**The World Versus God**

The hostility endured by the Jews in the decades after the Babylonian exile goes beyond mere racial prejudice. The opposition clearly has a religious basis, so that it is not a matter of some pagans hating some Jews. It is the world versus God. That is a common theme in the Bible, but it is not a reason to become discouraged. Jesus said, *In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world* (John 16:33)*.*

**1. The World Hates God’s *Restrictions***

Psalm 2:1-3. The world hates –

A. God’s moral *demands*

John 3:18-21, 36

B. God’s final *judgment*

C. God’s exclusive *worship*

Isaiah 45:5-7

D. God’s ultimate *claims*

Matthew 10:34-39

E. God’s individual *election*

**2. The World Pressures God’s *People***

“Don’t let the world around you squeeze you into its own mold” (Romans 12:2, JB Philips’ paraphrase) –

A. By mockery & *shame*

Romans 10:11; 1 John 2:28

B. By the lure of the *inner circle*

Proverbs 1:10; 13:20; James 4:4

C. By threat of *harm*

Matthew 10:28; Revelation 2:10

D. By offering a *false good*

Psalm 73:25-28

**For additional study or family discussion**

1. Did the Lord speak to you today about Himself and His ways? Did He show you a duty you need to perform or a promise you need to claim? What was either encouraging or challenging in the sermon?

2. Why is the opposition of the world not a cause for discouragement or despair?

* What finally happened when the pagans opposed the building of the temple and building of the wall of Jerusalem? What happened when Haman tried to kill all the Jews?
* John 16:33
* 1 John 4:4

3. Romans 8:14-25. What is ahead for you, even if you must pass through hard times to get there?

4. John 2:15-17. What does John mean by the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the boastful pride of life? How does the world use these to try to entice God’s children away from obedience to Him.

The best explanation I have ever read of the pressure of the world is an essay by C. S. Lewis, “The Inner Ring,” available in *Screwtape Proposes a Toast and Other Pieces.* Perhaps the best fictional account of giving in to the pressure to belong is found in the third book of his space trilogy (be sure to read the other two as well), *That Hideous Strength.*