

The Spirit of Truth

John 16:4-15

SS Lesson for 03/15/2015

Devotional Scripture: 1 Cor 2:10-16

OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW AND KEY VERSE OF THE LESSON

Key Verse: John 16:13

Commentary from The Bible Knowledge Commentary

LESSON INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

MAJOR THEME ANALYSIS

PROMISE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT (JOHN 16:4-7)

Promise because Jesus was going away (4-6)

Going away to prepare a place for us (John 14:2-3)

Going away to a place that we will follow Him later (John 13:36)

Going away in His glory (John 17:24)

Going away to a sanctuary (Heb 6:19-20)

Going away in a cloud (Acts 1:9-11)

Going away into heaven (Heb 9:24-25)

Promise with an advantage (7)

An advantage because one man's death took the place of many (John 11:50)

An advantage because just as Jesus went away, He is coming back for us (John 14:28)

An advantage because all things work for the good of those who have been called (Rom 8:28)

An advantage because an eternal glory awaits us (2 Cor 4:17)

An advantage because the Holy Spirit replaced Him (Titus 3:4-7)

WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT (JOHN 16:8-11)

Conviction of sin (9)

Conviction of sin because of not believing in Jesus (John 3:18)

Conviction of sin because of not believing Jesus is the Son of God (John 8:24)

Conviction of sin because of not being one of Jesus' sheep (John 10:26)

Conviction of righteousness (10)

Conviction of righteousness because everyone's acts are like filthy rags (Isa 64:6)

Conviction of righteousness because trying to establish their own righteousness (Rom 10:3)

Conviction of righteousness because of not having the righteousness that comes from God (Rom 3:22-25)

Conviction of judgment (11)

Conviction of judgment because there will be a time when Satan will be driven out (John 12:31-32)

Conviction of judgment because there will be a great white throne judgment (Rev 20:11-15)

Conviction of judgment because Satan's destiny is to be thrown into the lake of fire (Rev 20:10)

TESTIMONY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT (JOHN 16:12-15)

Testimony about truth (12-13)

The truth will be with us forever (2 John 1:2)

The truth God has hidden His Word in our hearts (Ps 119:11)

The truth the Holy Spirit expresses in spiritual words (1 Cor 2:10-13)

The truth through the anointing of the Holy Spirit (1 John 2:20)

The truth provided to those who are from God (1 John 4:6)

Testimony about and from Jesus (14-15)

Testimony that comes from God through the Holy Spirit (John 15:26)

Testimony that allow us to proclaim Jesus is Lord (1 Cor 12:3)

Testimony that reveals the deep things of God (1 Cor 2:10)

Testimony that provides the light of the knowledge of God (2 Cor 4:6)

CONCLUSION AND OTHER THOUGHTS

COMMENTARY THOUGHTS FROM BOB DEFFINBAUGH
CONCLUDING THOUGHTS FROM THE NIV STANDARD LESSON COMMENTARY
PRACTICAL POINTS FROM THE BIBLE EXPOSITOR AND ILLUMINATOR

Introduction

Overview and Key Verse of the Lesson

The lesson explains how we should wait and rely on **The Spirit of Truth**. The **study's aim** is to understand Jesus' fourfold prophecy concerning the Holy Spirit's ministry and see how Jesus' words directly affect our daily lives as we serve Him. The **study's application** is to serve our Lord Jesus faithfully so that we glorify Him. (*Adapted from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary*).

Key Verse: John 16:13

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.

Commentary from The Bible Knowledge Commentary

The world will persecute Jesus' followers **because they have not known the Father or Me**. They do not recognize the Father at work in the words and deeds of Jesus. The Jewish people, for example, had a certain knowledge of God through the Law, but that knowledge was not a saving knowledge for God said their "hearts go astray and they have not known My ways" (Ps. 95:8-10). Jesus gave this warning to His disciples about coming persecution in order to strengthen their faith. By recognizing His knowledge of the future they would grow in their confidence in Him. Jesus **did not** give them **this** warning before because the world's hatred was directed against Him. He shielded them with His personal presence, but now they would be His body on earth (Eph. 1:22-23). Learning of Jesus' departure brought depression to the disciples. They were obsessed by their coming personal loss of His immediate physical presence. If they could have understood why He was going and to whom He was going, then they would have rejoiced. Later (v. 22) Jesus predicted that their time of sorrow would be suddenly transformed into great joy. Jesus' statement, **Now I am going to Him who sent Me**, should have led the disciples to ask questions, but they didn't (Even Thomas [14:5] did not ask, **Where are You going?**) Their preoccupation with their own problems prevented their understanding the crucial nature of the time ("now") and the momentous significance of the events (His death, burial, resurrection, and Ascension). The departure of Jesus was necessary—though painful and difficult—for the disciples. In fact, His leaving was profitable and beneficial (the meaning of the Gr. *sympherei*, here rendered **good**). Without His departing (which included His death, burial, resurrection, and Ascension) there would have been no gospel. Atonement for sin was necessary for Jesus to save His people from their sins (Matt. 1:21). Also **unless** he departed there would have been no glorified Lord to **send... the Counselor** (the Holy Spirit) to apply the atonement. "The Counselor" translates the Greek *paraklētos*. This word was used of legal assistants who pleaded a cause or presented a case. This Counselor is the promised Spirit who came into the world in a new and distinctive sense on the day of Pentecost.

One of the Spirit's new ministries was to **convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment**. Conviction is not the same as conversion but is necessary to it. The words "convict... of guilt" translate the one word *elenxei*, "to present or expose facts, to convince of the truth." The Spirit works on the minds of the unsaved to show them the truth of God for what it is. Normally this process includes human aid (cf. 15:26-27). **Sin** is rebellion against God and this rebellion reached its climax in the crucifixion of Jesus. Today the greatest sin is the failure to **believe in** Jesus (cf. 3:18; 15:22, 24). Most people do not readily admit to being guilty of sin. They will admit to failures or vices or even crimes.

However, sin is against God, and people have suppressed the truth of God (cf. Rom. 1:18, 21, 25, 28). The mighty working of the Holy Spirit is necessary to convince and convict people of their desperate plight. In crucifying Jesus, the Jewish people showed that they thought He was unrighteous, that only a wicked person would be hanged on a tree and thus be under God's curse (Deut. 21:23; Gal. 3:13). But the Resurrection and the Ascension vindicated Jesus as God's righteous Servant (Acts 3:14-15; Isa. 53:11). The Spirit convicts men of their faulty views of Jesus when the gospel with its stress on the Resurrection is proclaimed (1 Cor. 15:3-4). The third area of the Holy Spirit's convicting work concerns **judgment**. The death and resurrection of Jesus were a condemnation of Satan (12:31; Col. 2:15), **the prince of this world** (cf. John 14:30). By Jesus' death, He defeated the devil, who held "the power of death" (Heb. 2:14). (Though defeated at the Cross, Satan is still active [1 Peter 5:8]. But, like a condemned criminal, his "execution" is coming [Rev. 20:2, 7-10].) People in rebellion should take note of Satan's defeat and fear the Lord who holds the power to judge. As the fact of coming judgment (both Satan's and man's) is proclaimed, the Spirit convicts people and prepares them for salvation (cf. Acts 17:30-31).

The disciples were not able to receive any **more** spiritual truth at that time. Their hearts were hardened, their concern was for their own preeminence in an earthly kingdom, so they saw no need for Jesus' death. Sorrow over His departure and dismay over the prophecy of a traitor among them, along with the prediction of their own desertion, rendered them insensitive to more spiritual truth. **But... the Spirit of Truth** (cf. 15:26) would come after Jesus' death to lead the apostles **into the truth** about Jesus and His work. The Spirit, Jesus said, would **not** teach the disciples **on His own** (i.e., on His own initiative) but would teach **only what He hears** from the Father. This points up the interdependence of the Persons in the Trinity. The Father would **tell** the Spirit what to teach the apostles about the Son. Also the Spirit would teach **what is yet to come**. This statement helps one understand the promise, **He will guide you into all truth** (lit., "all *the* truth"). This was a promise to the apostles that their partial understanding of the person and work of Jesus as the Messiah would be completed as the Spirit would give them insight into the meanings of the soon-to-come Cross and the Resurrection as well as truths about Jesus' return (cf. 1 Cor. 2:10). The New Testament books are the fulfillment of this teaching ministry of the Spirit. Because Jesus is the *Logos*, the revelation of the Father (or as Paul expressed it, "the image of the invisible God" [Col. 1:15]), **all that belongs to the Father is also the Son's**. The Spirit of Truth brought **glory to Jesus** as He revealed to the apostles things pertaining to the person and work of the *Logos* (**taking from what is Mine and making it known to you**). The Spirit worked in the apostles' minds so that they could perceive, understand, and teach about the Savior.

Lesson Introduction and Background

From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Adam and Eve knew what it was like to be exposed. After they sinned against the Creator by eating the forbidden fruit, they knew both their guilt and their nakedness. For them, the blessing of the presence of God became a threat. They tried to hide themselves from the very one who wanted their companionship. They did not want to be exposed. Other people have also been exposed throughout history—sometimes for the better, but usually for the worse. For those who lived in the days of Noah, exposure meant that God knew their profound wickedness; the result was destruction by water. For young David, on the other hand, exposure meant that God knew the inherent goodness of his heart (see Acts 13:22). David welcomed being exposed that way before the Lord, even saying, "Search me, God, and know my heart" (Psalm 139:23). Whether we like it or not, the hearts of all are exposed before God (Hebrews 4:13). This sounds frightening because we know our own sins and failures all too well. It can be something of a challenge, then, for Christians to welcome the presence of God's Spirit into every facet of their lives. Do we really want God taking notice of our every thought, action, or conversation? As Jesus teaches in this lesson, the indwelling of the Spirit is nothing to be feared.

Jesus gathered with his 12 apostles in the upper room on a Thursday night for a meal to celebrate the Passover. The heart of Judas Iscariot was exposed during the meal, and Jesus dismissed him into the night

to carry through with his evil designs (see John 13:27). To the 11 who remained, Jesus promised that the Father would send the Holy Spirit (John 14:26, last week's lesson). They were not to be left to fend for themselves. This promise to send an Advocate, repeated in John 15:26, was the prelude to Jesus' final promises in this regard in John 16. The disciples were to face difficult times. They would be rejected and persecuted by their own people—some of whom would even kill the apostles, thinking that they were “offering a service to God” (John 16:2). To face such challenges in Jesus' absence, the disciples needed to know that they still had the reality of God's presence backing them up.

Major Theme Analysis

(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)

Promise of the Holy Spirit (John 16:4-7)

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.

Promise because Jesus was going away (4-6)

Going away to prepare a place for us (John 14:2-3)

2 In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.

Going away to a place that we will follow Him later (John 13:36)

36 Simon Peter asked him, "Lord, where are you going?" Jesus replied, "Where I am going, you cannot follow now, but you will follow later."

Going away in His glory (John 17:24)

24 "Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world.

Going away to a sanctuary (Heb 6:19-20)

19 We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, 20 where Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf. He has become a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.

Going away in a cloud (Acts 1:9-11)

9 After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. 10 They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. 11 "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven."

Going away into heaven (Heb 9:24-25)

24 For Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence. 25 Nor did he enter heaven to offer himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own.

Promise with an advantage (7)

An advantage because one man's death took the place of many (John 11:50)

50 You do not realize that it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish."

An advantage because just as Jesus went away, He is coming back for us (John 14:28)

28 "You heard me say, 'I am going away and I am coming back to you.' If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I.

An advantage because all things work for the good of those who have been called (Rom 8:28)

28 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

An advantage because an eternal glory awaits us (2 Cor 4:17)

17 For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.

An advantage because the Holy Spirit replaced Him (Titus 3:4-7)

4 But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, 5 he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, 6 whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.

Work of the Holy Spirit (John 16:8-11)

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.

Conviction of sin (9)

Conviction of sin because of not believing in Jesus (John 3:18)

18 Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.

Conviction of sin because of not believing Jesus is the Son of God (John 8:24)

24 I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am [the one I claim to be], you will indeed die in your sins."

Conviction of sin because of not being one of Jesus' sheep (John 10:26)

26 but you do not believe because you are not my sheep.

Conviction of righteousness (10)

Conviction of righteousness because everyone's acts are like filthy rags (Isa 64:6)

6 All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away.

Conviction of righteousness because trying to establish their own righteousness (Rom 10:3)

3 Since they did not know the righteousness that comes from God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness.

Conviction of righteousness because of not having the righteousness that comes from God (Rom 3:22-25)

22 This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. 25 God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished—

Conviction of judgment (11)

Conviction of judgment because there will be a time when Satan will be driven out (John 12:31-32)

31 Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. 32 But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself."

Conviction of judgment because there will be a great white throne judgment (Rev 20:11-15)

11 Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. 12 And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. 13 The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. 14 Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. 15 If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire

Conviction of judgment because Satan's destiny is to be thrown into the lake of fire (Rev 20:10)

10 And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

Testimony of the Holy Spirit (John 16:12-15)

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.

Testimony about truth (12-13)

The truth will be with us forever (2 John 1:2)

2 because of the truth, which lives in us and will be with us forever:

The truth God has hidden His Word in our hearts (Ps 119:11)

11 I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.

The truth the Holy Spirit expresses in spiritual words (1 Cor 2:10-13)

10 but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. 11 For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. 12 We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. 13 This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words.

The truth through the anointing of the Holy Spirit (1 John 2:20)

20 But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and all of you know the truth.

The truth provided to those who are from God (1 John 4:6)

6 We are from God, and whoever knows God listens to us; but whoever is not from God does not listen to us. This is how we recognize the Spirit of truth and the spirit of falsehood.

Testimony about and from Jesus (14-15)

Testimony that comes from God through the Holy Spirit (John 15:26)

26 "When the Counselor 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.

Testimony that allow us to proclaim Jesus is Lord (1 Cor 12:3)

3 Therefore I tell you that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus be cursed," and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.

Testimony that reveals the deep things of God (1 Cor 2:10)

10 but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God.

Testimony that provides the light of the knowledge of God (2 Cor 4:6)

6 For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Commentary Thoughts from Bob Deffinbaugh

Earlier in His ministry, Jesus had warned the disciples generally about coming persecution, but there was no need then to be as specific as He is now. He was with them, then. He will not be with them physically when they undergo the persecution of which He now speaks. He will be with them "in spirit," or, better yet, "in the Spirit." The disciples appear to be in a state of emotional shock. They are overwhelmed with sadness. There seems to be nothing to say. Think of it. Jesus is going to leave them, and when He does, they are not only going to be forsaken by their own people, they are going to be hunted down by them as though they were criminals. Jesus notes the fact that His disciples are not now asking Him where He is going. Earlier, Peter did ask (13:36), and Thomas came close to asking (14:5). It is not that they hadn't asked; it is that they have stopped asking. It is as though the more they have asked, and the clearer Jesus' meaning has become (He really was leaving them behind, and they could not accompany Him), the more the disciples have become distressed. And so they simply (as we would say) "clammed up." This is similar, I think, to the questions

which Nicodemus was asking Jesus in John chapter 3. His questions and comments got shorter and shorter, and finally they just ceased. The more Jesus told him, the worse it seemed to get, and so Nicodemus, like the disciples, chose to keep quiet. Jesus seems to be calling their quietness to their attention, perhaps gently rebuking them by doing so. They were so caught up in their own sorrow and their own sense of loss that they did not wish to consider anything else, anything beyond themselves. D. A. Carson challenges us to consider the lessons we should learn from our Lord's gentle rebuke of His disciples for their silence: they are too preoccupied with themselves, and with their own problems, and not focused upon their Lord. Is this not true of us as well? Are we so absorbed in our own lives, that we not only fail to "fix our eyes on Jesus," but we also fail to see the needs of those about us? Things are not nearly as bad as they seem to the disciples. Jesus assures them that what He is telling them is the truth. That is, He is assuring them that they will see His words of comfort come to pass in the future. Our Lord's "going away" is not only necessary, it is to their advantage. It is not that Jesus is abandoning them when He goes away, and that He is sending the Holy Spirit as a kind of consolation gift. He must go away, or the Holy Spirit cannot come. And when the Spirit does come, the disciples will see that they could never have had it better. Here, Jesus speaks specifically of the Holy Spirit as their Advocate, as they seek to proclaim the gospel to a world that hates them, a world that has crucified Jesus and would also like to kill them. I am reminded of one of my favorite scenes from the movie, "The Bear." The "bear" is an awesome Grizzly, and he somewhat unwillingly adopts a young cub whose mother has been killed. In one of the final scenes, the baby Grizzly is being pursued by a mountain lion. Finally, the lion has the cub trapped. In desperation, the cub stands erect and sounds the most fierce "roar" he can produce. The mountain lion suddenly cowers and retreats. One wonders how this cub could produce such fear, from such a pathetic "roar." Then the camera angle widens, so that we are now able to see Pappa Griz, standing some distance behind the cub, towering high above it and the mountain lion. Now we know why the mountain lion decided he had an appointment somewhere else, one which was so pressing he would have to skip lunch. I would contend that when we proclaim the gospel to a hostile world, we are no more awesome than that cub, but we have an Advocate—the Holy Spirit—who seconds what we say, and He is not so easily ignored. Our Advocate has an agenda. There are certain things to which He will testify as being true, and these are spelled out in verses 8-11. He proves the world wrong with regard to sin, to righteousness, and to judgment. Let us take a closer look at each of these three elements of the Spirit's convicting work.

First, the Holy Spirit will prove the world wrong concerning sin. The most compelling evidence of a person's sin is their rejection of Jesus as the Messiah. Jesus is the ultimate and final revelation of God to men (John 1:1-18; Hebrews 1:1-4). Thus, to reject Jesus as the promised Messiah is the ultimate sin. Those who have heard the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ, who have witnessed its truth and power, and in spite of this testimony, reject Jesus as God's only provision for their salvation, have shown themselves to be guilty of sin:

1 Therefore we must pay closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away. 2 For if the message spoken through angels proved to be so firm that every violation or disobedience received its just penalty, 3 how will we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was first communicated through the Lord and was confirmed to us by those who heard him, 4 while God confirmed their witness with signs and wonders and various miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will (Hebrews 2:1-4).

It is on the basis of this rejection of Jesus that the Spirit proves men guilty of sin. This is consistent with the argument of Romans, chapters 1-3. All men have been given a certain knowledge about God and have turned from that knowledge, worshipping something other than the Creator. The Jews have received a higher revelation of God in the Law, and they stand condemned by it. And now that Jesus has come to the earth, fully revealing God, they have rejected Him. This is John's indictment in the first part of John chapter 1. Jesus is God (1:1, 4), made known (verse 18) to men. Yet in spite of this revelation of God to His own people, they did not receive Him as God (1:5, 10-11). *To reject Him who is the ultimate revelation of God is to be guilty of the ultimate sin.*

Second, the Holy Spirit will prove the world wrong concerning righteousness, because Jesus is going to the Father and will be seen no longer. The Holy Spirit will prove the world wrong with regard to righteousness. The Jews felt they could justify the crucifixion of Jesus because they had condemned Jesus as a sinner, while at the same time deeming themselves to be righteous. To be convinced that Jesus was, indeed, righteous would be

to prove the Jews wrong, and Jesus right. It is only when we see ourselves as sinners, deserving of God's eternal wrath, and Jesus Christ as the righteous One, that we see our need to trust in Him for salvation. The final proof of our Lord's righteousness is His resurrection from the dead (John 2:18-22; Acts 2:22-24; Acts 3:13-18; Acts 10:39-43; see also 4:1-2, 33; 13:27-34; Romans 1:1-4). The point of these texts is that the resurrection of our Lord was witnessed by the apostles, and this was to be proclaimed as proof that Jesus is precisely who He claimed to be—the Son of God. The resurrection of Jesus from the dead was the Father's sign of approval. It was the last and final sign, of which Jesus spoke (see Matthew 12:38-40). The enemies of our Lord remembered His prediction of His resurrection after His death, and took measures to insure that no one stole His body to give substance to His claims (see Matthew 27:62-66). The disciples were witnesses of His resurrection.⁷⁰ They testified to the fact that He was raised from the dead. *They* saw Jesus no more, because they saw Him after He had risen from the dead, and they watched as He ascended into heaven. The Holy Spirit uses the absence of Jesus (at a minimum, the absence of His body in the tomb) to underscore the witness of the apostles, that Jesus is the righteous One, the One who alone can save men from their sins.

Third, the Holy Spirit will prove the world wrong concerning judgment. The “**judgment**” of which the Holy Spirit will “**prove the world to be worthy**” is the future judgment of those who have refused to believe in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sins. It is the judgment of which Jesus has spoken earlier in John (John 5:21-30; see also 8:16, 26; 9:39). It is the judgment of which the apostles spoke (Acts 24:24-25). The basis on which the Holy Spirit proves the world wrong, and thus worthy of that judgment which is yet to come, is the fact that Satan has already been judged. Jesus spoke of this judgment of Satan and linked it to the judgment of the world: “Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out” (John 12:31). Satan is the source of man's sin and rebellion against God. He is the driving force behind all sin. When Jesus died on the cross of Calvary, He defeated Satan. If Satan has been condemned at the cross, then surely every other sinner's judgment is certain as well. It is the reality of Satan's defeat, and its consequences, which the Holy Spirit drives home to the world as proof that all sinners will be judged. I take it that the disciples are now winding their way through the narrow streets of Jerusalem, making their way toward the Mount of Olives and the Garden of Gethsemane. Judas has long since left the group and is at this very moment making arrangements to hand Jesus over to the authorities (Jewish and Roman). Jesus can now speak freely and frankly, preparing His disciples for what lies ahead. He has spoken to them about the ministry of the Holy Spirit to the world (verses 8-11); now He speaks of the Spirit's ministry to His disciples (16:12ff.). Jesus has much more to say to them, but this is not the time to do so. I would like to suggest that we often wish God would tell us all that He is doing, or is about to do, at the time we wish to know it. And yet how gracious God is to withhold from us those things we do not need to know, those things which would only cause us needless anguish if we did know them. Jesus withheld information from His disciples for their own good. It was another manifestation of His grace not to tell them all they wanted to know. God is gracious, both in what He reveals, and in what He conceals. I wonder if this is how we view the “unknowns” in our life. “The secret *things belong* to the LORD our God, but those *things which are revealed belong* to us and to our children forever, that *we may do all the words of this law*” (Deuteronomy 29:29, NKJV).

We should also see from our text an example of the fact that God reveals truth to us progressively. Jesus had much to say to them, but not at that moment. Jesus will teach them after His resurrection and before His ascension (see Luke 24:13ff.), but most of the teaching will be done by the Holy Spirit, after our Lord's departure. This is the subject of verses 13-16. While Jesus will be physically absent, the Holy Spirit will be present among and within them. The things which the Spirit teaches them are the things which Jesus will be teaching them. The reason Jesus can say this is that the truth which the Spirit is teaching is the truth which He hears from our Lord. The Spirit's teaching comes from and glorifies the Lord Jesus (verses 3-4), just as our Lord's teaching came from and glorified the Father (John 8:26, 40). We should take note of the important fact that Jesus is speaking to His disciples here. He promises to reveal truth *to them* through the Spirit. He does not make a general statement, that new truth will be revealed to an indefinite number of people, over an indefinite period of time. He informs them that He will reveal His truth to them. I believe that this promise of future revelation through the Holy Spirit is a promise that pertains to the New Testament apostles and is not a promise which can be claimed by men today. By future revelation, I mean revelation which claims to be Scripture and which has authority as Scripture (i.e., the Bible). It seems clear to me that the apostles, through

whom the New Testament Scriptures were given, were viewed as a distinct group, confined to New Testament times. Those who were to be regarded as true apostles were accredited by the “**signs of a true apostle**” (Hebrews 2:1-4; 2 Peter 1:16-21; 2 Corinthians 12:12).

A further observation should be noted. Jesus promises to reveal *all truth* to the apostles. We know that this does not mean that He will reveal all knowledge. How could the omniscience (all-knowing) of God be revealed to men? John makes clear that his Gospel, as all the others, is but a sampling of the things Jesus said and did: “This is the disciple who testifies about these things and has written these things, and we know that his testimony is true. There are many other things that Jesus did. If every one of them were written down, I suppose the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written” (John 21:24-25). Jesus must therefore mean that all the truth which is necessary for the church will be revealed through the apostles, and that there will be no lack to be made up later on. The words of Paul seem to support this conclusion as well (Acts 20:18-21, 25-32). In this text, Paul claims to have taught the Ephesians all the truth they needed to know. If they were taught all they needed to know, then there is no need for further revelation. Beyond this, Paul warns that false teachers will seek to convey “new truth,” which is nothing more than “man-made teaching” that appeals to fleshly desires and which will attract a following. Peter’s words also imply a completeness concerning that which our Lord will reveal to and through His apostles (2 Peter 1:3-4). Leon Morris therefore issues a sober warning: Believers should be very careful here, for from time to time through the history of the Christian church, people have arisen who have said that they had new revelations and they have led people astray. It is important for us to keep a firm hold on the truth that the definitive revelation has been given in Scripture. Christian teaching is the teaching God gave through Christ and Christ’s apostles. Nothing can claim to be authentic Christian teaching that does not agree with this. Allow me to point out one more observation. The revelation which our Lord promises the apostles is not only from Christ, it is Christ-centered (John 16:14-15). The revelation which is promised is that truth which has come from the Father, to the Son, and through the Spirit. It is thus our Lord’s teaching. But it is not merely the teaching of (i.e. from) our Lord; it is the teaching concerning our Lord. False revelations are those which appeal to man’s fallen desires (2 Timothy 4:1-4; 2 Peter 2:18-22), which elevate men (Acts 20:30; 1 Corinthians 1:10ff.), and which draw men’s focus away from Christ (1 Corinthians 1:22-31; 2 Peter 2:1; 1 John 2:18-25). Any teaching which claims to be divine revelation and does not exalt Christ is false teaching. A preacher friend of mine used to say, “All false teaching is either the Bible plus, or the Bible minus.” False teaching either seeks to add to or to take away from Scripture. I think one can also say, “All false teaching is either Christ plus, or Christ minus.” Paul would say, “True teaching is Christ only.”

(Adapted from URL: <https://bible.org/seriespage/35-christian-and-world-john-1518-1611>)

Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

From the beginning, God has taken steps to be present with humanity. In the case of Adam and Eve, this presence was first a blessing and later a threat. As long as they obeyed God, his presence was a great blessing. When they disobeyed, however, his presence exposed their shame. God is present with his people. In the desert wilderness, God dwelt in the tabernacle’s “Most Holy Place.” God was also present when the temple was built in Jerusalem. When Jesus was born, God became present in a different way, a physical way. One of the designations prophesied for Jesus was Immanuel: “God with us” (Isaiah 7:14). For those in Palestine who believed in Christ, this physical presence was a wonderful thing. For those who rejected him, it became their condemnation. Today God is yet present in his world. The presence of God is expressed through his Spirit. The presence of the Spirit is a threat to those who resist the Spirit’s threefold reproof regarding sin, righteousness, and judgment. But for those who embrace the promises of Jesus, the indwelling Spirit is a source of comfort, strength, and truth. And so it shall be until Christ returns.

Practical Points from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator

1. In God’s time, we will understand fully those things that now seem confusing (John 16:4-5)
2. Never allow any present circumstance to distract you from God’s larger plan (vss. 6-7)

3. While Jesus was limited physically on earth, the Holy Spirit is available and present with every believer, anyplace, anytime.
4. The Holy Spirit convicts men of sin and leads believers to repentance and righteousness (vss. 8-10)
5. Satan has been judged and cannot condemn the believer (vs. 11)
6. God will reveal only as much of His truth as we are able to handle at the time (vss. 12-15)