

The Spirit of Truth (John 16:4b-15)

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Introduction

1. Jesus explained to the disciples that they would face the hatred of the world as He had faced it (15:18–25). Jesus came into the world to reveal the Father and to proclaim the truth, but because men are sinners in rebellion against God, they reject the truth.
2. The disciples were given this information to prepare them to stand and not fall away when the persecution arose (15:26–16:4a). The enmity of the world is mostly from the religious community. In fact, they see their opposition to Christ as a service of worship (16:2). The real reason for their hatred is that they do not *know* (savingly) the Father or the Son (16:3).
3. The Son had to go away for the Holy Spirit to come from the Father. The Spirit would continue Christ's mission through the believers, who would now, in Christ's place, face the brunt of the world's hatred. How did this work?
4. The text for today continues the discussion of the world's hatred of Jesus and His disciples. Jesus, the Light of the World, began to expose the sin and evil that had been hiding in religious darkness (15:22, 24). The *Paraclete* was to take Jesus' place and continue His work through His chosen disciples.

I. The Work of the Spirit with Respect to the World (16:4b–11)

1. Jesus explained the reason for His telling the disciples about what they would face was that He had been with them but now was about to leave them (v. 4b).

Some have seen a contradiction in verse 5 as compared with 13:36 and 14:5. Two considerations clarify this apparent contradictory statement of Jesus. First, He was not saying the disciples had never asked but rather that they were not asking *now* when they needed to. Second, what did Peter mean when he asked, "*Where are you going?*" It was not an honest question but rather a protest due to his being self-absorbed in his shock of loss.

2. Jesus had to go in order for the Spirit to come; not that they could not coexist but that the Scriptures predicted the gospel age was also the age of the Spirit (Isaiah 11:1–5, 10; 32:14–18; Ezekiel 11:17–20; Joel 2:28–32).

The saving reign of God could not be fully implemented until Jesus died and rose again from the dead to be seated at the Father's right hand. People often wish they could have seen Jesus' day. However, Jesus said that the age of the Spirit is the best age.

3. When the Spirit comes, He will convict the *world* of three things: "*sin and righteousness and judgment*" (v. 8). The question is, just what was Christ seeking to convey here? *Convict* is used in the *personal* sense, not before God's court. Jesus' ministry of truth forced division in the world (John 15:20). In other words, the preaching of the Word of Christ in the power of the Spirit divides the world into two groups. Most will reject the Word, and many will persecute the preacher. Others (the elect) will hear the Word, believe and keep it unto eternal life.
 - a. The Spirit will convict of *sin* because those in and of the world do not believe in Jesus (v. 9; see John 3:18, 19). The purpose of this convicting work is gracious and designed to bring the elect in the world to recognize their need, turn to Jesus, and be delivered out of the world.
 - b. The Spirit convicts the world of *righteousness* because Jesus was going to the Father. This is the only time in the Gospel of John where this term appears. Note that the righteousness spoken of

here is the world's righteousness, not God's. People tend to believe in their own goodness and rightness—*self-righteousness*.

(1) Like sin, self-righteousness is *egregious* (appalling, horrible, atrocious), an abomination to God (64:6). People think their good works are acceptable to God. God regards their good works as a stinking abomination and flatly rejects them.

(2) Self-righteousness is also hopelessly *inadequate* (Matthew 5:20). The self-righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees was the very cause of their rejection of Jesus.

c. The Spirit convicts the world of *judgment* because "*the ruler of this world is judged.*" Again, this is not a reference to the judgment of God but the world's wrong judgment (opinion) of the things of God. The tendency of sinful humans when considering facts is to draw wrong conclusions. Satan is the father of lies. That is his stock-in-trade—to fool people into misjudging God's plans and purposes. Worldlings, even the religious, tend to pass judgment on others based on their opinions, not the authority of Scripture.

III. The Work of the Spirit With Respect to the Word (16:12–15)

1. It is fitting that this section shifts from the *world* to the *Word*. Jesus had much more to tell His disciples, but they would not be able to bear those things at that time. Some have suggested another contradiction here because of what Jesus earlier shared with them (John 15:15). What Jesus meant by the "much more to tell His disciples" had to do with what He was about to accomplish in His death and resurrection. Their inability to bear that revelation had more to do with their emotional state than their comprehension.
2. The Spirit would enable the final self-disclosure of Jesus as God's ultimate and final revelation. All revelation previous to Jesus pointed to Him (Hebrews 1:1–4). Once He came, the Spirit would sort out Jesus' revelation of Himself to His followers. The Spirit of truth *guides* the disciples "*in*" (not "*into*") all truth. "*In*" suggests the exploration of truth already disclosed; whereas "*into*" suggests discovering truth not yet revealed. Jesus is God's final revelation.
3. How does the Spirit answer that prayer? As Jesus did not speak on His own authority, so the Spirit speaks only what He receives from the Father through Christ. This submission reflects the essential unity of God in redemptive revelation. As Jesus' ministry brought glory to the Father who sent Him, so the Spirit's coming was intended to glorify the Son.
4. So, who are the beneficiaries of this work of the Spirit? First, those to whom Christ was speaking—the apostles—because they would become the authors of NT Scripture. Second, the followers of the apostles benefit derivatively because of what the Spirit taught the apostles.

Conclusion

1. Jesus exposed the emptiness of the world's religious pretensions with His light (John 3:19–21). How would Jesus continue to expose the emptiness of the world's religious pretensions with His light if He were gone? The Spirit would do this work *through* His disciples.
2. The Holy Spirit's work in this gospel age is to set forth Christ in all His glory. The Spirit is the author of all Scripture, which makes the gospel possible. His work, now that the Scriptures are complete, is to *illuminate* them, not to reveal new and additional truth.
3. This is what makes the Bible and submission to the Spirit's leading essential to the Christian life. Are you a person of the Book?