

STUDY 2 – JOHN 14:15-24

As we saw in our previous study, Jesus is comforting his disciples on the eve of his crucifixion. His betrayer has already left. In last weeks study we saw how Jesus comforted the 11 by assuring them that it was for their benefit that he went to the cross – he is the way to the Father and by his going he prepares a place for us. To get to God we don't have to DO anything, we need to KNOW Jesus.

Jesus continues to comfort his disciples by telling them that they will not be worse off if he leaves them. In these verses Jesus is not just speaking of the days following his crucifixion, but he is preparing his followers for life after his ascension back to his Father.

The big question that Jesus deals with in this section is “will the disciples be worse off without the physical presence of Jesus with them”? This is a real issue. It may be for us, as perhaps we wish we'd been walking the streets of Jerusalem with Jesus as he taught and performed miracles. Theologically it is a big question. The Old Testament pointed to a day when God would dwell with men, and in Christ, that day appeared to have come. What happens to those promises if Jesus is about to leave?

The answer Jesus gives is amazing. He will not leave his followers alone, as orphans (vs 18) without anyone to be with them, teach them, protect them, speak up for them and love them. He will send the Holy Spirit – who is described as a “Counsellor” (in the sense of “one who draws alongside” or “one who speaks in defence of”). He is described as the “Spirit of truth” (this will be expanded on in the next few chapters as Jesus says the Spirit will lead his disciples in truth). The Spirit is God, as the Father and Son are God (he is described as being both Jesus and the Father coming to the believer), but is also distinct from both the Father and the Son.

He will come to live with us and to be in us (verse 18). It is important to emphasise both of these truths. He will be with us – in that he remains distinct from us (Jesus is not promising we become God), but he also lives “in us” giving us an intimate relationship with God in a way that the disciples do not have before Pentecost. He reveals God's truth to us (vs 20) and God's love to us (vs 21). He will be with us for ever (verse 16), this is not a temporary promise. He grants us life (verse 19).

However, this promise is only for those who are disciples of Jesus. Notice Jesus' description of his followers – they are those who love him and obey him (verse 15, 21, 23-24). This is the non-negotiable minimum description of a Christian! His followers are in clear contrast to the world (those who are not disciples of Jesus), who do not accept Jesus, do not love Jesus and do not obey Jesus. The disciples receive the Holy Spirit, the world does not. There are only 2 categories. Therefore there is no such thing as a disciple who does not receive the Holy Spirit, or someone who does know love Jesus who does not receive the Spirit – thus ruling out second blessing/baptism of the Holy Spirit subsequent to conversion teaching, and universalism.

These verses are very precious to us as Christians. For a start, we get a real insight into the relationships between the three persons of the trinity as Jesus speaks about his Father and his Spirit. Jesus makes it clear that the words he is speaking are the words of his Father (vs 24). While it clear that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are distinct persons, their unity is emphasised again and again as neither works without the other.

The startling reality of these verses is that as Christians we are not worse off than the disciples were before Jesus ascended to his Father's side. No, we are far better off because we now know God

through the Holy Spirit being with us and living in us. We have a far deeper and richer intimacy with God (far deeper than we realise). It is us, it is the church that God now dwells in, fulfilling the Old Testament promises, and looking forward to that great final day when God will fully dwell with man (see the end of Revelation).

We should all have a desire for a deeper, richer intimacy with God, but we should all realise that comes not through greater experiences but through knowing God more by loving and obeying him, and is possible because we already have the Holy Spirit at work within us. The clear distinction Jesus makes between his disciples and the world should help us to see that there is no third category of disciples who are not Spirit filled.

POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

- Look up the following verses

1 Kings 8:27, Ezekiel 37:27, Zechariah 2:10 What is longed for and promised in the Old Testament?

There is a longing and a promise that God will dwell with his people.

- Look up John 1:14. How is that longing and promise fulfilled?

God becomes flesh and dwells among us in the person of Jesus Christ.

- Why, then, is Jesus' departure a problem?

Does the fact that Jesus is leaving mean that God will no longer live with his people? Were those Old Testament promises just for a very short period of time (those few years when Jesus was on the earth?).

- What does Jesus promise in verse 16? How is He described?

The Holy Spirit. Another "Counsellor" (see above), the Spirit of truth.

- How do we relate to the Holy Spirit (verse 17)? Why important to remember both things?

He lives with us (so is distinct from us – important to emphasise, this is not teaching that we become God), and he lives in us, uniting us to God giving us an intimate relationship with God and applying to us all of Christ's work.

- What does he do for us?

He is distinct from God the Father and God the Son, yet he is inseparable from God the Father and God the Son. His coming to be with us and in us is Jesus coming to us and the Father coming to us. He gives us life (vs 19). He unites us to God and gives us knowledge of him and his love.

- How is this promise of the Holy Spirit the answer to the problem we raised at the beginning of the study? See also 2 Corinthians 6:16

God now dwells with man in a deeply intimate way. Christians/ the church are now where God dwells.

- Someone says, 'If only I'd been alive then and been able to meet Jesus! It must have been great for them.....God seems so remote to me" How would you reply?

We are far better off than the disciples and know Jesus more intimately because he has sent his Spirit now.

- How are Jesus' Disciples described in these verses? What does that tell us about what is essential in our walk with Jesus?

Jesus followers are characterised by love for him and obedience to him (vs 15, vs 20).

- How is the world described? How is their relationship with the Spirit different?

The world do not love Jesus or obey him (vs 24), they do not know God (vs 17), so cannot know the Holy Spirit.

- Someone says to you "The Holy Spirit is only given to some of Jesus' followers". How would you reply?

The Holy Spirit is promised here to all of Jesus' disciples, all of those who are not part of the world (those who do not know God and are in rebellion to him). There is no third category.

- What do we learn about relationship the between Father and the Son from these verses? How is the whole trinity involved in our relationship with God and our salvation?

Jesus says these words, but they are also the words of the Father (vs 24). The Father, Son and Holy Spirit do nothing alone – they are all involved in each part of our salvation.