

The departure of Jesus and the coming of the Spirit of Truth (14:15-31)

The coming of the Spirit of truth (14:15-24)

In the first 14 verses of chapter 14 Jesus comforted the disciples and promised to return to receive them to Himself. The following verses speak of what will happen during the period between Jesus' departure and His return. The most significant development is that while Jesus is away He will send the Holy Spirit to serve as His substitute. John 14:15-31 is the first of several passages that refer to the Holy Spirit as the "Paraclete" (παράκλητος) – a Greek word that can be translated as "Comforter, Counselor, Advocate, or Helper." The significance of this title will be fleshed out as we go through the passages in which παράκλητος appears to avoid limiting the meaning by any one English word.

14:15 "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.

14:16 "I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper (Paraclete), that He may be with you forever;

14:17 that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you.

"If you love me" controls the grammar of verses 15-17 and even the content of verses 15-21. There are two things that happen if someone loves Jesus. First, if we love Jesus we will keep His commandments. Secondly, if we are those who love Jesus, we will receive the benefit of His prayers on our behalf; He will ask the Father to give us the Holy Spirit to help us and be with us forever.

The connection between love and obedience also occurs often. In 1 John 5:3 the love of God is defined by obedience. It says, "this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome." But the commands of Christ are not just ethical injunctions; they also include all that Jesus has said about Himself. In a parallel expression in John 14:23, Jesus said, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word." His word includes all that he has said about Himself as well as specific commands like "Receive me" (1:12), "Follow me" (1:43), "Believe in the light" (12:36), "Believe in God" (14:1), "Believe me" (14:11), "Abide in me" (15:4), and "Abide in my love" (15:9).

Jesus' commandments are His words, and belief in His words is tied to eternal life. In John 5:24 Jesus said, ". . . he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life." In this case hearing Jesus' words is synonymous to believing and obeying whatever Jesus has said.

Throughout the NT we see the pattern that the Holy Spirit is given by the Father at the Son's request (14:26; 15:26; 16:7). The Holy Spirit is with us, not just on occasion, or in times of our deepest needs, but always. It is also important to see that the Holy Spirit is not just with us; according to verse 17 He also abides in us. "With" suggests an association, a personal sharing with us. "In" has the idea of living inside. He is both external to us, and yet within us.

Since the term παράκλητος (Paraclete) means to be called alongside of to help, the NIV translates it as “Counselor” in 14:16. In secular Greek the term referred to an advocate in a court of law who was a witness or representative for the one on trial. The legal idea comes out more sharply in John 16:7-11, however, there the Paraclete functions more as a prosecuting attorney than as a defense counselor. The gospels never refer to Jesus as a Paraclete, but I John 2:1 does. It says, “if anyone sins, we have an Advocate (Paraclete) with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” Jesus is our Advocate in heaven who comes to our aid and defense when we sin; the Holy Spirit discharges His ministry on earth by strengthening and helping us.

Nevertheless, etymology by itself rarely determines the meaning of the word” (Carson, Discourse, 51). Word meaning is better determined by observing how the word is used. When we observe how the word is used, we see that the Paraclete, in many respects, serves as an ambassador to us for Jesus. An ambassador represents and fulfills the will of a sovereign. The Holy Spirit does what Jesus would do if He were there. This is made clear by three features.

1. He is called “*another* Paraclete.” (14:16 “another Helper”)

There are two different words for “another” in Greek. There is *another of the same kind*, and there is *another of a different kind*. For example, in Galatians 1:6 Paul warns the Galatians of deserting Him who called them by the grace of Christ, for “*another* gospel; which is really not *another*” (Gal. 1:6-7). In the first case, “*another* gospel” means a different gospel; the word used is *heteros* (ἕτερος), a word that is used to form *heterosexual*. The Galatians were following a gospel, but it was a different gospel than the real one. Paul then says it is really not *another* gospel. Here the word is *allos* (ἄλλος) which means another of the same kind; that is, Paul is saying that the gospel they are following is really not a gospel at all. Because of these different nuances of meaning, many translations translate the first “another” as “a *different*” gospel.

The word used in John 14:16 of the Paraclete is “another of the same kind.” The person of the Holy Spirit and His ministry is *essentially the same kind* as Jesus Himself is.

2. The Paraclete can also be seen an ambassador for Christ in that He and Jesus perform the same functions.

The Holy Spirit teaches (H.S. - Jn. 16:13 / Jesus - 7:14; 13:13), bears witness of the truth (H.S. - 15:26 f./ Jesus -8:14), convicts the world of sin (H.S. - 16:8-11/ Jesus -15:24), and dwells in the believer (H.S. - 14:16/ Jesus -14:23); all of these things Jesus also does. This is not to say that Jesus and the Holy Spirit have identical functions; it simply means that the Holy Spirit does for the disciples many things that Jesus did for them when He was present.

3. Thirdly, the Paraclete is also called the Spirit of Truth (14:17). Much of what the Spirit does is communicate truth about who Jesus is and what He did. This is also the work of an ambassador.

The world is skeptical of what it cannot see and it despises the truth so it cannot know the Holy Spirit. The disciples, however, will be conscious of His presence.

14:18 "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.

14:19 "After a little while the world will no longer see Me, but you will see Me; because I live, you will live also.

14:20 "In that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you.

When Jesus announced His departure, the disciples felt deserted, so Jesus assures them that they will not be abandoned but that He will come to them.

There are three different views as to what Jesus means by "I will come to you."

1) He will come to them at the resurrection. In two of Jesus' resurrection appearances He is said to "come" to the disciples (Jn. 20:19, 26). This also fits the words of Jesus: "I will come to you" and "*you will see Me.*"

2) Jesus will come to them in the Spirit. John 18-20 is framed by references to the coming of the Spirit (Jn. 14:16-17, and 25-26) so many think that this is what Jesus is referring to (Kostenberger, 436).

3) Jesus will return at His second coming. This idea is found in John 14:3.

Any of the above views are possible, and all three views have the same end result; namely, Jesus does not abandon the disciples. However, a couple of small clues lead us to think that Jesus is speaking of His departure at death and return at the resurrection. First, Jesus said "I will come to you" and "you will see Me." It seems hard to apply these words to the coming of the Spirit. It is not even clear that the Bible ever talks about Jesus as coming in the Spirit (Carson, 501). Secondly, He mentions that He will come "in a little while" which fits better with His resurrection than a more remote event. Thirdly, if He is trying to comfort them in their historical situation, it couldn't be His second coming because they did not see Him come in that capacity.

Jesus' resurrection meant that He would not abandon them, but it had a number of other implications for them as well. When Jesus rose from the dead, it was the guarantee that they will not be overcome by death; as Jesus said, "because I live, you will live also." In addition to that, after the resurrection, the disciples will also gain a fresh understanding of who Jesus is; it was at that time that they also understood that the Father was in Him. (a fuller explanation of this will come in chapter 17; Carson, 502, Morris, 652). Lastly, they will receive the benefits of the coming of the Spirit, for Jesus will not ask the Father to send the Comforter until He rises from the dead. Thus, the resurrection of Christ institutes a new era.

Once Jesus is crucified the world would not see Him anymore (after His resurrection Jesus only appeared to believers), but His death would only be a short interlude before the disciples saw Him again (14:19). Not only will He return from death, He will send the Holy Spirit to be with the disciples forever.

14:21 "He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him."

14:22 Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, "Lord, what then has happened that You are going to disclose Yourself to us and not to the world?"

14:23 Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him."

To "have" Jesus' commandments probably means to make Jesus' words our own, to take what He says into our innermost being. Keeping them is to apply them to daily life circumstances.

Jesus repeatedly tells us that loving Him is tied to keeping His commandments.

- Verse 15: "If you love me, you will keep my commandments."
- Verse 21: "Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me."
- Verse 23: "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word."
- Verse 24: "Whoever does not love me does not keep my words."
- 15:10: "If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love"

At face value this may sound like we earn salvation by our obedience, but that is a misunderstanding of the relationship of faith and obedience. Romans 5:8 says that God loved us while we were sinners. 1 John 4:19 says, "We love, because He first loved us." John 3:16 tells us that God's love for the world is what motivated Him to send Christ. If He loved us when we were His enemies, why would we have to earn His love now?

Loving Jesus is not the same as keeping his commandments. Keeping his word is the result of loving him, not the same as loving him.

- Verse 15: "If you love me, [the result will be that] you will keep my commandments."
- Verse 23: "If anyone loves me, [the result will be that] he will keep my word."

In chapter 15 Jesus says, "If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love"(Jn. 15:10). Jesus' obedience to the Father was not a matter of having to do things that He didn't want to do; rather, He obeyed the Father because He delighted in the Father, He had the mindset and desires of the Father and He had the same goals as the Father. Jesus makes His love for God and His obedience analogous to our love for Him. Jesus is not telling His disciples that they will prove they love Him by doing things that they don't want to do, but that real love for Christ is expressed in real desire for the things He desires. A true follower of Christ

loves what He loves and who He is. Thus, our love for Christ can be measured in our obedience to His commandments. This is the way that Jesus demonstrated His love for and unity with the Father.

To illustrate this, it helps to see the way “love” is used in John’s gospel. John 3:19 says, “People loved the darkness rather than the light.” “That is what they wanted. They desired it. They enjoyed it. They preferred it. They didn’t love the darkness out of duty. They loved it out of craving. The same kind of love is in John 12:43: ‘They loved the glory of man more than the glory of God.’ They wanted it. That’s what loving it means. They longed for it. They craved human praise. That’s how they ‘loved’ it” (Piper).

“Loving Jesus is not a matter of doing excellent things. It’s a matter of delighting in an excellent Savior” (Piper).

Regarding Judas’ question (Jn.14:22):

Jesus said that the Father will give you another Helper whom the world cannot receive, *because it does not see Him or know Him* (verse 17). Now in verse 21 He says, “He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and *I will love him and will disclose Myself to him.*” This prompts the question of Judas: How would it be possible for the Messiah (as popularly perceived) to show Himself to some and not everyone? The answer is their relationship to the Spirit.

The person who has and keeps Jesus’ commands will receive the Father’s love (14:21) and His indwelling presence (14:23). These gifts are not given to the world; that is, the love that He promises is a special love that is not extended to everyone. The world cannot accept the Spirit of truth. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 2:14 that “the natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.” John 3:16 makes it clear that God does love the world, but the gift of intimacy and help and love being promised in these verses is something the world cannot see, does not know, is not given, and does not experience. What is promised here is something so personal, so intimate, so reciprocal and relational that the world cannot receive it (Piper).

The greatest blessing of the text is Jesus’ promise of the triune God indwelling believers. In verse 17 Jesus said that the Spirit would abide in them. Then in verse 23 He said, “I am in My Father, and you [are] in Me, and I [am] in you.” Now in verse 23 Jesus says that the Father will also take up residence in the believer: “We” (the Father and the Son) will make “Our” abode with him.

An important observation comes from this. The believers’ growth and knowledge of Christ is tied to their love for Him and obedience to Him. Knowledge of divine things cannot come through study alone. The world hates Jesus because He testifies that their deeds are evil (Jn. 7:7), not because they have intellectual objections to what He says and does. In John 8:45 He said, “Because I speak the truth, you do not believe Me.” It is impossible to truly love Him without obeying Him, and to obey Him without truly loving Him.

D.A. Carson in his book *The Farewell Discourse and Final Prayer of Jesus* makes some comments that are very helpful in allowing us to see how Jesus' promises to the disciples fit into a broader biblical hope. I quote him at length.

The Old Testament writers were concerned that God should live with men. At the dedication of the temple, King Solomon, aware that God is utterly transcendent, cries out, "But will God really dwell on earth? The heavens, even the highest heaven, cannot contain you. How much less this temple I have built!" (I Kings 8:27). But although neither man nor his structures can contain God, nevertheless God may choose to live with men. The Old Testament writers look forward to the day when such intimacy will be commonplace. "My dwelling place will be with them; I will be their God, and they will be my people," God promises; and Ezekiel faithfully records the promise (Ezek. 37:27). "Shout and be glad, O Daughter of Zion. For I am coming, and I will live among you," declares the LORD" (Zech. 2:10). John insists that this occurred historically in the incarnation: "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us" (Jn. 1:14). But now we are brought a stage further: this God reveals Himself to the individual believer and takes up residence within him. Jesus promises "And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever—the Spirit of Truth . . . 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" (14:16-17a, 23).

Other New Testament writers make much of the same glorious privilege. "For we are the temple of the living God", Paul writes. "As God has said: 'I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people'" (II Cor. 6:16; cf. Lev. 26:12; Jer. 32:38; Ezek. 37:27). Paul prays that the Father "may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith" (Eph. 3:16, 17a). Nor is such experience to be exclusively corporate. Even if an entire church begins a slippery decline (Rev. 3:14-21), the exalted Christ still cries to the individual believer, "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me" (Rev. 3:20).

This privilege is part of the blessing of the new age. It is part and parcel with the eternal life we already enjoy. That life awaits Christ's return for its consummation; and so also the privilege of experiencing God's dwelling with man awaits Christ's return for its consummation. Then we shall hear the stellar shout, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away" (Rev. 21:4, 4).

Already, Jesus insists that the privilege is in some measure ours. A little later just before His ascension, He again promises his followers, "And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matt. 28:20). Christianity, it is true, is a religion based squarely in time-space history. It has propositional revelations, creedal confessions, moral standards, missionary expeditions,

and corporate worship. But as essential as these are, one further feature must not be overlooked. Christianity claims that it is the means whereby a man may know God, and whereby God may come and make His home in a man. The thought of it is overwhelming: yet this is the heritage of every true believer. (Pages 47-48)

14:24 "He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father's who sent Me.

The section ends at verse 24. Here, Jesus assures the disciples that the coming of the Spirit is not Jesus' idea, but fits into the same category of all that He has said. His words are the words of the Father.