

Echoes of Scripture

Easter 6a – John 14:15-21

Summary of John 14:15-21

Having told the disciples not to be troubled but rather to believe because he is going to prepare a place for them and he will return to bring them to himself, Jesus now says the he will send them the Holy Spirit (the Spirit of Truth) who will remain with them forever.

Suggested Course of Study

- Read Ezekiel 36-37
- Read 1 John 1:1-2:17
- John 14:1-16:33 (The Farewell Discourse)

Immediate Context

John 12:12-19	Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem	John 14:1-14	Jesus the way to the Father
John 12:20-26	Some Greeks wish to see Jesus	John 14:15-31	The promise of the Holy Spirit
John 12:27-36	Jesus speaks about his death	John 15:1-17	Jesus the True Vine
John 12:37-43	The unbelief of the people	John 15:18-16:4	The World's Hatred
John 12:44-50	Summary of Jesus' teaching	John 16:5-15	The Work of the Spirit
John 13:1-20	Jesus washes the disciples' feet	John 16:16-24	Sorrow will turn into joy
John 13:21-30	Jesus foretells his betrayal	John 16:25-33	Peace for the disciples
John 13:31-35	The New Commandment	John 17:1-26	Jesus prays for his disciples
John 13:36-38	Jesus foretells Peter's denial	John 18:1-11	The betrayal and arrest of Jesus

The Textⁱ

JOHN 14:15-21 (NRSV)

¹⁵ "If you love me, you will keep^f my commandments. ¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate,^g to be with you forever. ¹⁷ This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in^h you. ¹⁸ "I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. ¹⁹ In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. ²⁰ On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. ²¹ They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them."

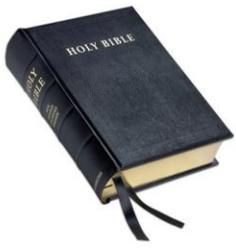
Key Words

IF YOU LOVE ME – ἀγαπᾷτέ second person plural, present active subjunctive from ἀγαπάω which indicates some contingency as can be translated as "If you might love me" or "If you were to love me" or "if you should

^f Other ancient authorities read *me, keep*

^g Or *Helper*

^h Or *among*



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love me”. ἀγαπάω can be translated as “to love out of deep appreciation and high regard” or “to demonstrate or show one’s love.”

YOU WILL KEEP MY COMMANDMENTS – τὰς ἐντολὰς (commandments) τὰς ἐμὰς (my) τηρήσετε (you will keep). Notice the footnote here which says that other ancient authorities read “If you love me, keep my commandments.” τηρήσετε is future active indication, second person plural form of the verb τηρέω which means “to watch over”, “to guard”, “to keep”, or “to protect, keep intact.” It has the sense of obedience here.

What commandments has Jesus given in the gospel of John? In the immediate context preceding this verse, we find three commands: to serve (wash one another’s feet), to love (love one another), and to trust (believe in God). John 13:14-15, Jesus says “So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you.” Several verses later, in John 13:34-35, Jesus says “I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.” And just a few verses later, in John 14:1, Jesus says “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me.”

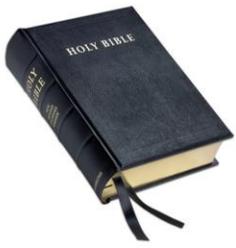
The word “command” or the notion of a command also appears in John 10:18 “I lay down my life in order to take it up again... I have received this command from my Father”; John 12:49-50 “the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment about what to say and what to speak. And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I speak, therefore, I speak just as the Father has told me”; John 14:31 “but I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father”; See also John 15:1-17 where we have the commands to “Abide in me”, “bear much fruit”, “become my disciples”, “love one another”.

Remember what Jesus said to Peter at the end of John’s gospel. Peter had betrayed Jesus; denying he knew him three times. Understandably full of shame and regret, Jesus approaches Peter and asks “Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?” Peter says “Yes Lord; you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Feed my lambs.” A second time Jesus asks “Do you love me?” Peter again responds “Yes, Lord.” Jesus says, “Tend my sheep.” A third time, Jesus asks, “Do you love me?” The text says that Peter felt hurt being asked a third time. But again he responds “Lord, you know that I love you.” Jesus says “Feed my sheep.” Jesus restores the disciple who betrayed him three times and gives him a new mission; he commands him to take care of his flock.

If we remember back to Jesus’ conflict with that influential group of religious leaders who were opposed to him, Jesus criticized them for failing to live up to their responsibility of caring for God’s flock. We remember the story where they kicked out of the synagogue the man born blind because of his favorable impression and support of Jesus. Rather than celebration the work of God that gave this man sight, they threw him out the door and slammed it shut. And that’s where Jesus said, “I am the good shepherd”. Now Jesus is commanding Peter (and the others) to care for God’s flock.

So how would we summarize the commandments of Jesus? Jesus commands us to love one another, to serve one another with humility, to trust God and to trust him, to abide in him, to bear much fruit, and to feed and tend and care for God’s flock. For God so loved the world, that he gave...

HE WILL GIVE YOU ANOTHER ADVOCATE TO BE WITH YOU FOREVER – παράκλητος (which is transliterated most often as Paraklete). This word is made up of the root from καλεω meaning “to call” and the prefix παρα which means “beside or alongside”; in other words “someone who is called alongside to help; our advocate”. It has been translated as Advocate, Counselor, Comforter and Intercessor.



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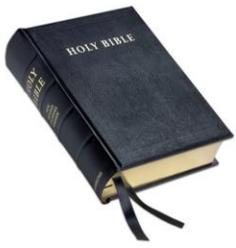
John describes for us what the *παράκλητος* will do: The Spirit will *be with* the disciples forever (see John 14:16); *teach* and *remind* them of what Jesus has taught (see John 14:26); will *testify* to them and through them to the world about Jesus (see John 15:26); will *prove* the world wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment (see John 16:8) *guide* them into all the truth and *speak* what he/she hears from the Father (See John 16:13); will *glorify* Jesus, will *take* what is His and *declare* it to the disciples (See John 16:14).

Notice Jesus says “another” advocate. Jesus is our first advocate. Jesus will be called our *παράκλητον* in 1 John 2:1-2 which says “But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.”

In John’s gospel, the word for the Spirit up until this point has been *πνεῦμα* (which like the Hebrew word *רוּחַ* *ruah*) means “wind, breath, spirit.” It was the Spirit who descended like a dove and remained on Jesus (see John 1:32). Jesus told Nicodemus that “no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit” (John 3:5). Jesus, as the whom God has sent, speaks the words of God and gives the Spirit without measure (John 3:34). In chapter 4, Jesus says “God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:23-24). He also said, “It is the spirit that gives life” (John 6:63). In John 7, it says “Now he said this about the Spirit, which believers in him were to receive; for as yet there was no Spirit, because Jesus was not yet glorified” (John 7:39). In John 15, Jesus will say “When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father, he will testify on my behalf” (John 15:26). In John 16, Jesus says “When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come” (John 16:13). Finally, in John 20:22, Jesus gives the disciples the Holy Spirit: “When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit’.”

For mentions of the spirit in the Old Testament, see Genesis 1:2 (wind from God); 2:7 (breath of God); 6:3; 41:8, 38; 45:27; Exodus 31:3; 35:31; Numbers 11:17, 25, 26, 29; 14:24; 24:2; 27:18; Deuteronomy 34:9; Judges 3:10; 6:34; 9:23 (God sends an evil spirit); 11:29; 13:25; 14:6, 19; 15:14; 1 Samuel 10:6, 10; 11:6; 16:13-23; 18:10 (an evil spirit from God); 19:9- 23; 2 Samuel 23:2; 1 Kings 18:12; 22:21-24 (the lying spirit); 2 Kings 2:9, 15, 16; 19:7; 1 Chronicles 12:18; 2 Chronicles 15:1; 18:20-23 (the lying spirit); 20:14; 24:20; Nehemiah 9:20, 30; Job 4:15; 27:3; 32:8 (breath of the Almighty); 33:4; 34:14; Psalm 33:6; 51:11; 104:30; 139:7; 143:10; Isaiah 11:2 (spirit of the Lord, spirit of wisdom and understanding, of counsel and might, of knowledge and the fear of the Lord); 29:10 (a spirit of deep sleep); 32:15 (a spirit from on high is poured out on us); 34:16; 40:13; 42:1-5; 44:3; 48:16; 59:21; 61:1; 63:10-14 (they rebelled and grieved his holy spirit); Ezekiel 3:12-24; 8:3; 11:1-24; 36:26-27 (I will put my spirit within you and make you follow my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances); 37:1-14 (valley of dry bones); 39:29; 43:5; Joel 2:28-29; Micah 3:8; Haggai 2:5; Zechariah 4:6; 7:12; 12:10.

THIS IS THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH – τὸ πνεῦμα (the spirit) τῆς ἀληθείας (of truth). At the beginning of the gospel, Jesus is described as being “full of grace and truth” (John 1:14) and it says “the law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ” (John 1:17). In John 8, Jesus says to the Jews who had believed in him, “If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free” (John 8:31-32). Jesus himself declared that he was “the way, the truth and the life” (See John 14:6). Here, we are told that the Advocate (the Holy Spirit or *paraklete*) is the “Spirit of Truth”. Later in this Farewell Discourse, Jesus will promise that “When the Spirit of Truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth” (see John 16:13). Then when Jesus has been arrested and is standing before Pilate, the subject of truth will appear again (See John 18:37-38). Here Jesus testifies to the truth and everyone who belongs to



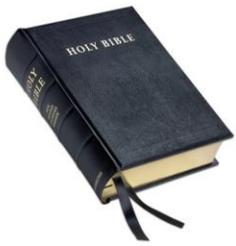
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the truth listens to his voice. The truth is synonymous with Jesus. Jesus is the truth. And the function of the Spirit, the Paraklete, is to testify: to speak on Jesus' behalf (John 15:26), to be the mouthpiece for God (John 16:13), and to declare the things that are to come (John 16:13).

WHOM THE WORLD CANNOT RECEIVE – *κόσμος* (the world). In the gospel of John, the *κόσμος* most often represents *both* those who are opposed to Jesus on the one hand, as well as, the object of God's creation that God loves and has sent Jesus to redeem. Whenever we hear the word world, we probably remember Psalm 24 which begins "The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it." We might also think of Psalm 8 which says "When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established; what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them. Yet you have made them a little lower than God, and crowned them with glory and honor. You have given them dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under their feet..." (verses 3-6). We also might think about what Paul says about the world in 2 Corinthians 5:19-21 "In Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." We might also think of 1 Corinthians 7:31 or Romans 12:2, 1 John 2:15-17, or even Revelation 11:15.

Listen what is said about the world in John's gospel: "The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the *world*. He was in the *world*, and the *world* came into being through him; yet the *world* did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God." (John 1:9-13). "Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the *world*" (John 1:39). "For God so loved the *world* that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. Indeed, God did not send the Son into the *world* to condemn the world, but in order that the *world* might be saved through him" (John 3:16-17). "And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the *world*, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil" (John 3:19). "For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the *world*" (John 6:33). "I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the *world* is my flesh" (John 6:51). "The *world* cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify against it that its works are evil" (John 7:7). "I am the light of the *world*. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life" (John 8:12). "You are from below, I am from above; you are of this *world*, I am not of this *world*... I have much to say about you and much to condemn; but the one who sent me is true, and I declare to the *world* what I have heard from him." (John 8:23, 26). "As long as I am in the *world*, I am the light of the *world*" (John 9:5). "I came into this *world* for judgment so that those who do not see may see, and those who do see may become blind" (John 9:39). "Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Those who walk during the day do not stumble, because they see the light of this *world*" (John 11:9). "The Pharisees then said to one another, 'You see, you can do nothing. Look, the *world* has gone after him!'" (John 12:19). "Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this *world* will keep it for eternal life" (John 12:25). "Now is the judgment of this *world*; now the ruler of this *world* will be driven out" (John 12:31). "I have come as light into the *world*, so that everyone who believes in me should not remain in the darkness. I do not judge anyone who hears my words and does not keep them, for I came not to judge the *world*, but to save the *world*." (John 12:46-47). "Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this *world* and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the *world*, he loved them to the end." (John 13:1). "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give



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to you. I do not give to you as the *world* gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.” (John 14:27). “I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this *world* is coming. He has no power over me; but I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the *world* may know that I love the father. Rise, let us be on our way.” (John 14:30-31). “If the *world* hates you, be aware that it hated me before it hated you. If you belonged to the *world*, the *world* would love you as its own. Because you do not belong to the *world*, but I have chosen you out of the *world*—therefore the *world* hates you.” (John 15:18-19). See also John 17:5-25 for many mentions of the world.

The notion that the world *cannot* receive the spirit is disturbing in a sense. Is it that they cannot receive it because they cannot accept it; because they have rejected Jesus? Or does God prevent them from receiving it?

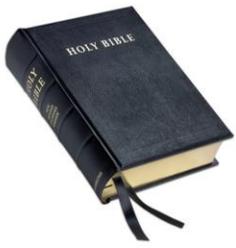
It reminds me of the passage in John chapter 8, where Jesus says to some of the Jews who were challenging him, “I know that you are descendants of Abraham; yet you look for an opportunity to kill me, because *there is no place in you* for my word” (John 8:37). Later he says to them, “Why do you not understand what I say? It is because *you cannot accept my word*. You are from your father the devil, and you choose to do your father’s desires... Whoever is from God hears the words of God. *The reason you do not hear them is that you are not from God.*” (John 8:43-44, 47).

HE ABIDES WITH YOU, AND HE WILL BE IN YOU – The word “abide” here is the Greek word μένω which can be translated “to abide, to remain, to stay, or to dwell”. See John 5:38; 6:56; but most significantly John 15:1-10 where he uses the imagery of the vine and the branches. The noun form of this verb was used just earlier to speak of the dwelling places Christ has gone to prepare for his followers. When you look at the footnote associate with this verse, you see that it says either that the Spirit of truth “will be *in you*” or “will be *among you*.” The verse says that the Spirit will *be* (ἔσται from εἰμί) *with* (παρ’ from παρά) you (ὑμῖν) and *in* ἐν ὑμῖν.

I WILL NOT LEAVE YOU ORPHANED, I AM COMING TO YOU – Οὐκ ἀφήσω (leave alone) ὑμᾶς (you) ὀρφανούς (an orphan). “I am coming to you.” Does this refer to the resurrection appearances? Or is this an eschatological promise? Jesus had said that he goes to prepare a place for them. He said he would return and bring them to himself so that where he is, they would be also. This I am coming to you could be equivalent to his promise to return. But it could also be the promise to return to them in the resurrection appearances. It could also be his promise of sending his spirit. What we notice is that Jesus has changed metaphors here. Before he hinted at the bridegroom and the bride metaphor. Now he uses the image of a parent and a child to describe the relationship between he and his followers. In essence, he is saying “You will not be lost little children.”

IN A LITTLE WHILE THE WORLD WILL NO LONGER SEE ME, BUT YOU WILL SEE ME – It is interesting that Jesus never appears to anyone but his disciples (followers) after the crucifixion and resurrection. He only appears to his followers. The disciples see him and speak with him, but then Jesus’ disappears from their sight. It’s like a divine game of Peek-a-boo. Now you see me. Now you don’t.

BECAUSE I LIVE, YOU ALSO WILL LIVE – This foreshadows the message of Easter, that death is not the end. The way of the Lord leads to life. Jesus, who died and was buried, was raised to new life. As we see how the word life is used in John’s gospel, we see that Jesus is life (John 14:6); he has life in himself (John 5:26). As we believe in Jesus we receive eternal life both in the present (John 5:24) and in the future (John 6:40). The gospel writer himself says that he wrote the gospel so that the readers would come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and through believing, have life in his name (John 20:31). See also 1 John 5:12;



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Romans 6:4; and Galatians 2:20. See also Daniel 12:2 which is the first clear biblical reference to life after death in the Old Testament.

In John 1:4 we read “in him was life, and the life was the light of all people.” John 3:15-16 “that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.” John 3:35-36 “The Father loves the Son and has placed all things in his hands. Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever disobeys the Son will not see life, but must endure God’s wrath.” John 4:14 “the water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.” John 5:21 “Indeed, just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whomever he wishes.” John 5:24-29 “Very truly, I tell you, anyone who hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life, and does not come under judgment, but has passed from death to life. Very truly, I tell you, the hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. For just as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself; and he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man. Do not be astonished at this; for the hour is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and will come out—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.” John 5:39-40 “You search the scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that testify on my behalf. Yet you refuse to come to me to have life.” See John 6:35-68. John 6:51 “I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.” John 6:53-57 “Very truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day; for my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them. Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of me.” See John 10:10-28. John 10:10 “I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.” John 11:25-26 “I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die.” John 12:49-50 “For I have not spoken on my own, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment about what to say and what to speak. And I know that his commandment is eternal life.” John 17:1-3 “Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you, since you have given him authority over all people, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.” John 20:30-31 “Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.”

ON THAT DAY – This is often a code word for the eschatological future; judgment day; the end of times. This phrase also appears in John 16:23, 26; and 20:19. Here it has the sense of being the day that he is coming to us; the day when the place he is preparing is complete and the Father says, “It is finished.” It is also probably synonymous with “on the last day” which we find in John 6:39, 40, 44, 54; 11:24; and 12:48.

YOU WILL KNOW THAT I AM IN MY FATHER, AND YOU IN ME, AND I IN YOU – The image we can get here is like that of Russian nesting dolls; one stacked within another. The other image we get is of the vine and the branches which Jesus will launch into very shortly in chapter 15.

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