

The Spirit and a Spirit-less World

Thomas Robinson, April 18, 2010

John 16:1-15

¹ "All this **I have told you** so that you will not fall away. ² They will put you out of the synagogue; in fact, the hour is coming when those who **kill you** will think they are offering a **service to God**. ³ They will do such things because **they have not known the Father or me**. ⁴ I have told you this, so that when **their hour** comes you will remember that **I warned you** about them.

I did not tell you this from the beginning because **I was with you**, ⁵ but now **I am going to him who sent me**.

None of you asks me, '**Where are you going?**' ⁶ Rather, you are **filled with grief** because I have said these things.

⁷ But I tell you the truth, **it is for your good that I am going away**. Unless I go away, **the Advocate** will not come to you; but if I go, **I will send him to you**.

⁸ When he comes, he will **prove the world to be in the wrong** about **sin** and **righteousness** and **judgment**:

⁹ about **sin**, because **people do not believe in me**;

¹⁰ about **righteousness**, because **I am going to the Father**, and you will see me no longer;

¹¹ and about **judgment**, because the **prince of this world now stands condemned** (judged).

¹² "I have **much more to say** to you, more than you can now bear. ¹³ But when he, **the Spirit of truth**, comes, he will **guide you into all the truth**. He will not speak on his own; he will **speak only what he hears**, and he will tell you what is yet to come.

¹⁴ He will **glorify me** because it is **from me that he will receive** what he will make known to you. ¹⁵ **All that belongs to the Father is mine**. That is why I said **the Spirit** will **receive from me** what he will **make known to you**."

John 14: 16-17

¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you **another advocate** to help you and be with you forever – ¹⁷ **the Spirit of truth**. The **world cannot receive him**, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But **you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you**.

John 14: 25-27

²⁵ All this I have spoken while still with you. ²⁶ But **the Advocate, the Holy Spirit**, whom the **Father will send in my name**, will **teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you**. ²⁷ **Peace** I leave with you; **my peace** I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and **do not be afraid**.

John 15: 26-27

²⁶ When **the Advocate comes**, whom I will send to you from the Father – the **Spirit of truth** who goes out from the Father – **he will testify about me**. ²⁷ And **you also must testify**, for you have been with me from the beginning.

A Conversation Getting Intense

It was clear to the disciples that this evening was not turning out well. The banquet with Jesus at Passover had a very dark turn: betrayal, denial, departure alone, persecution, hatred. They were to testify, but Jesus would be gone. Danger.

They are silenced by grief. Don't know how/what to ask. How can anything go on? They were followers/learners of Jesus, not leaders. Full of missteps, blunders. Jesus knew they couldn't deal with much of what he had to say to them (16:12).

John helps us sense what they felt. This enterprise was doomed. Without Jesus this "movement" wouldn't survive a week. Grief. No messianic movement survived the death of its leader. The religious leaders had already condemned Jesus as a sinner (9:24). If he was condemned and killed ("going to the Father"), no hope. Their grief was well placed: it is indeed astonishing that this message survived.

Help for a Difficult Future

Two things changed that inevitable failure: Jesus resurrection and the Holy Spirit. Dispirited, despondent disciples became powerful witnesses giving their lives. The strange message of a dying Jewish Messiah infiltrated a powerful pagan world.

The work is God's work (Father, Son, Spirit). Out of the long past of God's work with Israel, brought to an burning focus in Israel's Messiah, uniting God and Man, the single event of crucifixion/resurrection, exploding outward to the whole world. "For your good"... "you will see me no longer" - the incarnation is crucial but limited. The Spirit works everywhere, with, in, and through all Jesus' followers.

The Spirit of Truth brings no different/separate message, but "guides along the way in all the truth." Jesus is the Way, Truth, and Life (14:6). He conveys Jesus' own reality/glory which is also the Father's glory. Lives in you, testifies, gives peace.

Reversing the World's Verdict

God the Word becomes human; takes on human evil, suffering, death; defeats death; gives life to the world - glorious! But he does it as a servant, a powerless nobody; he's condemned as a sinner/traitor; he's crucified in shame; death takes him! The world knows the two stories can't go together. Super-hero can't be slave.

Jesus says that the Spirit is an Advocate who joins the disciples in testimony. He brings to light, exposes the truth and thus undercuts the world's false verdict that would be embodied in the betrayal, condemnation, and crucifixion of Jesus. He takes on Sin, Righteousness/Justice, and Judgment in surprising ways.

Sin: He does not catalog the world's obvious sinfulness. He brings forth Jesus, the Lamb of God to take on/take away the sin of the world (1:29). The world refuses to believe in the God's gift that saves from perishing and gives eternal life (3:16).

Righteousness: Jesus was pronounced guilty and executed. But God pronounced him righteous/innocent and glorified him. His righteousness a gift for believers.

Judgment: Jesus' condemnation seemed a victory for the world's power. His work could not survive. But through death he condemned death and sin and Satan.

The Advocate continues his work in the world. He works in us and through us to shine the light of this amazing Gospel into our hearts. Exposing our false expectations, helping us face our failure of faith, opening us to God's surprising work of grace, leading along the way of Jesus who is the Way, the Truth and the Life.