

The One to Come

John 16:5-15

In order for the Holy Spirit to be poured out on the Church, Jesus had to leave. This was a hard pill for the apostles to swallow because they didn't have the Spirit post-Pentecost yet. But He has been given so that we would understand His work over the past 2000 years and carry it on.

Summary of the Text

Jesus has been telling the disciples about the persecution they will face once He is gone (15:18; 16:1-3). He didn't mention this at the beginning of His ministry because they had a lot of time left together (v. 4), but now His death nears. Though He will leave soon to go back to His Father, their hearts are so filled with sorrow that they don't even ask where He is going (vv. 5-6). He keeps speaking the truth: it's better if He goes because otherwise the Spirit will not come (v. 7). When the Spirit comes, He will convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment (vv. 8-11). Jesus has a lot more to say but they're not ready for it yet (v. 12). When the Spirit comes, He will lead them into all truth, glorifying the Son and communicating what He hears from Him (vv. 13-14). The Spirit will give what He receives from the Son, and the Son has all things that the Father has. Jesus wants them to know this, the fullness of the Trinity delivered to them by the Spirit (v. 15).

Christ Ascended

Jesus went into the pit of the death so He could rise up and bless us with the gifts and power of eternal life: "But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore He says: 'When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men.' Now this, 'He ascended'—what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things" (Eph. 4:7-10; cf. Ps. 68:18). Forty days after His resurrection, Jesus ascended into heaven, crowned the right hand of the Father, and then ten days later, at the harvest festival of Pentecost, He poured out the Holy Spirit on the church (Acts 2:1-5). Jesus was always a Spirit-filled man, but now that He ascended to heaven as our resurrected head, His body the church has received that same power. He has begun to "fill all things." This is why He had to go and it was to our benefit for Him to go (v. 7). In the old covenant the Spirit would equip certain individuals for great things. For example, He anointed David to rule (1 Sam. 16:13) and Samson to defeat the Philistines (Judgs. 14:6; 15:14-15). But at Pentecost the Spirit was poured out on the church and everyone got drenched, which is why Peter says, "But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: 'And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams'" (Acts 2:16-17). To be a Christian is by definition to be Spirit-filled. No one can say Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:3). It's not the amount of emotion you experience or any specific gifting that marks you as indwelt by the Spirit, as some false teachers insist. If you want to honor the person of the Holy Spirit, go to the truth where Jesus said He would lead you (v. 13). The Spirit does not set us talking about ourselves and our gifts, but brings us to the Father through the Son.

The Prosecutor

The connection between the coronation of Jesus Christ at His ascension and the pouring out of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost explains the evangelistic power of the Holy Spirit. John Owen: "When God planned the great work of saving sinners, He provided two gifts. He gave His Son and He gave His Spirit. In fact each person of the Trinity was involved in this great work of salvation. The love, grace and wisdom of the Father planned

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it; the love, grace and humility of the Son purchased it; and the love, grace and power of the Holy Spirit enabled sinners to believe and receive it.” Jesus doesn’t talk about what the Spirit would like to do or might try to do or what Jesus hopes He will do: “And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment” (v. 8). You might have heard the Holy Spirit described as the helper, advocate, and paraclete, the one who defends His people from false accusations (v.7). Satan is a malicious prosecutor and the Holy Spirit is our flawless defense attorney. But He is also a righteous prosecutor who brings the world to conviction. First, “of sin”, Jesus says, “because they do not believe in Me” (v. 9). This could mean that He will convict them of sin which they do not now understand because they don’t believe in Jesus. Or it could mean the sin of unbelief itself which seems more likely and foundational. Unbelief is *the* sin. The conviction of Holy Spirit is not like the tormenting guilt of the world or the devil. The Spirit’s conviction leads to confession, forgiveness, relief, and reconciliation. Second, “of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more” (v. 10). This is the finished work of Christ on the cross. Both religious and irreligious people try to establish their own righteousness by doing good works, and the Holy Spirit reveals that our good works presented as grounds for acceptance with God are like filthy rags (Is. 64:6). Since we cannot justify (“make righteous”) ourselves, the Spirit convicts the world of Jesus’ righteousness. He walked in perfect love, fulfilling the law, and ascended to the Father. Third, “of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged” (v. 11). On the cross, the devil was defeated: ““Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself.’ This He said, signifying by what death He would die” (Jn. 12:31-33). What kind of death did Jesus die? The kind that cast Satan down and draws all people to Himself. This doesn’t happen instantaneously, but it does happen. We see the beginning at Pentecost when everyone heard the gospel in their own language and about 3000 were baptized (Acts 2:41). But not everyone believed: “Others mocking said, ‘They are full of new wine.’” (Act 2:13). The work of the Spirit continues to this day which is why the gospel is conquering the world.

The Spirit of Truth

Jesus had a lot more to say but the disciples weren’t ready for it. After Pentecost, John understood and wrote this down for us. The Spirit takes what He hears from the Son, speaks, and guides us into all truth (v. 13). We know what it’s like to hear things that are over our heads either as children or as novice adults. A good teacher lays out things that are clear and easy for students to understand, but also makes them work to figure things out. That what the Holy Spirit does for you, taking you deeper in knowledge and love for God, all the while cultivating His fruit in your life: “love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires” (Gal. 5:22-25). It was good for the apostles, good for the world, and good for us that Jesus ascended to the Father. Before the resurrection, they were often unbelieving, covetous, and cowardly. Afterwards they became faithful, confident, and bold (cf. 16:22-23). That is the work of the Spirit.