

JESUS'  
TEACHING  
ON THE  
HOLY SPIRIT

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**THE FIVE GOSPELS: THE SEARCH FOR THE AUTHENTIC WORDS OF JESUS**

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**THE FOUR WITNESSES** BY ROBIN GRIFFITH-JONES

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## EXPECTATION

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### FROM LUKE'S PEN

ACTS 1:1 In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach <sup>2</sup> until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen. <sup>3</sup> After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God. <sup>4</sup> On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. <sup>5</sup> For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit." <sup>6</sup> So when they met together, they asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" <sup>7</sup> He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. <sup>8</sup> But *you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.*"

### FROM JOHN'S PEN

JOHN 20:19 On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" <sup>20</sup> After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when

they saw the Lord. <sup>21</sup> Again Jesus said, “Peace be with you! *As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.*” <sup>22</sup> And with that he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit. <sup>23</sup> If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.”

### FROM ISAIAH’S SCROLL

ISAIAH 61:1 The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; <sup>2</sup> to proclaim the year of the LORD’s favour, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; <sup>3</sup> to provide for those who mourn in Zion – to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit. They will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, to display his glory. <sup>4</sup> They shall build up the ancient ruins, they shall raise up the former devastations; they shall repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations. <sup>5</sup> Strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, foreigners shall till your land and dress your vines; <sup>6</sup> but you shall be called priests of the LORD, you shall be named ministers of our God; you shall enjoy the wealth of the nations, and in their riches you shall glory. <sup>7</sup> Because their shame was double, and dishonor was proclaimed as their lot, therefore they shall possess a double portion; everlasting joy shall be theirs. <sup>8</sup> For

I the LORD love justice, I hate robbery and wrongdoing; I will faithfully give them their recompense, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.

## THE BREATH OF GOD

Over and over we have heard of the Breath of God. Now John gives the Breath a new and striking guise: as the Advocate, the Breath of Truth. John could not take even its name for granted; at almost every mention he explains this Advocate's standing as the Breath of God. So useful was the Greek term *Advocate* that the word was borrowed into Hebrew to speak of a representative at court, an ally—a function familiar among Greeks and Romans but unknown to Jewish law. Here, then, was a spokesman in the readers' defense, a foil to Satan, the great accuser, who had entered Judas. Here, too, is the readers' guide: "*The Advocate will guide you in all truth*" (John 16.12). What must the community do to be given this attorney? "*If you love me,*" said Jesus, "*you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the father and he will give you another advocate, to be with you for all ages: the Breath of Truth*" (John 14.15). This is the form in which John's readers will "see" Jesus again. In the Breath's presence John finds, too, the key with which he can decode that language of a heavenly dwelling. Jesus' pupils had expected to be taken away to be with him. But far from it: He will come to

dwell with them. This is the intimacy that he promises, among himself, his father, and his pupils. *“Those who love me will keep my word, and my father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.”* (John 14.23).

Here, too, was a saying that held out hope for Jesus’ final return and the end of history. It has been interpreted afresh. Life on earth will carry on; it is within that life that the transformation will be wrought, that the father will make his home within the believer. We have seen the gospel at work on sayings from the Old Order; here John has undertaken a similar task on a saying of Jesus himself. We might almost say that John’s Jesus has his Jesus anticipate the work of the Breath that he himself will send, the work of guiding John’s community in all truth: *“the Advocate, the holy Breath, which the father will send in my name—it will teach you everything and remind you of all that I have told you”* (John 14.26). John and his community have the Breath that Jesus promised; John writes and they read with the benefit that Jesus’ pupils did not have when he spoke. It is John’s task to ensure that the Breath is passed on and that its effect is shared with his whole community.

The Breath is to function in John’s day as Jesus did in his. But here the gospel’s central function conics into view. For the gospel itself, as we have seen, is to function in John’s church as

Jesus “functioned” in the story among those he met. Jesus healed, brought sight, called to new life; so in its turn does the gospel itself, the text itself, as it is read and received. And now the Breath is promised that will bring to fruition the function of the gospel in which the promise is made. The gospel needs the Breath’s work and is in turn its perfect vehicle. As for Jesus, so for the Breath he has sent: The presence of Jesus with John’s church is the gospel’s text; the activity of the Breath is the text’s effective reception.

John has reworked the expectations that a reader would have had of such an Advocate. Everything in this reworking is by now familiar. John’s Advocate is busy on earth, but this is not the court in which he was expected to work. Yet again John enacts oil earth what should be happening far from normal sight and understanding, for in Jewish thought the Advocate belongs with his adversary, Satan the great accuser—not in our humdrum life oil earth, but in the counsels of the court of heaven. No privileged journey is needed now to hear this Advocate’s plea on our behalf, and the Advocate in turn needs no more evidence to mount his case than the relation that defendants bear to Jesus.

*The Four Witnesses* 358f.

**JOHN 14: 15 "If you love me, you'll obey my instructions. 16 At my request the Father will provide you with yet another advocate, the authentic spirit, who will be with you forever. 17** The world is unable to accept (this spirit) because it neither perceives nor recognizes it. You recognize it because it dwells in you and will remain in you.

18 "I won't abandon you as orphans; I'll come to you. 19 In a little while the world won't see me any longer, but you'll see me because I'm alive as you will be alive. 20 At that time you will come to know that I'm in my Father and that you're in me and I'm in you. 21 Those who accept my instructions and obey them—they love me. And those who love me will be loved by my Father; moreover, I will love them and make myself known to them."

22 Judas (not Iscariot) says to him, "Master, what has happened that you are about to make yourself known to us but not to the world?"

23 Jesus replied to him, "Those who love me will heed what I tell them, and my Father will love them, and we'll come to them and make our home there. 24 Those who don't love me won't follow my instructions. Of

course, the things you heard me say  
are not mine but come from the  
Father who sent me."



**JOHN 14:** <sup>25</sup> "I have told you these things while I am still here with you. <sup>26</sup> **Yet the advocate, the holy spirit the Father will send in my stead, will teach you everything and remind you of everything I told you.** <sup>27</sup>

Peace is what I leave behind for you; my peace is what I give you. What I give you is not a worldly gift. Don't give in to your distress or be overcome by terror. <sup>28</sup> You heard me tell you, 'I'm going away and I'm going to return to you.' If you loved me, you would be glad that I'm going to the Father, because the Father is greater than I am. <sup>29</sup> So I have now told you all this ahead of time so you will believe when it happens.

<sup>30</sup> "Time does not permit me to tell you much more; you see, the ruler of this world is already on the way. <sup>31</sup> However, so the world may know I love the Father, I act exactly as my Father instructed me. Come on, let's get out of here."

**The advocate.** This speech continues the testamentary aspect of Jesus' departure (as though Jesus were giving his last will and testament to his disciples). The believers are no longer simply the disciples but those of the next

generation: those who accept his instruction (v. 21), those who love Jesus (v. 23). The evangelist is addressing the community after Jesus' death, the era of the community without the physical presence of Jesus.

**For this new generation, the gospel promises the provision of the divine spirit, the advocate (vv. 16-17), whose chief responsibility will be to “remind” the believers of what Jesus has said (v. 26). Thus they will know that Jesus dwells not only with the Father but also in them.** Similarly, love, so central to the Fourth Gospel's understanding of Jesus' mission, is defined in terms of “accepting” and “obeying” Jesus' instructions. In other words, the author seeks to describe on the ethical plane, on the level of day-to-day life in the community, the significance of Jesus' coming.

The distinction between those inside and those outside the community is absolute (note also 3:36; 5:23; 6:35-44, 65). This perspective is a hallmark of John's idea of community. The result is the diagnostic test in vv. 23-24: it will be evident to John's readers who the true followers of Jesus are.

**JOHN 15:**<sup>1</sup> I am the authentic vine and my Father does the cultivating. <sup>2</sup> He prunes every cane of mine that does not bear fruit, and every cane that does bear fruit he dresses so it will bear even more fruit. <sup>3</sup> You have

already been 'dressed up' by the things I have told you. <sup>4</sup> You must stay attached to me, and I (must stay attached) to you. Just as a cane cannot bear fruit in and of itself—if it is detached from the trunk—so you (can't bear fruit) unless you stay attached to me. <sup>5</sup> I am the trunk, you are the canes. Those who stay attached to me—and I to them—produce a lot of fruit; you're not able to achieve anything apart from me. <sup>6</sup> Those who don't remain attached to me are thrown away like dead canes: they are collected, tossed into the fire, and burned. <sup>7</sup> If you stay attached to me and my words lodge in you, ask whatever you want and it will happen to you. <sup>8</sup> My Father's honor consists of this: the great quantity of fruit you produce in being my disciples.

<sup>9</sup> "I loved you in the same way the Father loved me. Live in my love. <sup>10</sup> If you observe my instructions, you will live in my love, just as I have observed my Father's instructions and live in his love.

<sup>11</sup> "I have told you all this so you will be the source of my happiness and so you yourselves will be filled with happiness. <sup>12</sup> This is my order to you: You are to love each other just as I loved you. <sup>13</sup> No one can love to a greater extent than to give up life for

friends. <sup>14</sup> you are my friends if you follow my orders. <sup>15</sup> I no longer call you slaves, since a slave does not know what his master is up to. I have called you friends, because I let you know everything I learned from my Father. <sup>16</sup> you didn't choose me; I chose you. And I delegated you to go out and produce fruit. And your fruit will last because my Father will provide you with whatever you request in my name. <sup>17</sup> This is my order to you: You are to love each other."

**Vine & canes.** Jesus' relation to his disciples is now given particular metaphorical shape in the figure of the "authentic vine." They will "bear fruit" to the extent they remain attached to him.

Vines do not have branches, contrary to popular usage, but "canes." Each year canes are snipped from the vines and piled in the vineyard to be burned. A related figure of speech is attributed to John the Baptist in Matthew 3:10//Luke 3:9. The vines will not bear good fruit, or fruit in abundance, if they are not pruned annually. All of this suggests loyalty to Jesus himself, accompanied by the "pruning" of members of the community who do not "bear fruit." The context is that of the developed community of faith.

Just as the Father loves Jesus, and Jesus

loves his disciples, so the disciples are to love each other. The relationship of the Father and son is the model for the relationship between and among Jesus' followers. While the sentiment may have been congenial to the historical Jesus, the language is that of the fourth evangelist.

## TEACHING 3

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**JOHN 15:** 18 "If the world hates you, don't forget that it hated me first. 19 If you were at home in the world, the world would befriend (you as) its own. But you are not at home in the world; on the contrary, I have separated you from the world; that's why the world hates you. 20 Recall what I told you: 'A slave is not above his master.' If they persecuted me, they'll surely persecute you. If they observe my teaching, they will also observe yours. 21 Yet they are going to do all these things to you because of me, since they don't recognize the one who sent me.

22 "If I hadn't come and spoken to them, they wouldn't be guilty of sin. But as it is, they have no excuse for their sin.

23 "Those who hate me also hate my Father.

24 "If I had not performed deeds among them such as no one else has ever performed, they would not be guilty of sin. But as it is, they have observed and come to hate both me and my Father. (25 This has happened so the saying in their Law would come true: 'They hated me for no reason.')

26 **"When the advocate comes, the one I'll send you from the Father, the**

spirit of truth that emerges from the Father, it will testify on my behalf. 27 And you are going to testify because you were with me from the beginning.”

**Not at home in the world.** The discourse now turns from love (within the community of faith) to hate (on the part of those outside). The “you” in v. 18 refers not merely to the disciples but to all believers: those addressed in the narrative are Jesus’ intimate disciples, but for the author they represent all the subsequent readers of the Fourth Gospel. In the narrative of the gospel, Jesus’ persecution is dramatized in chapters 7-8. In the evangelist’s world, the believers’ persecution is alluded to occasionally and obliquely: in 9:22 the Judeans had agreed to banish from the synagogue anyone acknowledging Jesus as the Anointed (stated also in 12:42); in 15:25, the Law, which belonged to all Judeans, has become “their Law” (also compare 10:34); in 16:2, Jesus warns that “you,” meaning believers, will be expelled from the synagogue. **In this setting, the promise of the “advocate” connotes legal proceedings against believers** (v. 26), much as it does in Mark 13:11//Matt 10:19-20//Luke 21:14-15, and especially Luke 12:11-12: “When they make you appear in synagogues. . .” means “when they put you on trial”). All of this indicates that the context of this address is the later Christian community

under duress.

John 15:27 is reminiscent of Acts 1:21, where an apostle is chosen to replace Judas. In both cases, the qualification for giving apostolic testimony is being with Jesus from the beginning. Also, in both cases, the perspective is that of the post-crucifixion church, which seeks to establish criteria for those in positions of leadership in the church.

**Fate of the disciples.** The fate of the disciples had been predicted in the synoptic gospels, in Matt 10:17-23, for example, and in the little apocalypse, Mark 13:9-13. All of these predictions reflect the situation of the Christian community as it began to separate from Judean religious practice and form its own community. The formulation here in the Fourth Gospel is composed entirely in language particularly characteristic of that gospel (the love/hate contrast, the “world” as hostile to the Christian movement). None of these predictions can be traced back to Jesus.

**Slave & master.** “Slaves are never better than their masters” (v. 20) repeats a proverb quoted earlier in John 13:16 and elsewhere in the gospels in various forms. It stems ultimately from common lore.



## Teaching 4

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**JOHN 16:** <sup>1</sup> "I've told you these things to keep you from being led astray. <sup>2</sup> They are going to expel you from the synagogue. But the time is coming when those who kill you will think they are doing God a service. <sup>3</sup> They are going to do these things because they don't recognize either the Father or me. <sup>4</sup> Yet I have told you all this so when the time comes you'll recall that I told you about them. I didn't tell you these things at first because I was with you then. <sup>5</sup> Now I am on my way to the one who sent me, and not one of you asks me, 'Where are you going?' <sup>6</sup> Yet because I have told you these things, you are filled with grief. <sup>7</sup> But I'm telling you the truth: you will be better off to have me leave. **You see, if I don't leave, the advocate can't come to you. But if I go, I'll send the advocate to you. When the advocate comes, it will convince the world of its error regarding sin, justification, judgment:** <sup>9</sup> regarding sin because they don't believe in me; <sup>10</sup> regarding justification because I am going to the Father and you won't see me anymore; <sup>11</sup> regarding judgment because the ruler of this world stands condemned. <sup>12</sup> I still have a lot to tell

you, but you can't stand it just now.

**13 When (the advocate) comes, the spirit of truth, it will guide you to the complete truth. It will not speak on its own authority, but will tell only what it hears and will disclose to you what is to happen. 14 It will honor me because it will disclose to you what it gets from me. 15 Everything the Father has belongs to me; that's why I told you, 'It will disclose to you what it gets from me.'** 16 After a time you won't see me anymore, and then again a little later you will see me."

17 Some of his disciples remarked to each other, "What does he mean when he tells us, 'After a time you won't see me, and then again a little later you will see me'? And what does he mean by, 'I'm going to return to the Father'?" 18 So they asked, "What does 'a little later' mean? We don't understand what he's talking about."

19 Jesus perceived that they wanted to question him, so he said to them, "Have you been discussing my remark 'After a time you won't see me, and then a little later you will see me'? 20 I swear to God, you will weep and mourn, but the world will celebrate. You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy. 21 A woman suffers pain when she gives birth

because the time has come. When her child is born, in her joy she no longer remembers her labor because a human being has come into the world. <sup>22</sup> And so you are now going to grieve. But I'll see you again, and then you'll rejoice, and nobody can deprive you of your joy. <sup>23</sup> When that time comes you'll ask nothing of me. I swear to God, if you ask the Father for anything using my name, he will grant it to you. <sup>24</sup> You haven't asked for anything using my name up to this point. Ask and you'll get it, so your bliss will be complete.

<sup>25</sup> "I have been talking to you in figures of speech. The time is coming when I'll no longer speak to you in figures but will tell you about the Father in plain language. <sup>26</sup> When that time comes, you will make requests using my name; I'm not telling you that I will make requests on your behalf, <sup>27</sup> since the Father himself loves you because you have befriended me and believe that I came from God. <sup>28</sup> I did come from the Father and entered the world. Once again I'm going to leave the world and return to the Father."

<sup>29</sup> His disciples respond, "Now you're using plain language rather than talking in riddles. <sup>30</sup> Now we see that you know everything and don't need anyone to question you. This is

why we believe you have come from God.”

<sup>31</sup> “Do you really believe now?” Jesus countered. <sup>32</sup> “Look, the time has come for each of you to scatter and return home; you’ll abandon me. But I won’t be alone, because the Father is with me. <sup>33</sup> I have related all this to you so you can possess my peace. In the world you’re going to have trouble. But be resolute! I have subdued the world.”

**Jesus’ departure.** Some scholars suggest that 16:1-4a goes with the preceding passage because it continues the theme of persecution elaborated in 15:18-27. Whether or not this is so, the subject changes in 16:5. The remarks ascribed to Jesus in vv. 1-4a refer to events that took place long after Jesus’ death; they are probably recent occurrences in the evangelist’s community. Moreover, v. 4b appears to have been coined from the perspective of the future: Jesus looking back on the events that preceded his death, as though he were speaking from heaven.

**Fate of the disciples.** The fate of the disciples was predicted in John 15:18. The synoptic gospels also contain similar predictions. Expulsion from the synagogue and martyrdom soon became prospects for Christians in the Johannine community. But these prospects reflect events that occurred at a later time.

In the second part of his speech (16:4b-33), Jesus returns to topics that are more appropriate to a farewell address to his disciples. In addition, he reiterates a number of themes he has already introduced, themes that are characteristic of the thought and language of the fourth evangelist, rather than of Jesus:

In v. 5 Jesus tells his disciples that he is on his way to the Father, a theme --:-,-- reduced already in 13:33, 36-37, and 14:2-4, 28.

In v. 7 Jesus promises to send the advocate, the spirit, to them, as he has done earlier in 14:16, 26, and 15:26.

**In v. 13 the advocate is described as a guide to the complete truth. In 14:6 Jesus describes himself as the truth, then in 14:16-17 he promises the coming of the authentic spirit, which would remind them of everything he has told them 14:26).**

In v. 16 Jesus states that after a time they won't see him, but then later on they see him. He makes a similar claim in 14:19. The fourth evangelist is here using the term "see" in his special sense, "to see with the eyes of faith," or "to have intuitive insight, to perceive the truth."

At this point (vv. 17-18), the author of this discourse resorts to a common Johannine technique: the disciples don't understand what Jesus is talking about. This is comparable to the confusion of Peter about Jesus' departure in 13:36-37, and to the misunderstanding of Nicodemus in 3:3-13, and of the woman

at the well in 4:5-15.

In v. 20 Jesus tells the disciples that they will grieve at his departure, but the world will celebrate. The world is the enemy, as in 15:18 and elsewhere in John. But though the disciples will grieve, their grief will turn to joy when they “see” him again (as he will “see” them, 16:22).

In 16:23-24 Jesus renews a theme found frequently elsewhere in the gospel tradition: “Ask and you'll receive” (14:13-14; 15:7, 16; Luke 11:10//Matt 7:8; Mark 11:24//Matt 21:22). Most of the Fellows were of the opinion that this saying reflected the context of prayer and exorcism in the early Christian community (in this connection, note Mark 9:28-29, where exorcism is linked to prayer).

In vv. 27-28 Jesus again states that he has come from and is returning to the Father. He had said this already in 14:12, 24, 28; also in 3:13, and 6:62.

In vv. 29-30 the disciples claim that they now understand. Jesus responds in vv. 31-33 that they don't really understand; this is another instance of the fourth evangelist portraying the disciples as being in the dark.

These and still other features of this passage demonstrate that the language attributed to Jesus is far removed from the Jesus of the aphorisms and parables. Moreover, they contradict the Jesus who rarely speaks directly of himself; in the Fourth Gospel, Jesus speaks constantly

of himself and in elevated terms. The Fellows were virtually unanimous in their judgments that none of these words could be traced back to Jesus.

*Communion under  
Special Circumstances*

# Jesus' Teaching On The Holy Spirit

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**Brothers and sisters in Christ,  
God calls us to faithful service  
by the proclamation of the word, and  
sustains us with the sacrament of the  
body and blood of Christ.**

**[Hear now God's word, and] receive  
this holy food from the Lord's table.**

Most merciful God,  
**we confess that we have sinned  
against you  
in thought, word, and deed,  
by what we have done,  
and by what we have left undone.  
We have not loved you with our  
whole heart;  
we have not loved our  
neighbours as ourselves.  
We are truly sorry and we  
humbly repent.  
For the sake of your Son Jesus  
Christ,  
have mercy on us and forgive us,  
that we may delight in your will,  
and walk in your ways,  
to the glory of your name. Amen.**

*The priest shall say...*

Almighty God have mercy upon  
you,  
pardon and deliver you from all  
your sins,

confirm and strengthen you in all  
goodness,  
and keep you in eternal life;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
**Amen.**

*Before Communion...*

As our Saviour taught us, let us  
pray,

**Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those who sin  
against us.  
Save us from the time of trial,  
and deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory are yours,  
now and for ever. Amen.**

The gifts of God for the People of  
God.

**Thanks be to God.**

*After Communion...*

Glory to God,  
whose power, working in us,  
can do infinitely more  
than we can ask or imagine.  
Glory to God from generation to  
generation,  
in the Church and in Christ Jesus,  
for ever and ever. Amen.

*Dismissal...*

Let us bless the Lord.  
**Thanks be to God.**