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John 16:5-15 -- The Ministry of the Holy Spirit

Notes:

Vs. 5 - *But now I am going to Him who sent Me* -- Jesus customarily spoke in these terms, referring to the Father as the One who sent Him (5:24,30,36-38; 6:39,44,57; 7:16-18,28,29,33; 8:42; 10:36; 13:20; 14:9,24; 15:21; cf. 15:28). This language served to emphasize: (1.) His divine, preexistent origin in eternity; (2.) His present dependent relationship upon the Father; (3.) that He had a strong, conscious sense of mission, i.e., He was here to accomplish some thing(s) as a representative of the Father; and, (4.) He would return to Him who sent Him, to a place that they could not presently come. *and none of you asks Me, "Where are you going?"* -- Initially, Peter had asked Jesus in these same words (13:36). Possibly Jesus' seemingly terse response to him, and the prophetic warning that he would deny Jesus before morning, had made Peter somewhat introspective, or at least somewhat withdrawn. He had become uncharacteristically quiet since that interchange.

Vs. 6 - *But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart* -- Jesus had not encouraged speculation as to where He was going, being more concerned to clearly prepare them for what was to take place. Since He had announced that He would be leaving, the focus of the evening's teaching revolved around what would happen to them, how they would manage. They certainly were sad and confused by all of this. In spite of all He had said to prepare them for this day, they did not understand what would soon happen.

Vs. 7 - *But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away* -- Lit., "...it is beneficial/profitable/better to y'all in order that I might depart/go away". This was inconceivable to the disciples. How could it be beneficial to them to have Jesus leave them? *for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you* -- Again, Jesus turns their focus to the promise of the Holy Spirit. Somehow, having the Holy Spirit will be better than having Jesus with them. It was necessary for Jesus to leave in order for the Holy Spirit to come. We don't understand all the reasons why, but it is clear from the consistent testimony of the Scripture that this was not a mere "costume change" for Jesus. Some people teach a heretical doctrine called "modalism", which holds that there are not three persons within the triune Godhead, rather God was just putting on different hats, assuming different roles, that were meant to be instructive about spiritual truths. He was attempting to communicate truth about His character in order to help us identify with Him, and better relate to Him. These people insist that Trinitarians have misunderstood the purpose of Jesus' coming, or of this talk about the Holy Spirit. These are meant only as instructive roles for us to learn relational truths from. They were not meant to teach us anything about the essence of God's eternal nature. For them, Jesus left the stage so that God could take off the Jesus-hat and come back on-stage as the Holy Spirit, which is more in line with His real, natural state, anyway. The Father-role was just a construction to teach us about God's love for us. There really was not any Father separate from the Son separate from the Holy Spirit. These were just different hats worn by God to teach us about Him.

The problems with this view is that it doesn't take into serious account all of the Scriptures pertinent to this subject. Many passages, such as this verse, cannot be taken at face value, but the actual language of the passage must be "minimized" and reinterpreted to fit this particular scheme. Times when all three persons of the Trinity are present, such as at Jesus' baptism, are especially awkward to deal with from this perspective. Jesus' prayer life is either just "staged" for the instructive value of His example to us, or we have to create a schizophrenic Jesus, where the human side talks to the Divine side of His personality (and calls it "Father"). All verses that refer to Jesus in heaven "sitting at the right hand of the Father" cannot be literally understood, etc.

Vs. 8 - *And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin, and righteousness, and judgment* -- Literally, "and that (one) coming (at a point in time)". He is keeping their attention focused on the coming of the Paraclete. The word translated as "convict" means to "show something for what it really is, expose, convince". Often it is used in the context of reproof or rebuke, as in exposing or confronting someone's sin. Here it implies that not only does the Spirit reveal the truth of these things to people, but He does so in such a way as to be convincing and confrontive. He verifies, or establishes some measure of unavoidable certainty,

about the things He "exposes". The purpose of this is to move people to action based upon this new information.

Vs. 9 - *concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me* -- This is capable of two very different interpretations. Either Jesus is saying that their sin is that they do not believe into Jesus, or, as seems more likely, He is saying that the Spirit convinces people of their sin because they have not yet found forgiveness and relief by faith in Jesus. In other words, the Spirit works in the life of these people to convince them that they have a need for a Savior from their sin. Sin is the terminal illness; Jesus is the cure.

Vs. 10 - *concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you no longer behold Me* -- The Spirit will convince people of new understandings or perceptions of righteousness by virtue of the resurrection and exaltation of Jesus. He will verify that Christ is righteous, and that righteousness is found in Him, that God's plan to redeem mankind is righteous, etc. Before the Spirit's impact on their lives, these things would have seemed to them to be foolishness (I Cor. 2:14). The Holy Spirit will convince them of the reality and reasonableness of the truth.

Vs. 11 - *and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged* -- Jesus had spoken of the "ruler of this world" in 12:31, and again in 14:30, as a reference to Satan. The apostle Paul uses similar language in Eph. 2:2. The fact that he exists, or has been judged, is a third area that will take spiritual convincing. How could anyone see that this is true? Only through the lens of Christian teaching about Jesus' victory over Satan and the forces of darkness at the cross (Col. 2:15; Acts 2:24; Heb. 2:14,15), and the demonstration of that victory and authority through the casting out of demonic powers, could the veracity of the claim that Satan has been defeated possibly be established. The Holy Spirit will take the pertinent information that someone has been made aware of in these three areas and use it to begin to expose, clarify, and convince that individual of its truth.

Vs. 12 - *I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now* -- The word translated as "bear" also means to "carry (as a load, or even carrying an unborn child), endure, or tolerate". The point is that they were "maxed out" in their capacity to handle any more information.

Vs. 13 - *But when He* -- Lit., "that (one)". Cf. vs. 8. *the Spirit of truth comes* -- This is now the third time Jesus has referred to the Holy Spirit by this title (14:17; 15:26). The repetition is meant to drive this perception of the Holy Spirit deeply into our thinking. He is the Spirit of truth. The wind or breath of truth. Truth's Spirit. The Greek for this phrase is "whenever that (one) might come (at a point in time), the Spirit of truth...". The phrase communicates either that the Spirit is to come at one, single, yet-unknown point in the future, or to refer to any individual occasion or incident when He might show up. *He will guide you into all the truth* -- This is what He will do when He comes. The Greek could mean that "all truth" is the destination where He will lead us, i.e., He will lead us into a correct understanding of reality. It could just as legitimately mean that He will lead us in/with/by all the truth, i.e., He is a fully reliable source of information. This seems to fit the context better, especially since I don't know of anyone who has yet been led into "all the truth" in their understanding. *for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak* -- The emphasis of this comment is that He will faithfully communicate what has been communicated to Him, without the addition of His own extraneous ideas. He will, in fact, operate by the same modus operandi as Jesus had (cf. 5:30; 7:16-18). *and He will disclose to you what is to come* -- The word translated as "disclose" is not the same as in 14:21. Literally, Jesus is saying, "the (things) coming He will announce to y'all". Jesus meant that He will inform them of what they need to know in future situations. He was not referring specifically about future events concerning the second coming of Christ, as some have attempted to explain this verse.

Vs. 14 - *He shall glorify Me* -- It is the motivation of the Holy Spirit to magnify Jesus. Just as we spoke of the difference between the glory or radiance of the sunshine as distinguished from the fullness of the actual light, heat and radiation taking place in the sun itself, in the same way the Holy Spirit will show us a small portion of the fullness of Christ. His purpose is not to magnify Himself, but Christ, who by His incarnation, death, and resurrection has made available God's provision for us. *for He shall take of Mine, and shall disclose it to you* -- Again, the word "disclose" means to "announce, proclaim". He takes "out from" the fullness of Jesus and announces what is pertinent to the moment.

Vs. 15 - *All things that the Father has are Mine* -- A strong statement of equality with the Father. Everything that the Father has belongs to Jesus. Cf. 13:3; 17:10. *therefore I said, that He takes of Mine, and will disclose it to you.* -- Since it all belongs to Jesus, how could it be otherwise?