

## WEDNESDAY BIBLE FELLOWSHIP

Christ Church, Crouch End Hill

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No: 92

### "The Holy Spirit"

Brief Talk on John 16:5-15

#### **Introduction**

The gospel according to John contains a group of our Lord's sayings about the promised presence of the Holy Spirit (chapters 14-16). In John 16, Jesus knows that his death is imminent. His disciples, on being faced with that reality became troubled (14:1) afraid (14:27) and finally filled with grief (16:6). Jesus responds to each of their concern by talking about the Holy Spirit. In 16:12-15, Jesus spoke with reserve and certainty. He did not tell the disciples everything. He could not. Not because he was unequipped for the occasion, but because they were: "I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now (John 16:12)". No need to explain in future tense when they were experiencing difficulty in connecting present tense with past tense. Besides, Jesus had every confidence that the scattered pieces would eventually come together for them. Connections are always easier in retrospect. He could not tell them everything but he did tell them some things which were later recalled and recorded.

To point out the obvious, there is no "if" in our Lord's announcement concerning the activity of the Spirit. Not "if" the Spirit comes, but when the Spirit comes. Jesus was not announcing the "first time" appearance of a previously unheard of phenomena. Centuries before, the Spirit had "possessed" Gideon (Judges 6:34). The Spirit "came mightily upon Saul" (1 Samuel 11:6). Before that, the Spirit of God was obviously at work in the life of Joseph (Genesis 41:38). Before that, the Spirit "moved upon the face of the waters" at creation (Genesis 1:2). The Spirit had come upon Jesus at his baptism (Matthew 3:16) and led him into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil (Matthew 4:1). Consequently, when Jesus addressed the disciples about the Spirit which "was to come", he was not preparing them for some new supernatural presence. He was impressing upon them that the continuing work of the Spirit would assume a more prominent and permanent role in God's redemptive activity. It was not a matter of "if", but a matter of "when". And the "when" was to be very soon!

**Read John 16:5-15**

**Questions for discussion**

1. What would you want to tell your family or closest friends if you knew that you had only a short time to live?

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2. (a) Based on what Jesus says in these verses, how would you describe the mood among the disciples? (b) How would you have felt if you had been there?

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3. Jesus says that it is for the disciples' good that he should leave and that the Counsellor should come. Why is the Spirit's presence more profitable to the disciples than Jesus' presence?

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4. (a) What does Jesus say the Spirit's ministry would be toward the world (vv.8-11)? (b) How does the Holy Spirit do the same work today in the hearts of people who have not believed in Jesus? (c) How are sin, righteousness and judgment related?

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5. "The prince of this world" mentioned in verse 11 is Satan, our spiritual enemy. (a) In what way does Satan "now stand condemned" and (b) why is it necessary for the Holy Spirit to convince the world that its "prince" is already condemned?

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6 (a) What can we infer from verses 8-11 about our part in bringing people to faith in Christ and (b) What is the Spirit's responsibility?

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**Note:**

Jesus particularly described the Holy Spirit in 14:15 as "another" counsellor. The Spirit comes to fulfil the role of a previous helper to the disciples. Of course that previous counsellor is Jesus himself. The HS then is sent by Jesus from the Father to fulfil just what Jesus would do if he were still here on earth in his body. In all the HS does in every one of his tasks he "brings glory" to Jesus, he "testifies" about Jesus.

But how does this work out in specific terms? According to Jesus the HS has particular tasks for the people of the world & the people of God. For the people of the world: To Convict of their need of Jesus (V8-11). Have you ever tried to change someone's mind? It's often pretty difficult. Some are good arguers but generally no one likes to have to admit defeat, so most people dig in their heels.

The word translated "convict" means to present evidence so as to convince. Those who hear the gospel are convinced by the Holy Spirit of certain facts about themselves and about Jesus. Even those who reject the gospel are convinced of its truth. Their rejection is a matter of the will. They deliberately choose to reject what they have been convinced is true. This is a description of people Jesus calls the "world" as recorded here in John's gospel.

This is non-Christian human society rebelling against God & it's a rebellion seen supremely in a failure to recognise & accept Jesus. Putting it bluntly trying to help people become Christians is an impossible job. Trying to change the mind of the "world" is hopeless for us. The great news of these words of Jesus is that it is not impossible nor hopeless, when the HS is at work!

7. (a) What specific things did Jesus say the Spirit would communicate to the disciples (vv.12-15)? (b) Why were these promises associated with the Holy Spirit so important? (c) How does the Spirit guide us into God's truth and bring glory to Jesus today?

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## Conclusion

The disciples could only see the sorrow of Jesus leaving them; but Jesus' departure was an essential step in their growth as disciples - "The braver and more perfect disciple is he who can walk by faith, and not by sight only". (Bernard) Jesus said: "it is for your good that I go away".

Jesus had promised, "For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them" (Matthew 18:20). That was not a promise He could keep while in bodily form. He had to go away for that promise to be made true. God's Holy Spirit was promised to continue the work of redemption. Listen to Jesus: "When He comes, He will convict the world of guilt, in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment..." Sin is the truth about man, righteousness is the truth about God, judgment is the inevitable combination of these two truths. Human beings cannot come to an understanding of sin, righteousness and judgment apart from the Holy Spirit.

It is unbelief, the rejection of Jesus, which proves one to be a sinner. "Christ is good and holy and pure; to reject him is to convict oneself of being opposed to goodness and holiness and purity and love" (Erdman).

In verses 12-15: Jesus frankly admitted that His own teaching was incomplete, and anticipated the further instruction of the church by the Holy Spirit. This statement of Jesus leads us to anticipate the formation of the New Testament. Jesus Himself refutes those who say "I'll take what Jesus taught, but not what Paul or the others taught." Paul and the other New Testament writers taught us the many things that Jesus spoke of. **Today, the Holy Spirit continues to personally lead us into truth, but never in opposition to the Scripture,** because God's supremely authoritative revelation is closed with the New Testament. The Holy Spirit's ministry is revealing Jesus to us. He has many different ways, and many different gifts He uses to accomplish this, but the purpose is always the same: to reveal and glorify Jesus.