently [8 man] hates our Lord.

I Jn 3:8; Jn 8:58; Mt 11:19; 9:2; 12:30; Lk 9:23-24

2. There was nothing in Jesus' person that should cause anyone to [10 hate] Him.

Jn 8:11

3. People might have hated Jesus if He had been a hypocrite; but He was so sincere and consistent in the way He lived that [6 no] one could have shown Him to be hypocritical.

In today's text we will find three ways in which men's hatred of Jesus manifested (and still manifests) itself...

*** Malicious Hatred**

[John 7:10-11]

4. Jesus went up to Jerusalem secretly to avoid the Jewish leaders' [20 hostility] towards Him.

5. There were undoubtedly scribes, Pharisees, and religious leaders watching as the Galilean caravan arrived in Jerusalem, hoping to catch and capture Jesus as He [16 entered] the city.

Jn 5:18; 7:25, 14

6. Did the religious leaders have reason for their malice and hatred towards Jesus? Absolutely not! They had every reason to sit at His feet and learn the answers to many of [12 God's] mysteries.

*** Malicious Slander**

[Verse 12]

7. Some of these Jews slandered Jesus outright, claiming that He was a [18 deceiver] who led the Jewish people astray.

8. Others at the feast expressed the view that Jesus was a good man; that was true as [8 far] as it went.

9. Only a Man who is [8 God] in human flesh could ever do such wonderful things for His fellow men.

* **Malicious Indifference**

[Verse 13]

10. Jesus' true disciples were exceptional in that their faith in Him was strong enough to [20 overcome] religious intimidation.

Mt 10:27-28

11. Unwillingness to stand for Christ and not give in to intimidation is a sign of spiritual [26 indifference].

Mt 16:15

12. There are only two possible responses to Jesus—hatred and love, and indifference certainly [12 isn't] love.

13. Brother or Sister, you have great reason to love Jesus Christ; He has given you a love-relationship with Him that you will take with you to heaven where you will see Him face to face and [10 love] Him forever.

13. A Christian who no longer hates Christ, but has come to love Him, can still become angry with Jesus over circumstances in his life; a believer like that will have no peace until he humbles his heart, admits he is in sin, repents of it, and asks Christ's [24 forgiveness] of it.

Psa 51:10, 12