

The Coming Ministry of the Holy Spirit

John 16:1-15

John 16:1-15 - *"These things I have spoken to you, that you should not be made to stumble. ² They will put you out of the synagogues; yes, the time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service. ³ And these things they will do to you because they have not known the Father nor Me. ⁴ But these things I have told you, that when the time comes, you may remember that I told you of them. "And these things I did not say to you at the beginning, because I was with you.*

⁵ "But now I go away to Him who sent Me, and none of you asks Me, 'Where are You going?' ⁶ But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. ⁷ Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. ⁸ And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: ⁹ of sin, because they do not believe in Me; ¹⁰ of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; ¹¹ of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.

¹² "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. ¹³ However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. ¹⁴ He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. ¹⁵ All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you."

Background Notes

John 16 is the part of our Lord's Upper Room Discourse - His Farewell Discourse. In this part of the discourse there is further teaching concerning the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

In verse 1 the Lord said, *"These things I have spoken to you, that you should not be made to stumble."* Those *"things I have spoken to you"* were the teachings given at the end of John 15. The Lord specifically warned that His followers would experience persecution and hatred from the world, because they were not part of this world system. They would be hated because they would no longer be characterized by this world's values and attitudes - by the strong desires for sensual pleasure, gain (or greed) and earthly success (1 John 2).

Suppose the Lord had not told them what to expect? The disciples might have thought that preaching the gospel was going to be easy, and that everyone would welcome the Good News! They might have been disillusioned and stumbled when they found being a Christian isn't easy going, and that they were hated and persecuted for preaching the Kingdom of God. And so the Lord told them (and us) what to expect.

John wrote this Gospel in about 85AD. The persecution mentioned in verse 2 was literally taking place by the time John wrote. *"They will put you out of the synagogues; yes, the time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service."* Already, the Jewish Christians were ostracized from the synagogues.

Do you remember that the apostle Paul hated Christians before he was converted? When the Lord Jesus met him, he was on his way to Damascus to arrest and kill Christians? In Acts 26:9-11 Paul said, *"Indeed, I myself thought I must do*

many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. This I also did in Jerusalem, and many of the saints I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them. And I punished them often in every synagogue and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly enraged against them, I persecuted them even to foreign cities.” Paul (then known as Saul) actually thought he was offering service to God when he arrested and killed Christians.

The Roman persecutions began in 64AD, after Nero blamed the great fire in Rome on the Christians. So you see, these prophetic words of the Lord Jesus in John 16 were already being fulfilled – literally - when John wrote this Gospel.

These prophetic words can be applied today whenever and wherever true Christians are persecuted for their faith in Jesus Christ. In the country of Sudan, for example, there are recent reports of Christians being put to death - even crucified - by radical Muslims who believe they are "serving their god." Verse 3 indicates that those who persecute Christians, both then and today, do **not** know the one true God: *“And these things they will do to you because they have not known the Father nor Me.”*

“But now I go away to Him who sent Me, and none of you asks Me, ‘Where are You going?’” (v5). The Lord seemed disappointed that His disciples were not very interested in what was ahead for Him. They were only interested in their own future. And they were feeling sorry for themselves: *“But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart”* (v6). That is, they were more interested in their loss than in the Lord’s future!

In verse 7 the Lord told them that it was to their advantage that He go away. That truth certainly applies today. Why is it an advantage that the Lord is in Heaven in His resurrected body, and not here on this earth? If our Lord were here on earth, even in His glorified body, His body would be localized to one place at one time. It is to our advantage that the Lord is in Heaven, and that the Holy Spirit has been sent. The Holy Spirit indwells every believer on the face of this earth - all at the same time!

Doctrinal / Teaching Points

1. The Holy Spirit convicts the world of sin and righteousness and judgment.

“And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they do not believe in Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged” (v8-10).

The point in these verses is that the Holy Spirit is like God’s prosecuting attorney. He represents the case of a righteous God against sinful humanity. In fact, the Greek word that is translated “convicts” or “reproves” is a legal term. As a prosecuting attorney presents evidence to bring about a conviction, so the Holy Spirit presents evidence to show that the *world* is guilty – to convict the *world*. The fact that the Holy Spirit brings about the inner convictions on an unbeliever’s guilty conscience is not the main thought here. The main point here is God’s case against humanity, in which the Holy Spirit proves that the world is guilty. The world is convicted! God wins the case. The world loses.

Now how does the Holy Spirit go about presenting the evidence? He does this primarily through the preaching of the gospel. As the gospel is preached, the world is shown to be guilty concerning righteousness. The evidence is that Jesus

is righteous and the world falls short of His perfect standard of righteousness. As the gospel is preached, the world is shown to be guilty of sin - the sin of rejecting Jesus Christ, the Son of God. The resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ prove that He was right and the world was wrong. And the world is therefore guilty before God.

As the gospel is preached, the world is shown to be under judgment. Satan is no longer the ruler of this world. Satan was judged at the cross of Jesus Christ, and it is just a matter of time before the sentence of judgment is carried out. His judgment serves notice on the world that those who refuse to believe will also be judged, because they, too, are guilty.

The Holy Spirit convicts the world of sin, and righteousness, and judgment. Let's make sure that when we preach the gospel, we emphasize that everyone in this world is under judgment. They have fallen short of God's standard of righteousness, and they have rejected Christ, God's only means of salvation.

Let's not hinder the ministry of the Holy Spirit to this world. Let's not preach a watered-down gospel. The Holy Spirit convicts the world of sin and righteousness and judgment.

2. The Holy Spirit guides the believer into truth.

"I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you" (v12-15).

This promise was made directly to the apostles, and the writing of New Testament Scriptures is a fulfillment of this promise. When the apostles wrote the books of the New Testament, the Holy Spirit guided them. The Holy Spirit's guidance was intrinsic to the writing of Scripture. This is the process of **inspiration** of Scripture.

This "guiding into truth" promise was made specifically to the apostles who would be the inspired writers of Scripture, but it can also be applied to believers today. The Holy Spirit continues to guide believers into truth. When the Holy Spirit guides believers into truth today, this is the **illumination** of the Scriptures.

The "guiding into truth" ministry of the Holy Spirit is not independent of the Scriptures. **There is no truth given by the Holy Spirit that is independent from the truth found in the Bible, God's holy Word.** I remember hearing a Christian say once that the Holy Spirit had given him "new truths" which were not found in Scripture. No way! I'm not sure what "spirit" gave him these so-called "new truths," but it was definitely **not** the Holy Spirit.

Notice that the **ministry of the Holy Spirit is Christ-centered.** In verses 14-15 the Lord said, *"He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you."* That is, the Holy Spirit guides us into the teaching and truth concerning Christ. Any guidance into so-called "truth" that is not Christ-centered and not Christ-focused is **not** from the Holy Spirit, and thus is not truth. The Holy Spirit guides the believer into truth.

Practical Applications

1. Let's thank the Lord for hiding certain facts from us.

Notice at the end of verse 4: "*But these things I have told you, that when the time comes, you may remember that I told you of them.*" The Lord waited until the very end of His earthly ministry to tell His disciples about the coming persecutions they would face. He didn't tell them about this until the appropriate time. He could have told them earlier in His ministry, but He purposely hid this information from them because it was not in their best interest to know these things before this time.

Aren't you glad that the Lord has not revealed to you what serious illnesses you may suffer, or the way you will die? Aren't you glad that the Lord has not revealed tragic events you may face in the future, or the forms of the persecution you may have to suffer? But we can be sure that when these times come, the Lord will graciously reveal what we need to know, and give us the strength to endure, whatever the circumstances.

Hebrews 4:16 tells us that the Lord will mercifully give us the strength and grace we need – and He will supply that strength and grace **when we need it!** "*Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*" Let's thank the Lord for hiding certain facts from us.

2. Let's thank the Lord for revealing certain facts to us.

In verse 13 the Lord said, "*However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.*"

Just think of what we, as believers, know about the future - and what the world doesn't know about the future! We know that no matter how much suffering we go through now, we will live forever without pain, without suffering, and without sin.

And we know that no matter how many wars and manmade disasters take place now, when Christ returns there will be universal peace! We know that no matter what persecution the Church goes through now, it **cannot** be destroyed. The Church – composed of all true believers - is the body of Christ **forever**.

What a blessing to know that our future is secure! What a blessing to know what the future holds – and to know Who holds the future! Let's thank the Lord for revealing certain facts to us.