

Revealed in the Upper Room: The Holy Spirit and the New Testament

By PAUL J. SCHARF

As Jesus taught His disciples in the Upper Room on the night before His death, He addressed them in light of their collective position as “the foundation” (Eph. 2:20) for the forthcoming church.

The church age would begin on a specific “day” (John 14:20) which, we know, would occur on Pentecost Sunday. Once this age began, these men would bear the responsibility of leading a worldwide evangelistic and teaching ministry.

But, as we have seen, this would require renewed strength and direction. Jesus combined these subjects by speaking to these men regarding “the Spirit of truth” and His purpose to “guide (them) into all truth” (John 16:13).

The Holy Spirit would have an entirely different kind of ministry during the church age, in which His relationship with the disciples would change. “He dwells with you,” Jesus said, “and will be in you” (John 14:17).

Jesus gave revelation regarding the Holy Spirit in numerous texts in this Upper Room Discourse. Consider the following passages that speak about His new role in this dispensation of the church:

- John 14:16-18 speaks of a new, permanent relationship, for believers only.
- John 14:20, 23 explain how Christ would be “in” His disciples in the Person of the Holy Spirit.
- John 14:26 expands on the revelatory nature of the Holy Spirit’s ministry.
- John 15:26-27 touches on the dynamic work of the Holy Spirit, unleashing the worldwide “witness” (v. 27) of the disciples.
- John 16:7-11 explains the relationship that the Holy Spirit would have to the world.
- John 16:13-14 explains the relationship that the Holy Spirit would have to Scripture and to Christ Himself.

In light of Jesus’ impending departure (John 16:28), His teaching about this promised “Helper” (John 14:26; 15:26) and this expanded place of the Holy Spirit in their lives and ministries must have truly brought tremendous “peace” (John 14:27) and comfort to these beleaguered disciples.

The Holy Spirit would, in fact, work miraculously within the apostles to produce the inspired writings of the New Testament—brand new revelation providing instruction for this new church age. Jesus gave the disciples several key points related to the way in which He would disclose this new revelation:

- He would enable the disciples to record history—the four gospels as well as the book of Acts—based on a “remembrance” (John 14:26) of Jesus as their Divine teacher.
- He would equip the disciples to receive and communicate a more complete revelation (John 16:12). This would include previously unrevealed truths that only then they would have the capacity to “bear” (v. 12).
- He would authorize the disciples to write both the 21 epistles of the New Testament and also “things to come” (John 16:13)—especially the book of Revelation.

The Upper Room Discourse is certainly one of the most significant messages that we have from Jesus as recorded in the gospels, based upon both its content and its context. It is amazing that He shared it before engaging in His High Priestly Prayer of John 17—and, then, before a long and arduous night of trials and physical suffering.

Perhaps because of its setting amidst such other incredibly weighty subjects, we do not seem to give this discourse the proper attention, in my opinion. Jesus truly presented the disciples with an outline of their assignments for the coming church age. Surely, they must have looked back upon it with intense interest many times in the years that followed.

May we, likewise, return often to study the inspired recording of this most momentous sermon.

Have a blessed Resurrection Sunday. Happy Easter!

Paul J. Scharf (M.A., M.Div., Faith Baptist Theological Seminary) is a church ministries representative for The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, based in Columbus, WI, and serving in the Midwest. For more information on his ministry, visit sermonaudio.com/pscharf or foi.org/scharf, or email pscharf@foi.org.

Scripture taken from the New King James Version®.

Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson. Used by permission. All rights reserved.