

The Gospel of John

Chapter 16:16-33

November 2, 1997

- **The Gospel of John Outline:**

- Chapter 1 Our Lord is the Word, the Light and the Life
- Chapter 2 The Lord of the Wedding Feast; Zeal for the purity of the temple
- Chapter 3 Spiritual Birth, Belief and Salvation vs. Unbelief and Condemnation
- Chapter 4 The Ministry in Samaria, The Harvest, The Faith of the Nobleman
- Chapter 5 Paralytic man healed on the Sabbath, Unity of The Father and Son
- Chapter 6 The Bread of Life
- Chapter 7 The public debates about Jesus during the Feast of Tabernacles
- Chapter 8 Public debates: Woman caught in adultery; The Son makes you free; Abraham's true children
- Chapter 9 Jesus heals a man born blind.
- Chapter 10 Jesus is the Door and the True Shepherd
- Chapter 11 Our Lord is the Resurrection and the Life
- Chapter 12 Jesus Anointed and Worshipped as King, God softens some and hardens some, Public ministry ends
- Chapter 13 Jesus Loves His Disciples, Judas Betrays The Master
- Chapter 14 The Way, The Truth and The Life
- Chapter 15 Jesus is the True Vine
- Chapter 16 The Spirit will guide into all truth

- **Review and Introduction**

It appears that both chapters 15 & 16 describe instruction given by Jesus to His disciples while on their way to the garden at Gethsemane. Jesus had told them that if they kept His commandments their joy would be full. But He also tells them that the world would hate them, put them out of the Synagogues and even kill them in the name of God. Obviously, Jesus did not find these two instructions to be at odds with each other.

In this remaining portion of chapter 16 Jesus again predicts their joy but tells them that the joy would replace sorrow and that this would occur "in a little while". Clearly Jesus is preparing His friends for difficult times and is expecting them to overcome their sorrow and their adversaries.

Exposition of John 16:16-33

16 "A little while, and you will not see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me, because I go to the Father."¹⁷ Then some of His disciples said among themselves, "What is this that He says to us, 'A little while, and you will not see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me'; and, 'because I go to the Father'?"¹⁸ They said therefore, "What is this that He says, 'A little while'? We do not know what He is saying."

- Many have attempted to interpret these remarks made by Christ using various time tables. However, a plain reading of the verses would lead one to conclude that Jesus is referring to His death, burial and resurrection. In a little while (not quite one day) He would be crucified and the disciples would scatter. They would not see their Lord because He would be buried in a tomb. Then in a little while (three days) after His resurrection their sorrow would be replaced with joy because they will see Him and rejoice.
- Once again, the disciples did not fully understand what He was saying. What may be plain to us is only so because we have the rest of the story and we have the Spirit. But for the disciples, all they had was Jesus instruction which they had not yet been fully equipped to understand.

19 Now Jesus knew that they desired to ask Him, and He said to them, "Are you inquiring among yourselves about what I said, 'A little while, and you will not see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me'?"²⁰ "Most assuredly, I say to you that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; and you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned into joy."

- Jesus predicts their devastating sorrow but also reassures them that their grief would be relatively momentary. We can vividly see the antithesis between the elect and the world. Just as John records in the first chapter, the world did not know Him. While those who loved Him mourned over His death, those who should have adored and worshipped Him rejoiced at His death.
- This is a good verse to consider when discussing the various uses of the word for world (*kosmos*). When Jesus says that the world would rejoice at His death, does He mean each and every without exception? Clearly not. Rather, the use of the word world is used to suggest the magnitude of the number who hated him not the precise quantity of those who would hate Him.

21 "A woman, when she is in labor, has sorrow because her hour has come; but as soon as she has given birth to the child, she no

longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world.²² "Therefore you now have sorrow; but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you.

- The story that we have the pleasure to learn and rejoice over of Jesus' death on the cross and His resurrection is not just a sad human interest story where a promising young theologian has his career stopped short. Jesus death burial and resurrection was the pivotal point in human history and although it is sad to think of His death, Jesus here tells the disciples that the feelings of loss will be virtually forgotten and replaced by immovable joy.

23 "And in that day you will ask Me nothing. Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you.²⁴ "Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.

- After His resurrection and shortly thereafter at Pentecost, the disciples would become fully equipped to minister to the world because Christ sent the Holy Spirit to empower them. The things that He had taught them would be clear and they now would have access to the Father in the name of the Son. Until that time, the disciples asked questions of Christ directly but later they would be clothed in His righteousness and therefore able to come faithfully before the Father and make requests known.
- Jesus has expressed a number of times so far that the disciples would be able to faithfully ask anything of the Father and they would receive anything. While Jesus' death still grants us perfect access to the Father as we come before Him in the name of His Son, He will still hear and grant our prayers as they are in accord with His will. There are those who still attempt to "name-and-claim" and forget that our minds are being renewed and that sanctification is where we are conformed to the image of the Son and being made perfect.

25 "These things I have spoken to you in figurative language; but the time is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figurative language, but I will tell you plainly about the Father.²⁶ "In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I shall pray the Father for you;²⁷ "for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came forth from God.²⁸ "I came forth from the Father and have come into the world. Again, I leave the world and go to the Father."

- Jesus goes on further to explain that the time would come (perhaps after the resurrection or Pentecost) when the disciples would fully comprehend the things He had been teaching. Up to this point Jesus had been intentionally teaching them in figuratively but later after He sent the Holy Spirit His words would become clear and equipping.
- We often lose sight of the fact that Jesus has given us access to the *Father*. Jesus does not interpret for us rather He has interceded already for us and continues to do so (Heb. 7:25). It is on the basis of the completed work of Jesus that we understand our having been made holy and therefore able to come before the throne with confidence. Without Christ' righteousness, we be unable to approach Him at His throne.

29 His disciples said to Him, "See, now You are speaking plainly, and using no figure of speech!³⁰ "Now we are sure that You know all things, and have no need that anyone should question You. By this we believe that You came forth from God."

- Perhaps this section records the wishful thinking of the disciples who wanted the time of clarity promised by Jesus to be immediate. Another possibility is that the disciples were amazed that Jesus knew precisely what they were thinking without hearing them talk. Whatever the occasion, the disciples declare their comprehension and belief in Christ as one sent from God. But we know from Jesus' next remark that they still did not comprehend in the way that Jesus said they would later after the coming of the Spirit. Without the Spirit, we can do nothing.

31 Jesus answered them, "Do you now believe?³² "Indeed the hour is coming, yes, has now come, that you will be scattered, each to his own, and will leave Me alone. And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me.³³ "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." NKJV

- Jesus refutes their claim of comprehension but does not disparage them. Their current understanding would not compare to that which was yet to come. Obviously the disciples could not imagine the things that Jesus foretold nor could they step out in faith because the Spirit was not yet guiding them.
- Jesus' comfort came from knowing that He was doing the will of His Father. While troubling, the abandonment of the disciples in no way affected the work on the cross. Jesus did that which His Father commanded and He did so perfectly.
- Jesus again warns them of tribulation but encourages them with His triumph over the world.