

# THE PERSECUTION OF BOB DYLAN

Copyright 1994-2026 Bill's Bible Basics

Published On: May 6, 2026

Last Updated: May 6, 2026

Facebook Review Regarding Bob Dylan, Dylan's Association With Tom Petty And The Heartbreakers, Dylan's Time With Traveling Wilburys, Facts Intentionally Omitted?, Dylan Comes To Jesus, Ties To Vineyard Christian Fellowship, He Records Three Gospel Albums Beginning With "Slow Train Coming", Dylan Is Shunned By Secular Recording Industry, Bible Verses On Persecution, Dylan Returns To Singing The Kind Of Songs That 1st Made Him Famous, Rock and Roll Hall Of Fame Induction, Dylan Is Awarded A Nobel Prize In Literature, Dylan Retreats From Marketing Himself As A Born-Again Christian, Dylan Still Maintains Some Interest In Christian Theology, Dylan Rejects Organized Religion, A Return To His Jewish Roots Yet Dylan Does Not Describe Himself As A Messianic Jew, Dylan Remains Elusive And Prefers To Keep His Spiritual Life Private, Boldly Preach The Christian Gospel, Do Not Be Ashamed Of Your Faith, Be Careful Regarding Judging The Salvation Status Of Others, Secular World Explains Away Bob Dylan's 1970s Christian Conversion And Christian Music, Listen To Full "Slow Train Coming" Album On YouTube, Now You Know The Truth, Pray That Bob Dylan's Fire For The Lord Will Be Publicly Restored And He Will Give A Final Global Witness Of His Faith As He Tours, My Closing Remarks, BBB Suggested Reading List

Recently, I found myself reading an interesting commentary on the "Tom Petty Forever Fans" page which appeared in my Facebook news feed. It concerned how Tom Petty -- of Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers fame -- and Bob Dylan -- there is no need for an introduction here -- met during the late 1970s, how they became rather close friends, and how they eventually even toured together for a few years during the mid-1980s. The first tour occurred in 1986 and was called the "True Confessions" tour. It began in New Zealand and toured Australia, Japan, and North America. The second tour occurred the following year in 1987 and was given the name the "Temples in Flames" tour, which toured Europe.

The Facebook commentary also described the events which resulted in the impromptu and spontaneous formation of the

short-lived band "The Traveling Wilburys" during the late 1980s. The band included some big name rock stars such as George Harrison, Jeff Lynne, Roy Orbison, Tom Petty, and of course, Bob Dylan himself. At that particular time in my life, I was a disc jockey at an adult contemporary radio station here on Guam, and I recall how much I enjoyed the smooth style of the band's music.

While the Facebook commentary was interesting, nevertheless, I have to take issue with the following part, which I feel purposely glosses over a few important facts, and omits a few things which help to explain the lull which occurred in Dylan's musical career at that point in time:

----- Begin Quote -----

"But the 1980s had been hard on him. The albums were not connecting. The crowds were smaller. The reviews were unkind."

----- End Quote -----

As much detail as the aforementioned Facebook commentary went into, I must question why it purposely seemed to skip over exactly what happened during that period, and why the world -- at least the commercial/professional world of the recording industry -- turned against Dylan. Why were they "unkind" to Bob Dylan? For those of you who may be too young to know or understand that situation, let me inform you of exactly what happened, since the secular world seems to want to bury it. I was obviously already alive at that time, so I do remember what occurred.

The truth of the matter is that during the late 1970s, Bob Dylan -- who was born a Jew -- turned to Jesus Christ in a very real, tangible way. That is, at least until the world -- meaning the money-making, secular recording industry -- got on his case about it. In fact, regardless of what you may think of them, Dylan also joined the Vineyard Christian Fellowship where he did engage in studies with the Vineyard School of Discipleship . So he obviously was dedicated to his new faith. In fact during that period -- 1979 to 1981 -- following his conversion, Dylan released THREE Gospel-related albums, the first of which was "Slow Train Coming", which he released in August of 1979.

"Slow Train Coming" was followed by "Saved" in 1980, as well

as by "Shot of Love" in 1981. Collectively, the three albums are referred to as Dylan's "gospel trilogy" or as his "born again" trilogy. The albums -- particularly the latter two -- even included background Gospel singers. I bought all three of them on cassette tape during the early 1980s to play on my Walkman-styled miniature tape recorder. I used to listen to them whenever I would go out witnessing on the streets and pass out Gospel tracts.

To say the least, from a Christian perspective, "Slow Train Coming" was a very powerful album in which Dylan not only sang about his recently-found Christian faith, but in which he also offered warnings of coming judgment, and exposed the hypocrisy of the world. I absolutely loved it! Tragically, as I said earlier, much of the secular world most certainly did NOT want that new version of Bob Dylan. They wanted the old Bob Zimmerman -- his real name -- who would sing his old popular songs, and who would have NEVER sung about the Lord Jesus Christ so openly and boldly. For example, listen to Dylan's song "I Believe In You".

So personally, I am quite convinced that this was actually the initial source of Dylan's problems during that period of his life. Dylan turned to Jesus Christ, and then he dared to openly and very boldly sing about Him too. But the secular world -- in particular the business world of the recording industry -- was very unforgiving. Thus, they turned against Dylan. Whether or not Dylan personally viewed it this way -- I really don't know one way or the other -- in my view, they really persecuted him, EXACTLY as Jesus warned would happen to anyone who dared to follow Him. Consider the following group of related Bible verses which confirm this point:

"And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved."

Matthew 10:22, KJV

"Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake."

Matthew 24:9, KJV

"And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved."

Mark 13:13, KJV

"And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake."

Luke 21:17, KJV

"The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil."

John 7:7, KJV

"He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal."

John 12:25, KJV

"If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you."

John 15:18-19, KJV

"Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you."

1 John 3:13, KJV

Sadly, to some degree, the world apparently got to Dylan, and at least publicly, he seems to have largely cooled off in his new-found Christian faith, insofar as his published music is concerned. Thus, he eventually slid back into his regular musical format, singing the kinds of songs that had first made him rather famous decades ago. In fact, while he has never received a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame, in 1988 Dylan was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, and he was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in October of 2016 as well.

While Dylan eventually moved away from publicly marketing himself as a "born-again" Christian following the release of his three Gospel albums during the aforementioned three-year period, according to online information, it seems that while he has distanced himself from his public Christian persona, he still has a deep interest in Christian theology, while at the same time, he doesn't seem to embrace organized religion itself. Personally, I can readily relate to that, and I am sure that some of my readers do as well. As an example, in a 1997 interview with Newsweek magazine, Dylan stated "I find the religiosity and philosophy in the music. I don't find it anywhere else . . . I don't adhere to rabbis, preachers, evangelists, all of that"

Yet at the same time, beginning about five years later in 2022 and moving forward to this present time, Dylan has also made a few additional statements which seem to indicate that

he still embraces a private, deeply religious faith, which does include some tenets of Christianity, and which likewise includes a continued, regular interest in the Scriptures, as well as in certain church practices. For example, in a 2022 interview with the Wall Street Journal, Dylan stated, "I'm a religious person. I read the Scriptures a lot, meditate and pray, light candles in church." Dylan has also expressed his personal belief in both the Old and New Testaments, as well as in the topics of salvation, damnation, and the invocation of saints, which is obviously a Roman Catholic practice.

Yet being Bob Dylan, nevertheless, he still remains somewhat of an enigma in a religious sense. The reason why I say this is because while he seems to maintain belief in the Lord, he later returned to his Jewish roots, and he has been seen at some Chabad movement events and synagogues over the years. I thought that perhaps Bob Dylan might possibly view himself as a Messianic Jew being as this has been said of him by others. However, I was not really certain. Thus, I decided to search online in order to determine if I could better pinpoint where Dylan actually stands.

According to Google AI, Dylan has generally remained elusive regarding his personal faith, and as I mentioned earlier, he prefers to define his spirituality through his music, instead of by attaching himself to any particular religious labels, or any particular denomination. Sometimes Dylan describes himself as being a "true believer", or else he will mention finding faith in old songs. I am not sure if he was referring to some of the old Christian hymns, or perhaps to Jewish songs when he said that.

Perhaps the only way to summarize Bob Dylan's current position might be to conclude that while his music and public comments sometimes reflect Christian values and religious themes, yet he still tends to avoid long-term membership in any particular church congregation, and he prefers to walk his own spiritual path instead. In short, Mr. Dylan likes keeping his spiritual life private. Considering his unique position, plus the fact that fundamental doctrinal differences exist between the Jews and Christians -- which can very easily result in conflict -- I can't say that I blame Mr. Dylan for adopting that cautious position in order to maintain his own peace and sanity.

Again, I can understand and agree with most of what Dylan has stated in the few public comments he has made, because I hold the same views regarding organized religion, despite a lot of

church-going Christians who have been very quick to condemn me due to my lack of church attendance. Of course, one rather big and obvious difference I have with Dylan is that I definitely do believe that it is our responsibility to boldly share our Christian faith with others, in whatever form best suits our personal situation. Following are some Bible verses which make this point very clear:

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."  
Matthew 5:16, KJV

"And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes."  
Matthew 7:28-29, KJV

"And they went into Capernaum; and straightway on the sabbath day he entered into the synagogue, and taught. And they were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes."  
Mark 1:21-22, KJV

"But, lo, he speaketh BOLDLY, and they say nothing unto him. Do the rulers know indeed that this is the very Christ?"  
John 7:26, KJV

"For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."  
Hebrews 4:12, KJV

"Now when they saw the BOLDNESS of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus . . . And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all BOLDNESS they may speak thy word, By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus. And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with BOLDNESS."  
Acts 4:13, 29-31, KJV

"Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men."

Acts 5:29, KJV

"But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached BOLDLY at Damascus in the name of Jesus. And he was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem. And he spake BOLDLY in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Grecians: but they went about to slay him."

Acts 9:27-29, KJV

"Long time therefore abode they speaking BOLDLY in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands."

Acts 14:3, KJV

"And he began to speak BOLDLY in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly."

Acts 18:26, KJV

"And he went into the synagogue, and spake BOLDLY for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God."

Acts 19:8, KJV

"Nevertheless, brethren, I have written the more BOLDLY unto you in some sort, as putting you in mind, because of the grace that is given to me of God,"

Romans 15:15, KJV

"And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth BOLDLY, to make known the mystery of the gospel, For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak."

Ephesians 6:19-20, KJV

"According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all BOLDNESS, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death."

Philippians 1:20, KJV

"For his letters, say they, are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible."

2 Corinthians 10:10, KJV

"So that we may BOLDLY say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me."

Hebrews 13:6, KJV

"He was a burning and a shining light: and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light."

John 5:35, KJV

"Quench not the Spirit."

1 Thessalonians 5:19, KJV

But that is not all my friends. The Bible plainly state that if we are ashamed of the Lord, so much so that we even refuse to boldly preach the Gospel of Salvation to others, the Lord himself will not only be ashamed of us as well, but as I also explain in the article entitled "Must We Confess Jesus to Be Saved?", Jesus will even deny knowing us before His very own Father. What a terrible yet avoidable tragedy that would be! Following are some additional Bible verses which verify these very points:

"Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; OF HIM ALSO SHALL THE SON OF MAN BE ASHAMED, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."

Mark 8:38, KJV

"WHOSOEVER THEREFORE SHALL CONFESS ME BEFORE MEN, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, HIM WILL I ALSO DENY BEFORE MY FATHER WHICH IS IN HEAVEN."

Matthew 10:32-33, KJV

"Also I say unto you, WHOSOEVER SHALL CONFESS ME BEFORE MEN, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God: But he that denieth me before men SHALL BE DENIED BEFORE THE ANGELS OF GOD."

Luke 12:8-9, KJV

"That if thou shalt CONFESS WITH THY MOUTH the Lord Jesus, and shalt BELIEVE IN THINE HEART that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and WITH THE MOUTH CONFESSION IS MADE UNTO SALVATION."

Romans 10:9-10, KJV

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."

Romans 1:16, KJV

"For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."

2 Timothy 1:12, KJV

"For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause HE IS NOT ASHAMED TO CALL THEM BRETHREN,"

Hebrews 2:11, KJV

"But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore GOD IS NOT ASHAMED TO BE CALLED THEIR GOD: for he hath prepared for them a city."

Hebrews 11:16, KJV

Whatever Dylan's current position happens to be insofar as his faith in the Lord is concerned, unlike other Christians who can be rather quick to judge and condemn others who do not meet their particular standard regarding what qualifies one to be a Christian, I will not judge where Dylan stands in his personal life and relationship with the Lord, because I simply and honestly do not know with any degree of certainty. Quite frankly, I cannot stand self-righteous Christians who go around saying "This person is saved, while that person is most definitely not save." My friends, that is very dangerous talk, and we would all be wise to have no part in that kind of foolishness. Sadly, it happens quite often on some of the social networks. As I have said before, only God knows for certain what dwells in each person's heart.

Of course, the unbelieving, secular world had to invent some way to explain away those three years -- 1979-1981 -- during which Bob Dylan delved very deeply into Christianity in his music. Not surprisingly, not that long ago, I read a number of online comments which claim that in his usual Dylanesque style, Dylan was simply experimenting during that time, and his so-called "Jesus phase" was just a part of it. In other words, he was not really serious about it, they like to say. It was just one of Dylan's experimental phases, and he soon moved on to something else. That is how they explained it

away.

Personally, I don't buy that line one bit. If you honestly and closely listen to the lyrics of the songs on "Slow Train Coming", you sense that Dylan was being very sincere at the time, and he meant every word that he sang. At least that was my personal impression. Bob Dylan was NOT faking it for the sake of financial profit, or trying to dupe Christians just so they would purchase his albums. The guy was for real. As I mentioned to you earlier, listen to songs such as "I Believe In You." In fact, according to Google AI, you can listen to the entire "Slow Train Coming" album on an official Dylan YouTube channel at the URL below without any fear of facing legal repercussions. It appears to be a legit Dylan channel, and I would assume that YouTube would have taken it down by now if it wasn't:

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLb2l4eWLjmUaVyxpzYAYF4LM5kNYMjDeK>

At any rate, my dear friends, now you know the real truth regarding what actually happened during that brief period of Bob Dylan's life, despite what the world may try to leave out because it is unpopular with some people. To reiterate, in my view, Bob Dylan was pressured and persecuted due to publicly expressing his faith in Jesus Christ. Amongst hardcore Jews, doing so is an unforgivable sin, and many of us know who in large part both owns and controls the entertainment industry, including the very powerful recording industry, don't we?

If there is one final thing I would add regarding Bob Dylan, it is this. As I said, I honestly don't know Dylan's current status with the Lord. However, one thing I do believe is that it would very much please the Lord if Dylan's former Christian boldness was restored unto him. Considering the very powerful position he holds within the music industry, and the influence he has had over generations of music listeners, it would be wonderful if Dylan would once again use his music platform to boldly proclaim his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Believe it or not, but even though Dylan will be eighty-five years old in a few weeks, he is STILL performing, and he is currently on tour for his "Rough and Rowdy Ways" world tour. Wouldn't it be great if he went out with a bang, a Christian bang? What do you think? Then he could knock on Heaven's Door -- as per Dylan's huge July 1973 hit "Knockin' on Heaven's Door" -- and be gladly welcomed into his Father's Kingdom.

So my request as I end this current article is that you will consider praying for the man. Pray that the Lord gives Dylan a nudge, and he shares his Christian faith one more time with his global audience and admirers. Thanks for considering it!

With these thoughts, I will bring this article to a close. It is my hope that you have found it informative, enlightening, and I pray that it has been a blessing in your life as well. If you have an account with Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr or with any other social network, I would really appreciate if you'd take the time to click or tap on the corresponding link that is found on this page. Thanks so much, and may God bless you abundantly!

For additional information and further study, you may want to refer to the list of reading resources below which were either mentioned in this article, or which contain topics which are related to this article. All of these articles are likewise located on the Bill's Bible Basics web server. To read these articles, simply click or tap on any link you see below.

Are You a Burning Ember for the Lord?

Are You Crucified With Christ?

Christian Witnessing: Winning the Sheep and Waging the Warfare!

Civil Disobedience and Christian Persecution

Do You Stand Up for Your Faith?

He Who Fights and Runs Away: Choose Your Battles Wisely

Must We Confess Jesus to Be Saved?

The Battle is Not Yours Alone!

The Lord Will Lift You Up

The Parable of the Sower: Salvation and Service

Written by Bill Kochman

[wordweaver777@gmail.com](mailto:wordweaver777@gmail.com)

<https://www.billkochman.com>