

# The Comforter

Ron Roberts

The word "Comforter" is found 4 times in the New Testament (KJV). It is translated from a Greek term that means *someone who is called beside us*. The word is only used by John and it always refers to the Holy Spirit. (The same Greek word is translated "Advocate" in 1John 2:1 where it refers to Jesus. But the English word "Comforter" is our focus in this article)

Jesus refers to the *Comforter* whom He will send to the Apostles after He ascends to the Father. These 4 references teach us different things about this source of consolation supplied to the Apostles after the loss of their friend and Master, Jesus.

In John 14:16 we read, *And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; The Comforter was with the Father at the time Jesus was on earth with His Apostles. Although Jesus would have to leave them the *Comforter* would come and abide with them forever.*

Ten verses later we read in John 14:26, *But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. The Comforter is identified as the Holy Spirit. He will be sent by the Father in the name of Jesus. That is, God will send the Spirit which is consistent with the authority and teaching of Jesus. He will guide the Apostles in teaching the Gospel by bringing to remembrance all the things Christ had taught them and teaching them whatever else they needed to know.*

The third reference is found in the next chapter and is also verse 26. John 15:26 *But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me: What we learn*

that is different from this passage is the Spirit is referred to as the Spirit of truth. His message will be a testimony about Jesus. This is the subject of the Gospel. It is not only about who Jesus was and what Jesus did, but it also includes the commandments He said. It is ridiculous to think we need to learn the man without the plan. Jesus came to save us. That salvation is based on obeying His instructions. This is why the *Comforter* must come and guide the Apostles so they can teach and write everything correctly which needs to be obeyed.

The final reference is John 16:7 *Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. This verse helps us to see the reason for calling the Spirit the *Comforter*. He would come when the Apostles needed consoling after the loss of Jesus. It was necessary for Jesus to leave so the Spirit could come and the Gospel could be accurately preached. The message about Jesus and His completed mission could only be taught after He ascended and the Spirit descended.*

Back in 14:16 we read that the *Comforter* would abide forever. This was true for the Apostles. The Holy Spirit was **with them** and guiding them until they died. The Spirit provided us with the written word through the Apostles hands. Although the Spirit Himself is not miraculously with us His guidance remains through the Bible. We can learn what we need to do through the Spirit's message. This is important to understand when many churches of men claim they are receiving direct revelation from the Spirit which contradicts the teachings of the Bible. The Holy Spirit does not give anyone messages today. This miraculous gift was only necessary until the New Testament was completely written. There is no new information to be given.

Scholars believe John wrote later than the other New Testament authors. Some contend he wrote as late as the 90's while many of the other books were completed in the 60's. (*The book of Revelation was written by John but the date of the writing is contested. Some think it was written about 63 and refers in part to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. Others date it in the 90's believing it addresses the fall of the Roman Empire*). It is believed that false teachers called Gnostics emerged before John wrote his Gospel and the 3 epistles that bear his name. His writings dealt with the Gnostics error.

Gnostics believed they had special knowledge and greater understanding than the common Christian. They saw themselves as the elite, much like the Pharisees in Judaism. We find this same mentality in pseudo-intellectuals who claim they know more than we could ever learn from Bible study. These people tend to **intimidate the common folks**. Perhaps this is why the Holy Spirit is called the *Comforter* only by John (to provide consolation to his contemporary Christians). He points out that the Spirit gave all the teachings to the Apostles and there is no further revelation that is coming. The Gnostics had fabricated their doctrine from their own arrogance to impress men.

John's Gospel begins with proving Jesus was God and with the Father in the beginning (Jn.1:1-2). His first epistle shows that He and the other Apostles were witnesses of Jesus humanity. They were able to touch, see, and hear Him while He dwelt among them on earth (1 Jn. 1:1-3). The Gnostics, who tried to deny Jesus was God or was ever truly flesh, were corrected by John in these inspired writings.

It is our hope that many will accept the words of the Gospel, which actually come from the Comforter, and not be misled by false doctrines that are blasphemously attributed to His Holy name.