

Session 3 - Conviction of Sin (Part 1)

Series: Is It So? Reconsidering the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit

Speaker: Dr. Randy White

Date: November 24, 2024

Introduction

- **Opening Scripture:** John 16:8-11
 - Jesus speaks about the coming of the Holy Spirit (the Comforter) and His role in reproofing the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment.
 - **Traditional Interpretation:**
 - Viewed as a timeless, universal work of the Holy Spirit affecting all individuals who encounter the gospel.
 - **Purpose of the Chapter:**
 - **Challenge Traditional Assumptions:**
 - Question whether this interpretation aligns with a literal and contextual reading of Scripture.
 - **Explore a Specific Application:**
 - Suggest that Jesus referred to a specific ministry directed toward Israel during a particular time in God's dispensational plan.
 - **Objectives:**
 - **Examine the Spirit's Work:**
 - Understand the meaning of "reprove" and its implications for conviction.
 - Analyze the specific areas of conviction—sin, righteousness, and judgment—in relation to Israel's history and relationship with Christ.
 - Identify examples in Acts 2–7 where the Spirit's convicting work is evident.
 - Contrast this perspective with traditional evangelical interpretations of the Spirit's ongoing role.
 - **Invitation to the Audience:**
 - Encourage an open-minded examination of Scripture.
 - Seek a clearer understanding of the Spirit's work by untangling tradition from textual evidence.
-

Understanding John 16:7–11

Contextual Background

- **Upper Room Discourse (John 13–17):**
 - Jesus prepares His disciples for His impending departure and the coming of the Holy Spirit.
- **Significance of Jesus' Departure:**
 - Advantageous because it allows for the Spirit's arrival.
- **Description of the Spirit's Work:**
 - "Reproving" or "convicting" the world concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment.
- **Focus on Immediate Audience and Context:**
 - Addressing the disciples and the specific dynamics of God's unfolding redemptive plan.
- **Thesis:**
 - These verses reveal a focused work aimed at addressing the world's rejection of Christ, particularly through the Spirit's witness to Israel during the transition to the apostolic age.

Meaning of "Reprove"

- **Greek Term:** ἐλέγχω (*elengchō*)
 - Means to pass judgment, expose error, or convict.
 - **Implication:**
 - An intensified form of "prove," suggesting corrective proof that brings one to acknowledge error.
 - **The Spirit's Role:**
 - To "conclusively prove" the world's guilt concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment.
-

1. Proving Guilt Concerning Sin

Specific Focus on Unbelief

- **Jesus' Statement:**
 - "Of sin, because they believe not on me" (John 16:9).
- **Directed at Israel's Rejection:**

- Specifically addressing Israel's unbelief in Jesus as the Messiah.

The World's Involvement

- **Guilt Beyond Israel:**
 - The rejection of Jesus implicates humanity as a whole.
- **Role of Rome (Gentile World):**
 - Pilate's involvement and the Roman soldiers' actions demonstrate the world's complicity.
- **Psalm 2:1-2 Fulfillment:**
 - Nations and kings setting themselves against the Lord's anointed.

Israel's Beliefs About Jesus

1. Jesus as Miracle Worker

- **Acknowledgment by All:**
 - Miracles were undeniable and witnessed by multitudes.
 - Religious leaders did not deny His miracles but attributed them to other sources (e.g., Beelzebub).
- **Examples:**
 - Feeding of the five thousand (John 6:14).
 - Raising of Lazarus (John 11:45-47).
 - Widespread recognition, even by Herod Antipas (Luke 23:8).

2. Jesus as Teacher

- **Widely Revered:**
 - Taught with authority and unparalleled wisdom.
 - Attracted attention from both common people and religious leaders.
- **Examples:**
 - Nicodemus acknowledging Him as a teacher from God (John 3:2).
 - Crowds amazed at His teaching (John 7:46).
 - Confounded religious elite in the temple (Matthew 21:23-27).

3. Jesus as Messiah?

- **Rejection by Religious Leaders:**
 - Despite public acclaim, leaders orchestrated His crucifixion.
 - Feared losing their position and nation (John 11:48).
- **National Implications:**
 - Leadership's rejection had consequences for the entire nation.
 - "We have no king but Caesar!" (John 19:15).
- **Spirit's Reproof:**
 - Aimed at exposing this rejection and convicting the nation of unbelief.

The Gospel of Christ

- **Definition:**
 - The good news about Jesus' identity as the Messiah.
- **Spirit's Empowerment:**
 - Apostles preached to Israel, urging them to accept Jesus as the Christ.
- **Fulfillment of the Spirit's Role:**
 - Convicting them of sin, righteousness, and judgment.
- **Reference for Further Study:**
 - Randy White's booklet: *The Gospel of Christ: Its Nature and Identity*.

2. Proving the Righteousness of Christ

Focus on Jesus' Ascension

- **Jesus' Statement:**
 - "Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more" (John 16:10).
- **Ascension as Vindication:**
 - Confirms Jesus' sinless life, perfect obedience, and identity as God's Son.
- **Ascension Not Merely a Departure:**
 - It is a direct confirmation and public affirmation of His righteousness.

Scriptural Precedents

- **Elijah:**
 - Taken into heaven (2 Kings 2:11), marking him as a righteous prophet.

- **Enoch:**
 - "Translated" because he pleased God (Hebrews 11:5).
- **Psalms 24:3-4:**
 - Only those with clean hands and pure hearts may ascend to God's presence.

Jesus' Ascension Surpasses Examples

- **Greater than Elijah and Enoch:**
 - Jesus ascended as the preeminent Righteous One.
- **Fulfillment of Prophecy:**
 - **Psalms 110:1:**
 - Messiah seated at God's right hand.
 - **Daniel 7:13-14:**
 - Son of Man exalted and given dominion.
- **Declaration of Righteousness:**
 - Ascension exposes humanity's unrighteousness.
 - Confirms Jesus as the standard of righteousness.

Implications

- **Call to Acknowledge Jesus:**
 - Recognize Him as the Righteous One.
- **Ongoing Relevance:**
 - Points forward to the fulfillment of His kingdom.

3. Proving the Certainty of Judgment

Judgment of Satan

- **Jesus' Statement:**
 - "Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged" (John 16:11).
- **Satan's Defeat:**
 - Established at the cross and affirmed by resurrection and ascension.
- **Present and Future Aspects:**
 - Currently judged; ultimate judgment will come (Revelation 20:10).

Implications for the World System

- **World Under Satan's Influence:**
 - The world system characterized by rebellion is condemned.
- **Humanity's Alignment:**
 - Rejecting Christ aligns individuals with a defeated adversary.
- **Jesus' Words in John 3:19:**
 - Light has come, but men loved darkness.

A Call to Acknowledge the Judge

- **Jesus as Righteous Judge:**
 - Authority established through resurrection and ascension (Acts 10:42).
- **Urgency of Repentance:**
 - Recognize the inevitability of judgment and submit to Christ's lordship.
- **Paul's Declaration in Acts 17:31:**
 - God has appointed a day to judge the world by Jesus.

Certainty Declared

- **Sobering Clarity:**
 - Rejection of Christ leads to condemnation.
- **Hope Offered:**
 - Points to the ultimate triumph of God's justice and establishment of His kingdom.

Summary of John 16:8-11

- **Unique Passage:**
 - Only explicit biblical passage describing this specific convicting work of the Holy Spirit.
- **Caution in Doctrine Formation:**
 - Be careful about universalizing this role into a general principle of the Spirit's ongoing work.
- **Contextual Interpretation:**

- Possibly describes the Spirit's ministry to Israel during the transitional period after Christ's ascension.
 - **Implications:**
 - Encourages a careful, contextual understanding of the Spirit's work.
 - **Final Thought:**
 - Let Scripture guide our understanding, separating tradition from textual evidence.
-

Conclusion

- **Re-emphasis of Objectives:**
 - Sought to understand the Spirit's work in context.
 - Aimed to challenge traditional assumptions with careful biblical analysis.
- **Encouragement to the Audience:**
 - Approach Scripture with an open mind and heart.
 - Allow the Word to guide our understanding of the Spirit's ministry.
- **Invitation:**
 - Consider a more precise and contextual application of the Spirit's ministry in this pivotal passage.