

## **Introduction.**

In this booklet we are going to study some of the things that the Bible teaches about the Person of the Holy Spirit. In our country today there is a huge amount of confusion with regard to the Holy Spirit and His work. There are many people who speak about the Holy Spirit and have lots of things to say about Him, but when you examine their words you find that they are just telling you their thoughts; they are not preaching that which is in the Bible. This is a very dangerous thing. We need to be very careful that we understand exactly what the Bible is teaching about the Person and work of the Holy Spirit otherwise our whole understanding of Christianity will be wrong.

## **Jesus' teaching on the Holy Spirit.**

A few hours before His death on the cross of Calvary, the Lord Jesus met with His disciples in the upper room. After they had eaten a meal, the Lord Jesus began to give them some teaching. This teaching is found in John chapters 13-16. During this teaching session, the Lord Jesus taught His disciples about the Person and work of the Holy Spirit. In particular, there are four texts in these chapters in John's gospel where the Lord gave teaching about the Holy Spirit. In this booklet, we will look specifically at these four texts to see what the Lord Jesus teaches about the Holy Spirit. The four texts we are going to be looking at are: Jn. 14:15-18; Jn. 14:25-26; Jn. 15:26-27; and Jn. 16:8-16.

Because we are looking at these passages specifically, you will notice as you read through this booklet that there are some parts of the work of the Holy Spirit which we will not cover here. For example, there is very little in this booklet about the gifts of the Holy Spirit. These are matters which we will study in another course.

As you read this booklet remember that you are reading the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ. There may be many things here that you do not agree with. Many people have been given teaching by others on the subject of the Holy Spirit that is not accurate. They have been given man's teaching rather than teaching from the word of God. Perhaps that is your situation. You have heard a lot of teaching given by people and you hold strongly to the teaching you have been given. But perhaps the teaching you have is not based on the Bible. Perhaps you have received man's opinions and man's thinking rather than the living word of God. In this booklet we will not be looking at what other people are saying about the Holy Spirit, we shall be studying the teaching of Jesus Christ Himself. If you find that the views you hold are contrary to what He is teaching then you must abandon your views and submit to His teaching. This is the sign of a true follower of Christ: He submits to Christ and His teaching.

## **Lesson One, Please read John 14:15-18.**

There are two important lessons that we learn from this passage.

### **1. The Holy Spirit is God Himself.**

The Bible teaches us very clearly that when we speak about the Holy Spirit we are actually speaking about God Himself. The Bible teaches us that we love, worship and serve one God who exists eternally as three Persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Each Person is fully God. This means, therefore, that the Holy Spirit is none other than God Himself. This very important truth is found in Christ's teaching throughout this passage. The Lord Jesus in this passage is speaking about the fact that He is going back to heaven. He knows that His disciples will be troubled by this and so His teaching in these passages is designed to comfort and encourage them. He says to them that He is going back to the Father but that does not mean that He is abandoning them. In these passages, He teaches them that He will not leave them as orphans but will send the Holy Spirit to be with them. When we examine this teaching of Christ about the person and ministry of the Holy Spirit, we see that the Holy Spirit is God.

(i) Notice in the first place, Jesus says, "The Father will give you another Counsellor to be with you forever." He tells the disciples that He is going away, but "another Counsellor" is coming and that this Counsellor will be with the disciples forever (see v. 16). It is quite clear from this that the one who is coming will continue to do what Christ Himself was doing and that His work is an eternal work: He will be with the disciples forever. We can see from this that the Holy Spirit Himself is God. How else can He continue to do the work forever unless He is God?

(ii) Notice in the second place, that Christ speaks of the Holy Spirit as His personal representative. He says in v. 18, "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you." He does not say, "Something else will come to you," He says, "I will come to you." So when the Holy Spirit came to the believers, it was in effect Christ coming to the believers. This does not mean that the Holy Spirit and Christ are the self same Person, it means that the Holy Spirit is exactly like Jesus Christ: He is fully God. If He was not fully God then He could not continue the work that Christ was doing. If He was anything less than God then the disciples would be left as orphans.

This, of course, is not the only place in the Bible where we are taught that the Holy Spirit is God. In Ps. 139:7 David says clearly that the Spirit is God. He says in his prayer to God, "Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence?" The Spirit of God is the presence of God because the Spirit is God.

The New Testament also teaches very clearly that the Holy Spirit is God. When Ananias

told a lie to the church, Peter said to him, “Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit...you have not lied to men but to God” (Acts 5:3-4). When the Lord Jesus gave instructions on how we are to baptise believers, He said we are to baptise them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19). This is a very clear statement that the Spirit is God, just as the Father is God and the Son is God.

This, then, is the first great truth we see in this passage, that the Holy Spirit is God Himself. This has several important implications for us as Christians.

(i) In the first place, we have to be very careful how we think about the Holy Spirit. Many Christians hardly ever think about the Holy Spirit, and when they do think about Him, they only think of things like gifts and “exciting” worship. They do not realise that He is fully God and so we must be careful how we think of Him.

(ii) In the second place, we have to make sure that we understand the Holy Spirit's work correctly. The passage in John that we are studying gives us much teaching about the Person and work of the Holy Spirit. It is interesting to notice that nowhere in this passage does the Lord Jesus refer to gifts like tongues and healing, and nowhere does He speak about energetic and exciting worship. He speaks about the work of the Holy Spirit in terms of being a comforter who will be with the disciples. There is no doubt that in our country most people have never made a careful study of the Bible to see what it says about the Holy Spirit. They have a lot of thoughts of their own as to who the Holy Spirit is and how He works but they never study the Bible to see what it actually says about Him. This is a great mistake. The Holy Spirit is God. If we do not read the Bible to see what it says about Him then we will never understand our God.

(iii) In the third place, we need to be careful how we speak about the Holy Spirit. The Bible warns us against careless talk and it commands us not to speak about God in a careless manner. It is therefore most important that we think very carefully before we speak about the Holy Spirit. If we do not know what the Bible says about the Holy Spirit then it is best not to say too much until we have read the Bible and learnt what it says about Him. We are speaking about God Himself and His work, we cannot be careless and ignorant and say things we do not even understand ourselves. This will dishonour God.

(iv) In the fourth place, we need to remember that the Holy Spirit is God and He is therefore sovereign. This means that He is the one who is in control, not men. Men sometimes seem to think that they have control over the Holy Spirit and can make the Holy Spirit do things that they want done. They think of the Holy Spirit as some very strong person who is under their direction. They know the Holy Spirit can work miracles and they think they can control Him and how He does His miracles. Such thoughts are unbiblical and sinful. The Holy Spirit is not our servant, we are His servants. The Holy Spirit is not under our control,

we are to be under His control. The Holy Spirit is not there to obey our commands, we are here to obey His commands. He is God and therefore He is in control of all things.

Nebuchadnezzar said about God, “All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No-one can hold back his hand or say to him: 'What have you done'” (Daniel 4:35). These words apply to the Holy Spirit. He is God which means He works according to His own plans, He is not the servant of men, men are His servants. He is not someone whom we can command, He is God and He commands us.

The sovereignty of the Holy Spirit is seen most clearly in salvation. Jesus spoke about this when He said, “The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit” (Jn. 3:8). The work of salvation is the work of God, not the work of man. It is God who decides who is going to be born again, not man. A baby does not decide when it is going to be born. It does not say to itself when it is in the womb, “The time has come for me to be born, I will now come out of the womb.” It is born when God decides the time is right. Some babies are born earlier than expected and some later. It is not up to the baby, it is God who decides. In the same way, a person cannot decide to be born again. He is dead in trespasses and sin (Eph. 2:1) and dead men do not make decisions. It is God who decides who is going to be born again and when. The Holy Spirit is God and He is sovereign in salvation. He works according to the plan of the Triune God, not according to the plans of man.

## 2. The Holy Spirit is a Person.

A person is a living being, someone who thinks and feels and plans. The Holy Spirit is a Person. We know this because of the way Jesus speaks about Him in this passage. Jesus calls Him the Counsellor. A counsellor is someone who helps us in time of need. This means a counsellor has to be a person, he cannot be a rock or a piece of wood. Furthermore, Jesus says to His disciples, “I will not leave you as orphans, I will come to you.” This again tells us that the Holy Spirit is a Person: He is Christ's presence in His people. Again, in Acts 13:2 we read, “The Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.'” All these things show very clearly that the Holy Spirit is a Person: He is the Counsellor, He is Christ's presence in His people and He speaks. This teaching has several very important implications for us.

(i) We need to be careful how we speak of the Holy Spirit. There are many Christians today who use the word “it” when speaking about the Holy Spirit. This, of course, is completely wrong. We do not use the word “it” when speaking about a person, we use the word “he.” Notice in this passage that the word “he” is used throughout when referring to the Holy Spirit.

(ii) We need to be careful how we think about the Holy Spirit. Most people have not fully grasped that the Holy Spirit is a Person with His own views and His own feelings on various matters. Many churches, for example, claim that they have the Holy Spirit with them, especially when they are bringing worship to God. But they never ask themselves what does the Holy Spirit think about the way they are bringing worship to God. Is the Spirit pleased, for example, when a person prays in a really loud voice and offers a long prayer with lots of repetition? Is the Spirit pleased when people in a church sing the same chorus again and again and when their singing goes on for hours? Is the Spirit pleased when people in a church are forced to bring money to the offering by the pastor? These are important questions we need to ask ourselves, especially in the life of the local church.

(iii) We need to remember that the Holy Spirit is a Person and is therefore watching every area of our lives. He is God and therefore He is everywhere. It is sadly true that for many people Christianity is something they do in the church or in public. It is sadly the case that for many people their Christianity is a matter of outward appearances. They are careful to make sure that they appear to be good, decent, moral Christians in public. But when they are by themselves or when they are with their closest friends then they no longer bother to be “Christians” but are as worldly as the people of the world. They forget that the Holy Spirit is God and that He is watching everything we do. There is nothing hidden from Him. We cannot hide our sins from Him and we cannot hide our deepest thoughts and desires from Him. He sees us as we really are not as we appear to other people.

## **Lesson Two, Please read John 14:15-18.**

These few verses are full of very important teaching about the Holy Spirit and so in this second lesson we are going to look at these verses again. These are some of the lessons we learn from the passage:

### **1. The Holy Spirit is our Counsellor.**

Jesus said, “I will ask the Father and He will give you another Counsellor” (v. 16). There are three very important things that the Holy Spirit does as our Counsellor.

(i) He gives us help and support. The word “Counsellor” can also be translated “helper” and is a word which actually means someone who stands next to us and supports us physically. The Holy Spirit was sent by the Lord Jesus to give help and support to the Christian in his life here on earth. Later on in this same passage the Lord Jesus says, “If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you” (Jn. 15:19). Life for the Christian here on earth is not easy. We are hated by the world because we belong to Christ and we are under constant temptation to leave the Lord and follow the ways of sin. The world is forever trying to seduce us with its pleasures and possessions. There are many, sadly, who have not bothered to fight but have decided to live worldly lives. However, those who are loyal to the Lord and have decided to fight sin and the world find that they are in need of help. The fight against sin and against the world is a hard fight and we cannot succeed by ourselves. We need help from heaven. This is why the Holy Spirit was given to us: He lives in us and helps us to live the Christian life in a world full of sin and compromise.

(ii) He gives us guidance from the word of God. A counsellor is a person who gives guidance and advice to someone. In the same way the Holy Spirit is there to guide us. There are many situations in life when we are not sure what to do. We are not always sure how we are to live so that we may bring glory and honour to our Lord. The Holy Spirit uses the word of God to guide us. It is important for us to understand that in all His work, the Holy Spirit uses the Scriptures. He does not do anything without the Bible and He will never guide a person to do anything that is against the Scriptures. So if a young man says, “The Holy Spirit told me I must marry this girl even though she is not saved,” then we may be sure he is wrong. The Bible makes it clear that he must not marry an unsaved girl and the Holy Spirit would never give him guidance that is contrary to the word of God. This is why it is so important to know the word of God. The Holy Spirit does not just work without the word, He uses the word in everything He does.

(iii) He gives us comfort from the word of God. When the Bible speaks of a comforter, it does not mean someone who comforts us in time of grief like the death of a family member.

Rather, the Bible is speaking about the ministry of the Holy Spirit in giving assurance to the people of God that they are truly saved and will be in heaven in eternity. The ministry of assurance is a very important ministry of the Holy Spirit. As the saved people of God we are in rather a strange situation. On the one hand, we have been forgiven all our sins and are now counted righteous in the sight of God on account of faith in Christ. But on the other hand we still have sin living in us. This means that a person who is truly saved can often get discouraged. He sees his sin and knows that it displeases God, and he wonders if God can love him and whether God will one day allow him to enter heaven. A Christian can therefore live a very unhappy life thinking that God does not love him because of his sins. This is one of the main reasons why the Lord Jesus sent the Holy Spirit. Paul says, "The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children" (Rom. 8:16). This is the ministry of the Holy Spirit as our comforter. He grants us assurance that we are indeed the children of God.

## 2. The world cannot accept the Holy Spirit.

Jesus says in v. 17, "The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him." The world (meaning people who are unsaved) is unable to accept the Holy Spirit. The word "accept" means to acknowledge. Jesus is saying here that the world cannot accept that the Holy Spirit exists and that He is at work in the world. The Holy Spirit does many wonderful things here on earth. He convicts a sinner of his sins and bring him to Christ in repentance and faith. The Spirit brings the person into the kingdom of God and adopts him into God's family. Then the Holy Spirit begins to work inside that person to change him. There are millions of stories of how people who were steeped in sin and lived the most terrible lives were wonderfully converted and how their lives were changed completely so that they became great servants of God. All this is the work of the Holy Spirit. But the world is unable to accept any of this. They are willing to accept that a person's life has changed totally, but they will not accept that it is the work of the Holy Spirit. They usually think that the person has tried really hard and by his own effort and has changed his life.

Jesus gives us the reason why the world cannot accept the Spirit. It is because they neither see Him nor know Him. They cannot see the Holy Spirit because He does not have a body. He lives in the believer. And they do not know Him because they are not saved. Only a saved person is able to know God. The unsaved person can know things about God but he can never know God, only the saved person can know God. Paul says, "The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor. 2:14).

## 3. The Holy Spirit was active in the Old Testament and during the time of Christ.

Jesus said to His disciples, "The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you." Notice the way that the Lord Jesus speaks about the presence of the Holy Spirit. He does not say, "He will be with you," He says, "He is with you," meaning that even when the Lord Jesus Himself was here on earth the Holy Spirit was here and active. We know this because the gospels tell us that He was active in the ministry of Christ. It was the Spirit who led Him into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil (Matt. 4:1), and it was in the "power of the Spirit" that He returned to Galilee after that temptation (Lk. 4:14). On one occasion Jesus said, "If I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you" (Matt. 12:28), meaning that it was the Spirit who had given Him the power to drive out demons. We need to understand, therefore, that the ministry of the Holy Spirit here on earth did not begin on the day of Pentecost. It is not the case that He was in heaven until the day of Pentecost and then came to earth for the first time on that day. We know that He was active in the Old Testament, because it was He who moved the Old Testament prophets to write the Scriptures: "For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet. 1:21). In the Old Testament and during the time of Jesus, the Holy Spirit was here in the world and He was with the people of God.

## 4. The Holy Spirit now lives in all the people of God.

Jesus goes on to say in Jn. 14:17, "He lives with you and will be in you." This is a reference to the day of Pentecost. On the day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit began His work here on earth in a very special way. Whereas before He was with the people of God, He now began to live in all the people of God. This is why Jesus said, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him" (Jn. 14:23).

There is a teaching in our country that only some people have been filled with the Holy Spirit. There are churches who say that a person can be born again but does not have the Holy Spirit, he needs to be baptised with the Holy Spirit. There are churches today saying that if a person does not speak in tongues then he is not filled with the Holy Spirit. This is how some churches are teaching today. But this is not true. The Holy Spirit of God now lives in every person who is born again. It is not the case that only some believers have been filled with the Holy Spirit. The Bible says, "If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ then he does not belong to Christ" (Rom. 8:9). Every person who is born again has the Holy Spirit living in him, the Spirit has been given to all God's people. God Himself said, "I will pour out my Spirit on all people," (Acts 2:17), meaning all who are born again, not just some.

## 5. The Holy Spirit is Christ's representative here on earth.

In Jn. 14:18 Jesus said, "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you." In this teaching session in the upper room, His main aim is to comfort the disciples and to encourage them. In a few hours they would see Him arrested, tortured and then crucified. He did not want them to lose faith in Him. And so He says to them, "I will not leave you as orphans, I will come to you." In saying this, He is speaking about the coming of the Holy Spirit. This means that the Holy Spirit is in every way identical to Christ: He is God, just as Christ is God. It also means that the Holy Spirit will continue to minister to the disciples in the same way as Christ did. This is an area where there is a lot of confusion and misunderstanding among Christians today. Many Christians do not see any link between the Person and work of Christ and the Person and work of the Holy Spirit. In their thinking, Christ came into this world as our Saviour and died on the cross for us, and then the Holy Spirit came to do something completely different. In the thinking of many Christians today the Person of the Holy Spirit bears very little resemblance to the Person of Christ, and the work that the Holy Spirit does today has no relationship at all to the work that Christ did. To many Christians, the work of Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit are two completely different things and the two things bear no relationship at all to each other. This is how many Christians today think. But this is not true. There is an important link between the work of Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit's main aim is to glorify Christ (Jn. 16:14).

This means that the Holy Spirit is God just as Christ is God. He came to continue the work that Christ began. There is no real difference in the ministry that the Lord Jesus did when He was here on earth and the ministry that the Holy Spirit is now doing. It is not the case that the work of salvation is finished. The Lord Jesus by His death on the cross secured our salvation. But it was then necessary for the Holy Spirit to come and continue and complete that work. We human beings are dead in trespasses and sins and cannot respond to the gospel message unless the Spirit first works in us. We cannot come to Christ in repentance and faith until the Holy Spirit makes us born again. And so the Holy Spirit came as Christ's representative to continue the work that He began to do.

## Lesson Three, Please Read John 14:25-26.

This is the second of four texts where the Lord Jesus gives teaching on the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

### 1. The Holy Spirit was sent to explain to the disciples the teachings of Jesus.

Jesus says, "All this I have spoken while I was with you. But the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things" (Jn. 14:25-26). When we read the gospels it is quite clear that the Lord Jesus gave a lot of teaching to His disciples but many times they failed to understand Him. There were many things to do with His life and death and resurrection that they just did not understand. There were many things He taught about the kingdom of God but the disciples simply did not understand Him. This is because man cannot understand the things of God until the Holy Spirit gives him understanding: "The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them for they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor. 2:14).

Notice carefully what the Lord Jesus is saying here. He is not saying that the Holy Spirit will give to people teaching that is not found in the Bible. He is not saying that the Holy Spirit will teach certain people special things that will not be made available to the rest of God's people. He is saying that He will explain the word of God to the people of God. This is why Jesus says, "All this I have spoken while I was still with you." He spoke to them many words and they did not understand a lot of His teaching. And so He tells them, "But the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things." There are two important implications from this teaching.

(i) We can only understand the word of God when the Holy Spirit teaches us. The word of God cannot be understood by a person using his natural intelligence, it is spiritual truth and so it is understood spiritually. There are many people who are highly intelligent in the things of the world, but they cannot understand the Bible because it is spiritual truth that is spiritually discerned. This means that we should not place a lot of emphasis on human learning. There are people who think that if a person has been to university and has got a degree then he is able to understand the Bible because he is intelligent. But this is not true. A person can have many degrees from many universities, but that does not mean that he can understand the Bible. Someone who has only been to primary school can understand the Bible because it is the Holy Spirit who teaches us the Bible.

(ii) All God's people should read the Bible. There is a very common belief in our country that only some people can understand the Bible. People think that only a pastor or a bishop can understand the Bible, and that ordinary people can never understand what the Bible is

saying even if they try. This is a very common belief in our country and it is completely wrong. Nowhere in the Bible are we told that only pastors and bishops can understand the Bible. Nowhere are we told that the ordinary person reading it can never understand it. These things are not taught anywhere in the Bible. Rather, we are told that the Holy Spirit will teach everyone who reads the Bible and wants to understand it. We do not need special degrees or anything like that. Anyone who reads the Bible carefully and prayerfully with a humble, teachable heart can understand it.

## **2. The Holy Spirit was sent to remind the disciples the teachings of Jesus.**

Jesus said to His disciples that the Counsellor “will remind you of everything I have said to you” (Jn. 14:26). We may wonder why the disciples needed to be reminded of everything that Jesus taught them. The answer, of course, is that after the ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ back to the Father, His disciples had two very important ministries:

(i) The disciples had a teaching ministry in the early church. Soon after the Lord Jesus returned to the Father, the Holy Spirit came and the number of people who became followers of Christ increased dramatically. On the day of Pentecost alone 3,000 people were converted to Christ, and in the weeks that followed many thousands more came to faith in Christ. The Bible is very clear that when people are converted to Christ they must be taught the Christian faith so that they are rooted and grounded in Christ and cannot be led astray. The new convert is like a young tree that has been planted in a very windy area and needs to establish roots quickly otherwise he will be blown away. This is why in the early church the apostles gave attention to the ministry of the word (Acts 6:4). All Christian teaching has as its foundation the Person, works and teaching of the Lord Jesus. When we teach the Christian faith we are actually teaching who Jesus was, what He did and what He taught. And so the disciples needed to be reminded of everything the Lord Jesus taught them while He was with them. They needed to remember everything that He had taught them over the three years He was with them. This is what the Holy Spirit did when He came.

(ii) The disciples were involved in writing Scripture. Many years after the death, resurrection and ascension of Christ, His disciples wrote down details of His life here on earth. Some of these books, like the gospel of John, was written more than fifty years after the ascension of Christ. How did John (who was an old man when he wrote his gospel) remember in detail the teachings of Jesus? How did he remember everything that Jesus taught in the upper room just before His crucifixion? The answer, of course, is that the Holy Spirit reminded him. This was a very important part of the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the early church: He inspired the disciples of Christ to write the New Testament, just as He had inspired the prophets to write the Old Testament (2 Pet. 1:19-21).

We need to understand, therefore, how important it is for us to teach the Scriptures and not

just our own views and ideas. It is a sad truth in our country that a pastor or a preacher will very rarely explain to the congregation in detail what the Bible actually says. It is usually the case that the preacher will read a few verses from the Bible and then spend the whole sermon giving his views and ideas and telling stories. There is very little teaching from the Bible itself. This is a great mistake. The Holy Spirit came to teach the disciples the things that Jesus had spoken. The words that Jesus spoke were of the greatest importance. The disciples did not fully understand them and so the Holy Spirit gave them understanding. In the same way the words that are written in the Bible are of great importance. It is the duty of every preacher to study the Bible diligently so that he knows exactly what a certain passage is saying and then to preach the content of that passage and to apply it. That is the kind of preaching that God demands from us.

## Lesson Four, Please read John 15:26-27

In this text Jesus says, “When the Counsellor 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. And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning.”

There are four important lessons we are being taught here.

### 1. The Holy Spirit was sent on the day of Pentecost by the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus says in this text, “When the Counsellor comes, whom I will send to you.” When He returned to the Father after His resurrection, He sent the Holy Spirit to come to the world. This is why when Peter was explaining the events on the day of Pentecost he said, “God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact. Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear” (Acts 2:32-33). The fact that the Lord Jesus sent the Holy Spirit has some very important implications.

(i) It shows us that our salvation is very carefully planned by God. God the Father first planned who is going to get saved and then sent the Son to die on the cross for those whom He had chosen. When the Son had completed His work on the cross, He returned to heaven and sent the Holy Spirit. The whole programme of saving sinners is carefully planned from beginning to end.

(ii) It shows us that the Holy Spirit came to continue and complete the work which Christ began. This is something that most people do not understand very clearly. To most Christians activities of the Holy Spirit have no relationship at all to what Jesus did. They do not realise that the Holy Spirit came to continue the work of Christ.

(iii) It shows us that the Holy Spirit is not under the direction of man. This again is a great error that many people fall into. They think that they can lay hands on people and give the Holy Spirit to them. We hear of meetings where people are called forward to “receive the Holy Spirit.” Then the pastor or preacher lays hands on people and says to them that they have now received the Holy Spirit. The impression he gives is that the Holy Spirit is under his control and he can give the Holy Spirit to any person. This, however, is not biblical. The Holy Spirit is God Himself. He came to complete the work that Christ began. He enabled the followers of Christ to preach repentance and faith in Christ.

### 2. The Spirit proceeds from the Father.

Jesus says, “The Holy Spirit who goes out from the Father.” It is quite clear from these verses that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit work closely together in the great plan of salvation. It is not the case that the Lord Jesus and the Holy Spirit are working independently of the Father in the plan of salvation. It is not the case that the Lord Jesus and the Holy Spirit between them worked out the plan of salvation without the Father. The Father was involved in every stage of our salvation. The Holy Spirit came from the Father and was sent to earth by the Son. The plan of salvation is the plan of the triune God.

### 3. The Spirit came to testify about the Lord Jesus Christ.

The word “testify” means to give an account of an event that has happened. A person in court testifies to what he has seen and heard: he gives an account of an event that has happened. The Holy Spirit came to give testimony to the fact that the Lord Jesus came to earth to save His people from their sins. There are two ways in which He testifies about the Lord Jesus Christ.

(i) The Spirit gave testimony to the disciples about the saving work of Jesus Christ. Peter said, “The God of our fathers raised Jesus from the dead – whom you had killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Saviour that he might give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel. We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him” (Acts 5:32). It is the Spirit who gave the disciples understanding so that they could make sense of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is He who explained to them the plan of salvation and how it was being carried out. This is why Jesus said, “When he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all 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” (Jn. 16:13).

(ii) The Holy Spirit gave the disciples the courage and ability to testify about Christ. Jesus says in this text, “When the Counsellor 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. And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning.” From the day of Pentecost onwards, the disciples preached Christ in every place, even when they were threatened and commanded not to do so. This is because they were given power from on high when the Holy Spirit came. It is He who led them into Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria and the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8).

## **Lesson Five, Please read John 16:8-11**

In this passage, the Lord Jesus speaks about the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the world.

### **1. The Spirit convicts the world of guilt in regard to sin.**

Jesus says, “When he comes he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin because men do not believe in me.” The Lord Jesus in these verses is speaking about the ministry of the Holy Spirit whereby He convicts the unsaved people of the world. The unsaved people in the world live lives of sin and will therefore be judged for their sin. However, it is interesting to notice that there is one sin in particular that the Holy Spirit will convict them of: that they did not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible makes it clear that it is their sins that will take them to hell and that this is the greatest sin of all because the Holy Spirit has given testimony that He is the Saviour sent from God and the disciples of Christ have given testimony that He is the Saviour sent from God. It is important for us to realise that the primary reason why the unsaved will be sent to hell in eternity is because they did not believe in the the Lord Jesus Christ. That is the main reason why they are cast out from the presence of God and cast into hell for eternity. It is not only because they lived lives of sin, but primarily because they did not believe in the Son of God.

Perhaps an illustration will help us to understand this point. Imagine that a man who cannot swim falls into a deep river and is drowning. A fisherman on a boat nearby immediately goes to the drowning man, holds out his hand and says, “Take my hand and I will rescue you.” For some reason, however, the man refuses to obey. He is able to reach out and take the man's hand, but he refuses and so he drowns. Later on, the village elders hold a meeting to investigate the matter, and they ask the question, “Why did he die?” Of course there are several answers to the question: He was careless when walking near the river and fell in, he could not swim, and so on. All these are true reasons, but the main reason is that he did not take the hand of the man who was offering to rescue him. In the same way those who die in their sins and go into hell for eternity do so for a variety reasons: because they are born in sins and trespasses and because they have lived sinful lives, and so on. But the main reason is that they have refused to come to Christ and be saved in Him.

### **2. The Spirit convicts the world of guilt in regard to righteousness.**

Jesus says that the Holy Spirit will convict the world of guilt “in regard to righteousness because I am going to the Father.” In order to understand this, we need to make sure that we first understand the word “righteousness.” The Bible teaches us two things about the word “righteousness.”

(i) In the first place, the Bible teaches us that righteousness means to obey the law of God perfectly without any fault at all. The person who all his life has fully, completely and perfectly obeyed the law of God is considered righteous. This is what the word means.

(ii) In the second place, the Bible teaches us that the only way anyone can be righteous is through faith in Christ. Paul says, “But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe” (Rom. 3:21-22). In other words the Bible is saying that we as human beings can never obey the law of God fully, completely and perfectly. The Lord Jesus, however, did obey the law of God fully, perfectly and completely and He gives to us His obedience. We are found righteous in the sight of God because Christ gives us His righteousness.

So what Jesus is saying is that the Holy Spirit convicts the world of guilt in regard to righteousness because He has gone to the Father having lived a perfect life here on earth. The reason the unsaved people do not have righteousness is because they did not come to Christ seeking it. Had they come to Him, He would have given them His righteousness. The fact that He has gone to the Father shows that He lived a righteous life here on earth, because if He had not lived a righteous life, He would not have gone to the Father, He would have been cast out of the presence of God forever. So the Holy Spirit will convict the world of guilt for not being righteous.

### **3. The Holy Spirit convicts the world of guilt in regard to judgement.**

Jesus says that the Holy Spirit will convict the world of guilt in regard to judgement “because the prince of this world stands condemned already.” The Bible makes it very clear that the Lord Jesus is coming one day to judge the living and the dead. It also teaches us that the judgement of God is an on-going thing, it is not something that will only happen on the day the Lord returns, it is taking place now. However, when we look at how the people of the world are living it is clear that they do not really believe that God judges sin. If they really did believe that God is holy and that He judges sin they would not live the way they do.

However, most people in the world think that the statements in the Bible about God judging sin are not to be taken seriously. They think that God is like a parent who threatens to beat a child if the child does a certain thing. Usually, the child does do that thing and the parent takes no action. He never intended to hit the child, he was just threatening the child. Most people think God is like that, that He is just threatening us and that He would never actually judge us and send us to hell. However, there is one thing that proves beyond any doubt that God is indeed holy and that He does indeed judge the wicked: the fact that He has already judged and condemned Satan, the prince of this world. At the cross of Calvary the Lord Jesus defeated Satan and judged and condemned him. The fact that God has already acted in judgement shows that He is indeed holy and that He will indeed judge all who live lives of sin. This is why Jesus says that the Holy Spirit will convict the world of guilt in regard to judgement because the prince of this world is already judged. He is saying that the Holy Spirit will convict people of guilt and will judge them.

## Lesson Six, Please read John 16:12-16

These are the last recorded words of the Lord Jesus Christ on the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The things that He teaches here He has already taught but they are of great importance and so He repeats them. There are certain things about the work of the Holy Spirit which are vitally important and so He taught them again to emphasise them.

### 1. The Holy Spirit was sent to teach the disciples the word of God.

Jesus said, “When he, the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all 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.” The Lord Jesus gave a lot of teaching to His disciples which they did not understand at the time. It is quite clear, for example, that they did not understand what the kingdom of God was all about even though He had given them plain teaching about it. And so we read that after His resurrection they asked Him, “Lord are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?” (Acts 1:6). They were still thinking that Jesus had come to set up a kingdom in Israel with His throne and palace in Jerusalem.

And so in this passage the Lord Jesus tells them that when the Holy Spirit comes He will explain to them more clearly the teaching they have already received. Notice that the work of the Holy Spirit was not to give them new revelation, He was to guide them into the truth they had already received, which means He was to give them understanding of the things they had already received. Jesus had given them much teaching and these things were there in their minds although they did not understand them very clearly. Then when the Holy Spirit came, He gave them a proper understanding of what He had taught them. There are two implications for us from this.

(i) The word of God is sufficient for all our needs. The Holy Spirit did not come with any new revelation beside what the disciples had already received. It is not the case that He taught them truths and doctrines that they had never heard of before. Even the doctrines that are found in Paul's letters had already been given to the disciples in seed form. The Holy Spirit took that seed and germinated it in the minds of the disciples so that they saw these doctrines more fully and explained them in much greater detail in their letters. When we read the letters that men like Peter, Paul, James and John wrote we are not reading doctrines that have never before been heard of. We are reading things that the Lord Jesus had already taught. The apostles understood them in greater detail and applied them carefully to their readers. This means that the work of the Holy Spirit is not to give new revelation to the people of God.

There are people in our country today, for example, who say that the Holy Spirit is revealing things to them that are not found in the Bible and that are even contrary to what is found in the Bible. This is one of the main reasons why Christians in our country do not read and

study the Bible diligently. They believe that the Bible is out of date and that the Holy Spirit will give them new teaching each day. But this is a serious mistake. The Holy Spirit was sent to teach what has already been revealed. He will only give us deeper understanding of what is found in the Scriptures. If we do not read and study the Bible then we cannot receive from Him an understanding of what is found in it and we will always remain shallow Christians.

(ii) The Bible can be understood by all of God's people because it is the Holy Spirit who gives us understanding of His word. There are millions in our country today who believe that a person has to be a pastor, a “man of God” before he can understand the Bible. They believe that if an ordinary person who is not a pastor or a “man of God” tries to read the Bible then he will never understand it. They believe that only certain special people can have understanding of the word of God. This, of course, is not at all true. The Holy Spirit has been given to all God's people and not just to some, and His work is going on in all believers and not just some. If a person wants to know what the Bible is saying and wants to understand it then what he needs to do is to read the Bible carefully and prayerfully, asking God the Holy Spirit to give him understanding of it. As he thinks about and meditates on what he has read he will find that gradually over time his understanding of what is written in the Bible will grow and he will understand more and more clearly how he is to live in the light of what God has written in His word.

### 2. The Holy Spirit came to bring glory to Christ.

Jesus says in this passage, “He will bring glory to me.” The way in which the Holy Spirit does this is to make known to us the character and teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is what Jesus means when He says in this text, “He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you.” The Lord Jesus Christ is fully God. This is why He says, “All that belongs to the Father is mine.” He has all the characteristics of God. The Holy Spirit therefore brings glory to Him by making known His character to His people. As we see more and more of the Lord Jesus Christ and understand His character more and more, so we see His glory because His glory is in His character.

The implication of this for us as believers today is that we bring glory to God by declaring His character to a lost world. Most Christians today would say that their aim in life is to bring glory to God. But how exactly do we do that? The answer is that by our lives and our words we are to show the world what God is like. We are to speak of Him, telling people who He is and what He is like. And we are to be like Him so that people may see something of His character in our daily lives. This is how we are to bring glory to God in a lost world.