

What Did Jesus Mean That His Followers Are No Part of This World?

When Jesus prayed to the Father just before His passion, He declared of His followers, “They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world” (John 17:14–16). In that profound statement, He affirmed that while His disciples live in this age, their ultimate citizenship, allegiance, and values belong to the Kingdom of God. They are called to bear witness to the light, distinct from the darkness of worldly systems.

The New Testament writers reinforce this separation. James bluntly warns, “Friendship with the world is hostility toward God” (James 4:4). John echoes, “Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him” (1 John 2:15–17). These stern words call believers to examine where their loyalties lie—whether with passing culture or the eternal King.

Paul exhorts Christians, “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is—what is good and acceptable and perfect” (Romans 12:2). Transformation comes not from political power or worldly acclaim, but through the inward work of the Spirit, setting believers apart for holy conduct.

God’s call to separation extends even to the bearing of arms. Christians must not serve in military roles that require taking life. If a person is already in the military when they come to know Christ, they should request reassignment to support positions that do not require carrying a sword against another human being. Jesus Himself commanded, “Put your sword back into its place; for all who take up the sword will perish by the sword” (Matthew 26:52), and the law declares, “You shall not murder” (Exodus 20:13). Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God” (Matthew 5:9). When one becomes a Christian, they are no longer obligated to serve man if that service requires disobedience to God.

God’s call to separation applies likewise to how we worship and celebrate. Holidays with pagan origins defile pure devotion and cannot be embraced by God’s people. As Paul admonishes, “Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry” (1 Corinthians 10:14), and again, “Come out from among them and be separate” (2 Corinthians 6:17). He warns, “Purge out the old leaven” (1 Corinthians 5:7). Such separation honors Yahweh and preserves the purity of worship.

We await the day when Jesus will return and establish His righteous rule. As the Spirit declares, “He will rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are broken to pieces, even as I myself have received authority from My Father” (Revelation 2:27). Until that day, we live as exiles in this world, shining as lights in the darkness.

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Peter 1:3). To Him be glory forever and ever. Amen.

Reference

John 17:14–16 - “I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.”

James 4:4 - “You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.”

1 John 2:15–17 - “Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world passes away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.”

Romans 12:2 - “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is—what is good and acceptable and perfect.”

Matthew 26:52 - “Then Jesus said to him, ‘Put your sword back into its place; for all who take up the sword will perish by the sword.’”

Exodus 20:13 - “You shall not murder.”

Matthew 5:9 - “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.”

1 Corinthians 10:14 - “Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry.”

2 Corinthians 6:17 - “Therefore come out from their midst and be separate, says the Lord. And do not touch what is unclean; and I will welcome you.”

1 Corinthians 5:7 - “Purge out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, just as you are in fact unleavened. For Christ, our Passover, has already been sacrificed.”

Revelation 2:27 - “And he will rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are broken to pieces, even as I myself have received authority from My Father.”

1 Peter 1:3 - “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”