

# The Holy Trinity

## HAVING THE RIGHT ADVOCATE IN COURT

John 16:12-15

(The Holy Trinity)

analysis by Steve Kuhl

12"I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. 13When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. 14He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you. 15All that the Father has is mine. For this reason I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you."

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## DIAGNOSIS: Now is the judgment of the world...

### Step 1-Initial Diagnosis: Unprepared

This text is incomprehensible apart from the wider context of chapters 13-17, if not the whole gospel, which pictures life as a cosmic trial. The scene is Jesus with his disciples in the upper room. There he drops a bomb shell on them, for which they were unprepared: in a matter of hours he must "go away" (v.7), which is euphemism for the cross, his time of trial and of condemnation before the world. Their response is predictable: "sorrow" (v.6). But Jesus' trial is not the only, or even most pressing, problem of unpreparedness that concerns Jesus. Actually, that "going away" is "to their advantage" (v.7). The real problem of unpreparedness has to do with the fact that they

themselves are not yet ready for their time of trial, their time on the cross, their experience of rejection for following Jesus. But ready or not – and they weren't (are we?) – the cross/trial is an essential part of the Christian life. Moreover, as with Jesus, those who crucify his disciples will also think of themselves as doing God a favor, bringing God's judgment to bear (v.2). How to be prepared for that? That is the question.

### **Step 2–Advanced Diagnosis:** Stumble

The reason this unpreparedness is so dangerous is that when the time of trial comes, as it inevitably will, the disciples will “stumble” (v.1) on the witness stand. They will not have the conviction of heart to stand for the truth about Jesus. This, in fact, is what happened the night in which Jesus was betrayed. For “fear of the persecutors” (20:19), for fear that what happened to Jesus would happen to them, the disciples stumbled. They deserted the truth. Their actions (and heart) reflected the same worldly judgment about Jesus, that he is a blasphemer and not the Son of the Father. In essence, this is our “unbelief.”

### **Step 3–Final Diagnosis:** Alone/Defenseless

The end result of this stumbling is that the disciples were now more alone—and more defenseless—than ever. Their worst fear became truth. Jesus was absent from their life, not only in the flesh, but now also in Spirit (but all of this for our benefit, as we shall see). Because of their stumbling, their desertion, nothing of his belonged to them, and nothing of them belonged to him (v.13). They were left totally to their own defenses. Ironically, they were now in no better shape than the world with regard to God. They too, along with the world, will be proved wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment (v.8). Stumbling, they have not only Jesus' persecutors to fear, but also his Father, the judge behind the judges, who has already condemned the world and all who stand against the truth as embodied in his Son, Jesus Christ.

## **PROGNOSIS: ... But see Who stands on our behalf!**

### **Step 4–Initial Prognosis:** Going Away

Although the disciples did not yet know it (do we?) Jesus' "going away", his cross, his trial and condemnation, was the best thing he could do for them. They (and us), and the whole world, stood condemned already. By going to the cross, Jesus opposed that judgment, his Father's very own judgment, not on the grounds that it wasn't true—undeniably, it is!—but by deciding to suffer the Father's condemnation on our behalf. As a result, a place of contradiction—a loop hole, so to speak—was established in human history with regard to the judgment of God. In so far as Jesus identifies with this sinful world, he is justifiably condemned; but in so far as he is the sinless Son of God, he is unjustifiably condemned. Indeed, at only this point in history, on the cross of Christ, the whole, otherwise-consistent system of divine judgment is invalidated. Moreover, God, the Father of Jesus, has declared this to be the case by raising his Son from the dead and making him the pivotal point concerning his judgment of the world.

### **Step 5–Advanced Prognosis:** Taking and Declaring

The question remains: How do we participate in this loop hole, this new, alternative truth, which is established in Christ Jesus? The work of Jesus is not applied to the world simply by fiat. The simple answer is that it applies "by faith." In the language of the fourth gospel, faith is more than knowledge, it is a matter of taking and declaring: taking what is Jesus' (i.e., his death and resurrection, his trial and verdict) and declaring it to us (v.15). That is what faith does. It means pleading Jesus in the time of trial, it means welcoming his death and trusting in his resurrection. Faith is therefore that steady confidence that God's truth in Jesus Christ applies also to us, even when all other evidence is to the contrary.

## **Step 6—Final Prognosis:** Guided

This act of faith, of taking and declaring the things of Jesus to us, does not have its origins in the human will, though it certainly resides there. Rather, it is a work of the Holy Spirit, whom Jesus sends. Just as we would never think of entering a courtroom without an attorney, so Jesus does not want us to enter the trial of life without his personally appointed attorney at our side, the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is the defense attorney who is always at our side, advising us to plead our best evidence, the truth established in Jesus Christ. Wherever right testimony about Jesus is active, there the Holy Spirit is advising. Without this Advocate, we are truly alone, left to stumble, left to our own defenses. But with the Spirit we are properly prepared no matter what form our trials take. Indeed, the cross, the time of trial, when it comes to those who are in the spirit, actually becomes a part of the evidence that we are in the right concerning sin, righteous and judgment. It means we are in the dock with Jesus.