

4. Jesus' departure and return in the Spirit was going to result in a new relationship of mutual indwelling with His disciples. He wasn't returning in some ethereal, mystical way, but so as to perpetuate His own life and ministration in and through them. They were going to carry forward His work in the world – the work for which His Father sent Him – as branches in the vine. Their fruit would be His fruitfulness in them; for that reason, their work would amount to the Father being glorified in the Son (14:12-14).

This fruitfulness had its premise in their union with Jesus in the Spirit, but it also depended upon them abiding in Him (15:4-8). Whatever fruit they might bear would only be *His* to the extent that they lived in conformity to His life and mind. Being connected to the vine isn't enough; branches can only bear the vine's fruit when they draw upon the vine's vital life forces. Thus the fruit that appears on such branches is acknowledged and received as the vine's produce, not their own.

- a. So it would be with the disciples' fruit-bearing: Jesus was going to yield the produce of His own fruitfulness through them, so that their words and works would be *His* just as His words and works had been His *Father's*. The fruit testifies of the vine and the inspectors and harvesters receive it as such. So the world was going to receive the disciples' "fruit" as their Lord's; men would hear in their words and observe in their works the words and works of Jesus Himself. And abiding in Him and bearing His fruit, the disciples were going to receive the same response as He had (15:18-20).

Specifically, Jesus told them to expect the world's hatred: "*If the world hates you – and it does (and will), remember that it has hated Me before you.*" He was going to join them to His own resurrection life by His Spirit. And sharing His true humanity as the Last Adam, they would no longer be sons of the first Adam. In this sense Jesus was extracting them from the world defined and ordered by fallen, Adamic mankind ("If you were of the world, *but you're not...*"). Participating in Jesus' life was going to render them aliens in the world such that it would no longer recognize them as its own. Like a lioness that pushes away or even kills a cub she doesn't recognize as hers, the world's once loving embrace was going to turn to loathing and rejection (15:19).

Jesus was going to transform His own by conforming them to Himself. It wasn't merely that the world would no longer recognize them as it had; it was going to see *Him* in them. His return in the Spirit would result in them sharing His image and likeness (as servants are the extension of their master) and so also men's response to Him. Those who persecuted their Lord were going to persecute them, and those who embraced Him and His word would embrace them and their proclamation of His gospel and kingdom (cf. 1 John 4:4-6).

- b. Jesus wanted His apostles (and all subsequent disciples) to understand that men would be responding to Him when they responded to them; whether rejection or embrace, persecution or discipleship, the response would come "for His name's sake," even as His disciples are branches in Him appointed to bear His fruit.

Though this dynamic is universally true, Jesus was particularly concerned with what lay ahead for His apostles in terms of *Israel's* response to them (15:22-25). His reference to those who “don’t know the One who sent Me” suggests this, but His subsequent statements show clearly that He had His Jewish countrymen in mind (ref. esp. verse 25). For they were the ones who’d heard His words and witnessed His works and then refused Him. Those words and works demonstrated to the house of Israel that Jesus was the promised Messiah, sent by Yahweh to redeem them and bring their exile to an end. But, rather than finding deliverance and restoration in Him, most only heightened their guilt and condemnation. It is in this sense that Jesus’ words and works caused them to “have sin” (vv. 22, 24). And committing this sin of unbelief by rejecting their Messiah, they exposed the delusion of their confidence before God: They believed that refusing Jesus was an act of zealous devotion to Yahweh, but it actually proved that they neither loved nor knew Him. By hating Jesus they were hating the One who sent Him – the One whose promises He’d come to fulfill on behalf of Israel and the world.

And this hatred wasn’t going to end with Jesus’ death; it was merely going to shift to His disciples. Most in Israel – certainly the religious establishment – were committed to the Judaism and messianic vision familiar to them and so perceived Jesus to be a false messiah. More than an irritating distraction, He was a threat to the status quo and eliminating Him meant that the nation could return to its business of worship and ministration. No doubt the Jews repaired the torn veil in the temple and recommenced the temple rituals until God brought it all to a complete end in 70 A.D. But killing Jesus didn’t end either the distraction or the threat; His disciples simply picked up where He left off. His words continued in their mouths – amplified by their insistence that the things He’d declared had now been fulfilled – and their hands wrought His works of power and renewal. Indeed, it was as if Jesus still remained alive. The vine was bearing its fruit in its branches and the ire formerly directed toward it was now coming against them.

- c. News of Jesus’ resurrection and subsequent appearances didn’t reverse Israel’s hatred; quite the opposite, the activities of His Spirit-filled disciples only intensified it. The rulers and people sought Jesus’ death in order to eradicate His impact in Israel, but that hadn’t happened. It soon became clear that Jesus would not be completely eliminated until all of His followers were silenced, whether through threats, imprisonment or death. And this is precisely what the authorities and zealous Jews set out to do (ref. Acts 3:1-4:31, 5:12-42, 6:8-8:4, 9:1-2).

This hatred and rejection of Jesus was conscious and willful (5:39-40, 10:22-39; cf. Matthew 21:23-44), but it was also a crucial point of fulfillment (15:25). Israel’s sin was entirely its own, and yet it was scripted into God’s purposes from the very beginning. In making this point, Jesus alluded to two psalms (35 and 69) which share a couple of important features. First, both are ascribed to David; secondly, the statement Jesus cited highlights the same central theme in both psalms, namely David’s appeal to Yahweh for justice in view of the unfounded and unrighteous hatred and persecution he was enduring from his countrymen.

Jesus was drawing on David's plight, but not merely as an example of His own. He was connecting Himself with David in terms of *prophetic fulfillment*. He understood David's prophetic role as Yahweh's prototypical king – the royal seed of Judah and man after Yahweh's own heart through whom He established the kingdom promised to Abraham (cf. Genesis 15:18, 17:1-7, 22:15-17 with 2 Samuel 8:1-15 and 1 Kings 4:20-21). David was the preeminent typological precursor of Israel's coming messianic deliverer-king; indeed God's covenant with David specified that this individual would be his royal descendent (2 Samuel 7; cf. Matthew 1:1). Thus the title, "Son of David," assigned to Jesus by many in Israel who believed Him to be the Messiah (Matthew 9:27-29, 12:15-23, 20:30-31; Luke 18:35-43); so also Jesus' own self-affirmation (Matthew 22:41-46).

God had established David's kingdom – the kingdom He covenanted to Abraham and reaffirmed at Sinai and in His covenant with David – through his suffering in hatred, rejection and persecution. No sooner did Samuel anoint David as Israel's true king than he was driven away to endure years of humiliation and unjust treatment before finally taking the throne of the theocratic kingdom (1 Samuel 16-31). Yahweh established this pattern for David, not primarily because it served his personal development and preparation for ruling His kingdom, but because of David's typological role in the salvation history. He intended David's experience as His elect, anointed king to presage and portray the messianic king to come from him; Messiah, the regal Son of David, would also take Yahweh's throne through unjust suffering; He, too, was to be "hated without cause."

Jesus' citation, then, connected Him with David as the Lord's prototypical son-king, but in a particular sense: Like David, the messianic king was to be exalted to Yahweh's throne through rejection and persecution. Thus Israel's response to Jesus was prophetically necessary. Yes, it was willful and uncoerced, but it was also a crucial component of His messianic credential; without it, the Law ("torah" in the broadest sense of referring to the Scriptures) could not be fulfilled.

- d. Jesus' announcement of His impending death horrified the apostles; they saw in it the end of His messianic mission and their hope of the kingdom. These circumstances were utterly foreign to their understanding of the Messiah and his role in Yahweh's coming kingdom. But contrary to what they imagined, this outcome precisely fulfilled the divine plan as revealed in the Scriptures. Rejection, suffering and death were not a tragedy, but the glory of the Father and Son, being the very means by which everything promised was to be fulfilled (ref. 12:23-32, 13:31-33; cf. also Luke 24:13-27, 44-48). The apostles needed this new insight and understanding if they were to fulfill their obligation of fruit-bearing in testimony to Israel and the world. Jesus gave them a glimpse into it by connecting Himself with David in this way, but full illumination awaited the coming of the Spirit. Sent from the Father at the dispatch of the enthroned Son, the "Spirit of truth" would lead the apostles (and all disciples) into the truth as it is in Jesus. Thus He'd equip them to fulfill their role as branches in Him, bearing His fruit by testifying in truth and power to the triumphant King and His kingdom (15:26-27).