

# Christ on High, and the Holy Ghost Here Below

## John 16

by John Nelson Darby

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*The Holy Ghost is sent to convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment, and to guide the saints into all truth, revealing the glory and Person of the Lord Jesus Christ.*

**Scripture:** John 16:7

**Topics:** "The Role of the Holy Spirit", "Christ's Rejection and Glory"

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### Description

John Nelson Darby emphasizes the contrast between Christ's divine authority and the rejection He faced from His own people, highlighting the role of the Holy Spirit as the Comforter who guides believers after Christ's ascension. He explains that the Holy Spirit's work involves convicting the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment, while also guiding the saints into all truth. Darby points out that the rejection of Christ reveals the blindness of the human heart and the necessity of recognizing Him as the Son of God. He encourages believers to trust in the Holy Spirit's presence and guidance, reminding them that their identity is rooted in their relationship with Christ. Ultimately, the sermon calls for a deeper understanding of the Holy Spirit's role in revealing the glory of Christ to believers.

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### Transcript

The Gospel of John brings out specially that which refers to the Person of Christ in contrast to all that is Jewish. At the beginning of it we see Him presenting Himself in divine right and power to "his own," while "his own received him not"; and towards the close we see Him leaving those who had thus rejected Him, and the Comforter coming to take His place - to take of the things of Christ, and testify of Him to the world, and to be the guide and support of those whom He was leaving behind. In this chapter we see the twofold character of the work of the Holy Ghost: His way with the world, and His way towards the saints.

Verse 2. The first thing the Lord shews the disciples here is, that they are to have the same position as their Master: opposition and rejection. The opposition of the world often comes from entire blindness. "Whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service." Such is the blinding power of unbelief! It was so with Saul. He thought he "ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth," Acts 26:9. Man walks in darkness, because he is darkness, his conscience is darkness, and in consequence of false instruction his mind is blinded too. What a man does conscientiously, he always does with earnestness, though he may be acting wrongly with a blinded conscience. A person may be very

conscientious in resisting the truth. What is called conscientious acting is often nothing in the sight of God but the conduct of one who is thoroughly blinded by Satan.

Verse 3. "These things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me." God had given them every evidence of who Christ was, but, in spite of all that God could give, they rejected Him. "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness . . . ."

All ignorance is the fruit of sin; but here it is wilful blindness. They "loved darkness rather than light." Notice here the sin of rejecting light. No general acceptance of truth will do, if it does not enter the soul as of God. The way in which God was proving men now, was whether they would own His Son. He presents Jesus as an object, in order to put men's hearts to the test, and if Christ is not received, all general acknowledgment of other truth goes for nothing. There is such a thing as a man screening himself from the charge of rejecting truth by just taking a little, as much as will satisfy his conscience; but the great test to the heart is whether he receives that special testimony which is not accredited in the world. If Christ, the Son of God, is rejected, this is everything for condemnation in the sight of God.

156 By rejecting Christ, men proved they did not know the Father. If Christ had come, saying that God was not Jehovah, they would have been right in not receiving Him; but He always identifies Himself with the Father, and so men were proved the very enemies of both.

"And these things will they do unto you," etc. Very often when we have received truth from God, we must be content without being able to satisfy others that it is truth. And if others cannot understand, so neither can we explain. We must go on patiently, though we have to act in a way unintelligible to many. We must expect to be despised. The Lord set His face stedfastly to go to Jerusalem, and it was the very thing that brought out man's opposition. The path of faith can never be understood, though communications of truth may be.

Verse 5. "None of you asketh me, Whither goest thou?" "We are constantly acting in unbelief in this way. The Lord often tries our hearts. The disciples were thus tried in the prospect of the Lord being taken from them. What comfort they had had in His blessed presence! And now sorrow filled their hearts (v. 6). The sorrow was legitimate, but they were filled with themselves - their own grief, instead of seeing how God was working, and what were His purposes. The real truth was, that the Son was going back to the Father. We may lose God's purpose of blessing to our own souls, by not seeing His mind in that which grieves us. The disciples were shut up in their own sorrows and thoughts, instead of inquiring where the Lord was going. But He would comfort them, in spite of this weakness of faith, and gives them the promise of the Comforter (v. 7).

What a wonderful blessing the presence of the Holy Ghost must be, when it needed that the Lord Jesus Christ should go away in order that He might come! It is well for us to ask ourselves whether we do really believe in the personal presence of the Holy Ghost down here. A soul might say, "Ah, if I had the Lord here to direct me, how well should I do and bear!" "But if we know redemption-deliverance through the death and resurrection of Christ, we have Him still with us, and in the best and nearest way. For the Holy Ghost dwells in us to unfold Him to our souls, to teach us the glory of Him who has loved us and shed His blood for us, who has all power, Head over the Jews, Head of the Gentiles, Lord over everything. Nor is it only the glory of His Person, but our union we learn. "At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you." We have the Holy Ghost too as the guide; and the Lord would have us guided not ignorantly but in intelligence. The presence of the Holy Ghost presupposes judgment having passed upon

the flesh, which naturally resists guidance, and the flesh must not be allowed place in the Christian, if he would be guided of the Spirit.

157 In chapter 14 Christ says, "The Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name," etc.; but in chapter 16 the Lord speaks of sending Him by virtue of His own personal title. Going up to glory as Son of man and as Son of God, He sends the Comforter, in virtue of His own official glory.

Then we see the work of the Holy Ghost (v. 8, etc.). The world He will convince of sin, and righteousness, and judgment. His office again is to guide the saints into all truth (v. 13-15).

"He will convince the world of sin, . . . because they believe not on me." It is not here as Messiah to the Jews that the Lord speaks of Himself, but as the Son of God to the world, as such. It was "sin" not to know the Father nor Him. The charge here is not that of having killed the prophets or broken the law; but "they believe not on me." God had sent His Son into the world, and He had been cast out. (He says this in view of its accomplishment.) The very presence of the Holy Ghost stamps the world with this sin. He could not be sent here, unless Jesus had been rejected - unless God's own Son had been cast out. He had wrought always: this is His personal mission and presence on earth.

God said, "I have yet one Son; it may be they will reverence him." It was His last trial of a world lying in the wicked one, full of all kinds of corruption. He was reconciling the world unto Himself, and saying, as it were, Receive My Son, and I will not impute your sin; but they cast Him out and slew Him, and thus proved that wilful sin was in man. There was the perfect light of God in love and grace, in the Person of His Son, coming down to earth, and men loved darkness better. This was their condemnation. It is not God coming in the terrors of the law to frighten men, but in grace to attract; and they will not have Him. There is no reason why the Son of God was rejected, but the utter wickedness of man's heart.

158 It is a moral thing, this unbelief. It is a demonstration of what the heart is by nature. The Lord cannot now with wicked hands be crucified and slain; but the moral guilt is just the same; for the natural man will not receive Christ, he does not want Him. To those who do receive Him, God says, "Their sins and iniquities I will remember no more." But of the world it is said, "The world seeth me [Christ] no more."

This rejection of Christ is the one great sin that the Holy Ghost deals with the world about. Why do people prefer vanity - everything - anything - to God's Son? Because they are perfectly opposite to God, and that is sin. It is the plant and pith and sap of that which is in my heart by nature. And if the world is convinced of sin, there is an end of righteousness. The only righteous One who ever came into it was rejected and allowed to suffer before God. On the cross God leaves the righteous One to be utterly rejected. But righteousness came in by this way; and it was proved when He, who had been obedient unto death, went back to the Father. What an answer to all that He had done was there in this acceptance! He had accomplished all that gave Him a title to be at the right hand of God; He had proved Himself fit for God's throne.

When the Holy Ghost thus convinces the world of righteousness, it is not a testimony of man's fall from God, or of man's corruption, or of man's failure under law, but man's rejection of the One who is accepted at the right hand of God. It is His righteousness and God's righteousness thus vindicated. "Ye see me no more." All was ended as regards the world. When God's Son was rejected, there was to be no more connection with the world, as the world, till the vindication of His title in judgment. "Now is the judgment of this world." Then I come to see that I, in heart, have thus rejected Christ. I saw no beauty in Him; not one affection was set upon Him. Education may have led me to own Him after a certain way, and there is

mercy in that; for knowledge of scriptural truth may be used by God: just as when a fire is laid, you have only to put the light to kindle it. But we have all been either despising Him, or in active will rejecting Him.

159 The world is given up to judgment, while God is still dealing with it in blessed patient grace. We see no sign of judgment yet, though the saints may be rejected now as Christ was. But it is our place to walk as strangers and pilgrims here below. All that is of the world, and the prince of this world, is judged by the presence of the Holy Ghost.

Let me fix your attention on the perfect, divine righteousness accomplished by Christ. What the Holy Ghost tells our souls is this, that it is such a righteousness as is fit for God's own throne. There is where I rest as my title to glory. Fruits will follow, of course; but my title to heaven is in the divine righteousness of Him who is there for me.

"He will guide you into all truth." This has nothing to do with the world, as the world. But as when the Lord said, "What I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you." "All truth" is the whole truth of the glory and Person of the Lord Jesus Christ - all ours. We know but little of it, it is true; but the Holy Ghost is down here to unfold it to us. He brings down to us the things from heaven, the glories of the Father and the Son, the fellowship with the Father and the Son, not what is going to happen to Nineveh. All the counsels of God in Christ are ours, in the power of the Holy Ghost. What a wondrous field of spiritual thought in this new world to which we are introduced! It is filled by Christ for our own use. Our portion is to see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. It is not speaking to us of miracles, but taking the heart of the saint into all that God has to say about His Son Jesus. What a blessed place the saints are in! the Holy Ghost to reveal to them all that God delights in as regards the Lord Jesus, His Person, His work - all that the Father has given Him - all His coming glory.

We may not say, "These things are too high for me." The question is, not that we have not been far from Him, but if He is near to us. Suppose my father is the great judge of the country, I ought to be outside the arm of the law, but I am interested because it is my father's work. How that little word "my" - "our" - comes home to the heart! And all things are ours.

While the Holy Ghost shews us all the fulness of the Father's house in the glory of Jesus, our hearts are attracted by Christ Himself. When He gives the capacity to understand the glory, He says, I have given it all to you; you shall share it with Me. And, beloved friends, we shall see Him again in all His glory. The secret of our joy now is, that He gets Himself His right place in our hearts. It is the perfection of His grace that He should draw them to Himself. There must be this work in the heart, as well as the arrow in the conscience to shew us what we are; or else it will be as the morning cloud and the early dew. Remember too, we are not of this world. He has separated us to Himself, and we are to walk with Him as His people.

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