

1 John 3:13 Commentary

PREVIOUS

NEXT

1 John 3:13 **Do not be surprised**, brethren, if the world hates you:

Greek: kai me thaumazete (2PPAM) adelphoi ei misei (3SPA) humas o kosmos

NET - Therefore do not be surprised, brothers and sisters, if the world hates you.

Wuest - Stop marveling, brethren, if, as is the case, the world hates you.

- **Do not be surprised** - Ec 5:8 John 3:7 Ac 3:12 Rev 17:7
- **if:** Mt 10:22 Mt 24:9 Mk 13:13 Lu 6:22, Lk 21:17 John 7:7 Jn 15:18,19 Jn 16:2,33 John 17:14 Ro 8:7 2 Ti 3:12 Jas 4:4
- 1 John Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

EVIDENCE OF ETERNAL LIFE: HATRED BY THE WORLD

The **KJV** says "**marvel not**" to which **Jamieson** quips "The marvel would be if the world loved you!"

Do not be surprised (Do not marvel; "cease wondering" - Robertson) (2296)(**thaumazo** from **thauma** [from **thaomai** = to wonder] = wonder, admiration) means to wonder, marvel, be struck with admiration or astonishment. John used this same expression in John 3:7 ("Do not be amazed that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'") and in John 5:28 ("Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs shall hear His voice.")

John MacArthur - An ancient proverb states that you can judge a man's character by who his enemies are. That is also true in the spiritual realm. The world loves its own, but since Christ chose believers out of the world, the world hates them (John 15:19). (Strength for Today)

The verb **thaumazo** is in the **present imperative with a negative** which can mean stop being surprised and/or don't let this begin ("do not begin to wonder" - A T Robertson). Jesus warned His disciples (one of those "promises" we would rather forfeit!) "you **will be hated** by all on account of My Name, but it is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved (Why this latter clause? Because the world's hatred will cause some to fall away because "they have no firm root in themselves, but are only temporary; then, when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately they fall away."- Mk 4:17)." (Mt 10:22) As Jesus explained "If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before [it hated] you." (John 15:18) Indeed, as Paul promised "timid" Timothy (2 Ti 1:7-note) "all (**How many?**) who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus **will be persecuted** (another "promise" we would rather pass on!)." (2 Ti 3:12-note; cp Php 1:29-note)

Why does John warn believers **not** to be **surprised** at the world's hatred? What event from Genesis has he just described? Is not **Cain** a representative of the fallen, God hating world system and Abel the perfect representative of a child of God? So just as Cain murdered Abel, the world hates (~murders) Christ followers. Thus we should not be surprised at their intractable hatred! **Have you ever shared the Gospel with someone who was smiling until they heard what you were saying, only to have the smile turn to a sneer or a scornful look?** If you have shared the Gospel, then you know the answer! If you haven't had this experience, then beloved, I beg you to share the Gospel! Not to invoke their hatred but to throw them a "life preserver" lest they enter into a tormented, Christ-less eternity!

John Piper explains Cain's hatred was a picture of the world's hatred of believers - The devil inspired **jealousy** within his heart; his jealousy gave rise to **hatred**; and his hatred issued forth in **murder**. **And John presents Cain to us as the model of the world**. The "**world**," that is, humanity aligned in rebellion against God, is Cain's posterity and it will continue to respond to righteousness in the same way he did. Therefore, says John in 1 Jn 3:13, "**Do not wonder that the world hates you**" We should not be surprised if the world hates us as Christians. After all, the same devil who inspired Cain to hate and ultimately murder Abel has the world in his grip (1Jn 5:19, Jn 8:44). ([Love: A Matter of Life and Death](#))

Henry Mahan - Therefore, do not be amazed and surprised if the world (especially the religious world, as most men are) detest you and persecute you. Your faith in Christ condemns their self-righteousness and exposes their false hope! How often we have heard this claim: 'If what you preach (meaning sovereign grace in Christ) is true, then I'm not saved!' Yes, if what Abel believed and did is true and the only way to God, then Cain came the wrong way and was rejected. This was the cause of his hatred. ([1 John 3 Commentary](#))

Martyn Lloyd-Jones observes that another "proof that we are Christians is that the world hates us... Neither does the world hate us because we are good. Let us be quite clear about that. The world does not hate good people; the world only hates Christian people; that is the subtle, vital distinction. If you are just a good person, the world, far from hating you, will admire you; it will cheer you. And what is true of the individual is true of the whole Church. The psychological explanation is quite simple. The world likes good people because it feels that they are a compliment to itself. So the world applauds them. But the world, we are told, hates Christians, not because they are hateful, not because they are good, not because they do good, but specifically because they are Christians, because they are of God, because they have Christ within them." (Children of God) **This begs the question - have you ever experienced the world's hatred? If not, why not?**

Matthew Henry - The great serpent himself reigns as the god of this world. Wonder not then that the serpentine world hates and hisses at you who belong to that seed of the woman that is to bruise the serpent's head'. Does the world hate you? I don't mean everybody in the world, but is there a general principle, because of the life that you live and the stand that you take as one of Christ's children, it hates you - that's a sign that you've got God's life in you! But a sure sign that you haven't is that you're going the whole way of the world, and they think you're it's best friend (cp James 4:4, 1 Jn 2:15-17+).

Guzik - We shouldn't be **surprised** when the **world hates** us; but we should be surprised when there is hatred among the body of Christ. (Ed: **That never happens to you does it, beloved?**) ([1 John 3 Commentary](#))

David Smith - It is natural that the world (cf 1 Jn 2:15+, 1 Jn 3:1+) should hate those whose lives contradict its maxims and condemn its practices. Nevertheless our business is not to be hated by the world, but to commend Jesus to it and win it. We must not impute to the world's hostility to goodness the consequences of our own unamiability or tactlessness. ([Expositor's Greek Testament](#))

Jamieson - The world feels its bad works tacitly reprov'd by your good works.

Hawley - Hatred from the outside world should serve to increase the believers' love for one another... The world hates us because it can see the difference between our godly lives and its own evil... Any **professing** Christian who is **warmly embraced by the world** at large should reexamine the reality of his claim to discipleship (1 Jn 2:15-17; 3:1; 4:5-6; 2 Ti 3:10-12; Jas 4:4). (Emphasis added)

Vine - Since the spirit of Cain still characterizes his moral descendants, believers are not to be surprised if the hatred that was exhibited in the murder of Abel is still manifested.

Brethren ("Brothers" - ESV; "Brothers and sisters" - NET, "My brothers" - NIV, RSV) - This is John's only use of the term **brethren** (adelphoi) to directly address his readers. More often he uses the term '**little children**' (1 Jn 2:1, 12, 28, 3:7, 3:18, 4:4, 5:21).

Vine adds that "the apostle now adopts a new mode of address. The title suggests the family relationship, of which love is to be the chief characteristic (see 1 Jn 3:11). This title occurs nowhere else in the epistle."

Brothers (80)(**adelphos** from **a** = denotes unity + **delphus** = a womb) is literally those from the same womb and means brother or near kinsman. **Adelphós** generally denotes a fellowship of life based on identity of origin and of course in this passage describes members of the same family with God as their father (cf Jn 1:12+) and thus brothers and sisters in Christ. (Ro 8:29).

Vine on the significance of **if** in this verse - The "**if**" does not introduce a suggestion as to what might possibly be the case, but implies the existence of the hatred as a fact.

If the world hates you (people like Cain) - There is nothing "*iffy*" about it - the world will hate us! In 1 Jn 3:1 John had explained to his readers that "the **world (kosmos)** does not know (**ginosko**) us, because it did not know (**ginosko**) Him." Now John describes the world's hatred which is a certainty for us as believers for we are aliens and strangers and belong to another world, another King, another Kingdom. In His great prayer in John 17 Jesus said "I have given them (His disciples) Thy word; and **the world (kosmos) has hated them**, because (**term of explanation**) they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." (Jn 17:14) Note how "Thy word" is juxtaposed to "the world has hated them?" **Why does the world hate us?** Because we have received and believed God's Word (Jn 17:8)!

John alludes to this contrast between believers and the world in chapter 4 writing...

They (context - 1Jn 4:1-4) are from the **world**; therefore they speak [as] from the **world**, and the **world** listens to them. We are from God; he who knows God listens to us; he who is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error. (1 Jn 4:5-6)

And not only do the unregenerate of this world hate us, they do not even know us and John explains why they do not know us!

See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we

are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. (1 Jn 3:1+)

World (2889)(**kosmos**) describes the godless world system and its evil, inveterate, incorrigible, intractable, intransigent, irrevocable enmity toward God and every one of His children. As **John Stott** says "the world is Cain's posterity, so we are not to be surprised if the world hates us." (**Ref**) **Trench** has a famous definition of the anti-God world system as "All that floating mass of thoughts, opinions, maxims, speculations, hopes, impulses, aims, aspirations, at any time current in the world, which it may be impossible to seize and accurately define, but which constitutes a most real and effective power, being the moral, or immoral atmosphere which at every moment of our lives we inhale, again inevitably to exhale."

W E Vine observes that this is the last contrast in this section which has already contrasted "God and the Evil One, righteousness and unrighteousness, the children of God and the children of the devil, and now the last contrast is continued in the mention of the hatred of the world to God's children. Since the spirit of Cain still characterizes his moral descendants, believers are not to be surprised if the hatred that was exhibited in the murder of Abel is still manifested. The "if" does not introduce a suggestion as to what might possibly be the case, but implies the existence of the hatred as a fact. Cp. the Lord's own words in John 15:18 and Jn 17:14. (Collected Writings)

Hates (3404)(**miseo**) means to have a strong dislike, a deep enmity (implying hostility and even persecution - cp Mt 5:43-44**note**). Hates is in the **present tense** which indicates that the godless world's attitude toward followers of Jesus is continual. This truth is difficult to accept for most of us, as we are continually in a struggle with our old flesh which urges us to please men so we will be accepted by them (cf James 4:4+)! Is this not another reason believers should be strongly cautioned against entering the marriage covenant with unbelievers? (cf 2 Cor 6:15)

Harris comments that "The secessionist opponents (**Ed**: cp 1 Jn 2:19-**note**), who have departed from the community (OF BELIEVERS) to which the author is writing and have "gone out into the world" (1 Jn 4:1), are now showing hatred for their former associates (cf. 1 Jn 3:17) by refusing to assist them materially, a violation of the commandment to love one another." (**Ref**)

Jesus warned His disciples and so John one of His disciples is passing on the warning...

"If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you.(John 15:18-19)

Peter issued a similar warning to the brethren who reside as aliens and strangers (1Pe 1:1, 2:11) in the world declaring

"Beloved, **do not be surprised** (**present imperative with a negative**) at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you, but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing; so that also at the revelation of His glory, you may rejoice with exultation." (1 Pe 4:12-13+)

F F Bruce - The **world**, orientated against God, is, as John has indicated already (1 John 2:15-17+), inherently inimical to the cause of God. Manifestations of its hostility, therefore, should not take the children of God by surprise. The warfare between the two sides continues, although the decisive victory has been won; this gives the children of God confidence that they can overcome the **world** by faith in Him who has already overcome it (1 John 4:4, 5:4-5.; cf. John 16. 33)."

William Barclay - In ancient Athens, the noble Aristides was unjustly banished; and, when one member of the jury was asked how he could have cast his vote against such a man, his answer was that he was tired of hearing Aristides called 'the Just'. The hatred of the world for Christians is a phenomenon that is always with us, and it is due to the fact that in Christians people with worldly values see themselves condemned; they see in Christians what they are not and what deep down they know they ought to be; and, because they will not change, they seek to eliminate those who remind them of the lost goodness. ([1 John 3 Commentary - Daily Study Bible](#))

Bridges on the **moral world** - The moral world includes people indifferent or hostile to God, the God-hostile environment generally, and in the widest sense, corruption and evil summed up under the general term "the world." If the people of the world can be spoken of as "the world" in a neutral sense, "the world" can also refer to the subclass of indifferent and hostile people who reject God and his ways. Before the flood nearly all the people of the world became corrupt (Genesis 6:11). In Jesus' time the world hated him (John 7:7) and will hate his followers (John 15:18-19). The world, ungodly people, cannot receive the things of God (John 14:17,22; 16:8-9 ; cf. 1 John 3:1) and is not even worthy of the people of faith who live among them (Hebrews 11:38). In the New Testament the world also appears as a hostile environment. Because of the hatred of the world's people, the Son asks the Father to protect his followers rather than remove them from their alien surroundings (John 17:14-16). Paul expresses his indifference to the world by saying he "is crucified" as far as the world is concerned (Galatians 6:14). Seven times in 1Corinthians 1-3 Paul refers to the world's ignorance of God and its powerlessness to find him without the cross of Christ. Because of the world's hostility to God, it

is full of corruption (2 Peter 1:4) and stands as a symbol of corruption. One cannot be friendly with the evil world and love God at the same time (James 4:4; 1 John 2:15-17+). Believers by their faith must "overcome the world" (1 John 5:4-5), killing whatever belongs to their "earthly nature" (Colossians 3:5) and denying "worldly passions" (Titus 2:12). ([World](#))

Related Resources:

- [What does it mean that we are not to love the world?](#)
- [How can believers be in the world, but not of the world?](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible [World](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the NT [World](#) [World](#)
- [What is Christianophobia?](#)