

11.11.18 ~ John 16:16-24,  
The Disciples' Grief will be Turned to Joy.

**Read John 16:16-18...** The disciples are confused about the meaning of Christ's words, "a little while".

Notice that Jesus uses this phrase two times in **verse 16**; He has used it several times already (**John 7:33**), "For a little while longer I am with you, then I go to Him who sent Me," (**John 12:35**), "For a little while longer the Light [speaking of Himself, cf. John 1:4] is among you," (**John 13:33**), "Little children, I am with you a little while longer," (**John 14:19**), "After a little while the world will no longer see Me, but you will see Me; because I live, you will live also."

We have studied the previous passages where this phrase is used (it can mean a few days, weeks, or months), but what does Jesus mean in this context?

From the above verses usage of that phrase, I believe we can see a pattern, e.g., after a little while: Jesus will go back to the Father, He won't physically be with them anymore, but they will see Him.

It would seem that Jesus' words, "a little while, and you will no longer see Me," is not referring to Christ's death, but ultimately to His ascension back to the Father; and I believe the second part, "and again, a little while, and you will see Me," speaks to the coming of the Holy Spirit to the believers on the day of Pentecost. More on that in a few minutes.

The disciples' response (**verses 17-18**) is interesting; there has been no dialogue from them since **John 14:22**, where "Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, 'Lord, what then has happened that You are going to disclose [reveal] Yourself to us and not to the world?'"

This Judas (not Iscariot), is listed in **Luke 6:14-16**, where the 12 disciples are named, saying, "Judas *the son of James*." In **Acts 1:13**, he is listed with the other disciples who are waiting in the upper room for God's Holy Spirit to come upon them..

In **John 16:17-18**, the disciples speak out because they are having a hard time accepting that Jesus is going to die soon, and eventually He will leave them and go back to the Father in heaven.

**Read John 16:19-20...** Jesus knows the disciples want to ask Him about all this, so He says to them again (**verse 19**), "A little while, and you will not see Me, and again a little while, and you will see Me." Then Jesus goes on to tell them (**verse 20**) that they will soon weep and lament (no doubt over His death), and the world will rejoice; but their grief will be turned into joy.

The Jewish leaders, those in Israel who reject Jesus, and the world that is at enmity with God, will rejoice at the Lord's death; but the grief felt by those who love Him will be turned into deep and eternal joy, when they realize the crucifixion of God's Son has brought forgiveness and eternal life to all who believe in Him.

The cross on which the Savior dies is the provision of God, through which the penalty for sin is eternally paid for all who will receive Christ Jesus as Lord.

**Read John 16:21-22...** Jesus gives them an example of how pain and suffering can be turned into joy, i.e., when a woman is giving birth to her child, she goes through much pain; although this was a consequence to the curse of sin entering creation (cf. **Genesis 3:16**, "To the woman [God] said, 'I will greatly multiply your pain in childbirth, in pain you will bring forth children.'")

Birthing children is painful, but after a woman gives birth, realizing that a child has been born to her, she no longer concentrates on the suffering and pain of her labor, but instead is filled with the deep joy of having been given a child from God.

Jesus is saying to His disciples that in a similar way, they are going to experience great anguish and grief when He is taken away from them, but they will then, "in a little while," rejoice in their hearts when He comes to them again; in fact, they will receive a joy that no one can take from them; this is deep joy that comes from God, not from our circumstances.

Think about this for a moment - Jesus will be taken away from them in just a few hours, in the Garden; He will be hung on a cross where He will die, after which He will be taken down and put into a tomb.

They will see Him again after His resurrection, but that will only last for 40 days, and He will then ascend back into heaven to be with the Father. I doubt they will be feeling deep joy when Jesus rises up into the clouds and disappears from their sight.

**See John 14:15-27...** Jesus told them He is going to send another One just like Him, i.e., another Helper [Counselor, Comforter], the Spirit of Truth, **to be with them forever**. This is speaking of the Holy Spirit, on the day of Pentecost, when God will permanently [eternally] indwell all the believers through the presence of His Spirit, at which time the Family of God is birthed.

Notice again, in **John 14:16-17**, the Spirit will live in them forever; and in **John 14:21, 23**, we read that God the Father and God the Son will come to them and make Their home with them, i.e., live in them.

**See Romans 8:9-11...** Paul tells us that those who belong to God have the Spirit of God, also called the Spirit of Christ, in them; in fact, Paul says here, if you belong to God you have Christ in you (cf. **Galatians 2:20**, "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.")

Jesus repeatedly told these guys He was going to be arrested, put to death and buried, but on the third day He would rise from the grave.

Jesus would then show Himself to them over a period of 40 days, after which He would ascend to the Father; and 10 days after His departure from this earth, He would send the Holy Spirit to indwell them, to mark them as His very own, and to empower them to be His witnesses in proclaiming the message of forgiveness for sins to all nations, even to the remotest parts of the earth.

**Read John 16:23-24...** Do you understand what Jesus is saying in **verse 23**? In "that day" i.e., in the day they see Him again, they "will not question Him about anything." "That day" cannot mean His resurrection, simply because they asked Him many questions between His resurrection and His ascension (see **Acts 1:1-6**).

But after the coming of the Holy Spirit, they would no longer ask Jesus anything, as they had always done, for Jesus would be in heaven; but they would now have God's Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of Truth living in them, their own resident teacher and representative of the Godhead, for eternity (**See John 14:16, 25-26; 16:13-15**).

The disciples, after the coming of the Holy Spirit, would finally understand Jesus' relationship with the Father, why Jesus had to die, and how His resurrection demonstrated eternal life for those who believe in Him.

Another very important truth is stated in **verse 24**, that believers can ask the Father for anything in Christ's name, and it will be done. This is the third time during a very long evening, before Jesus' subsequent arrest, that He declares this truth (**John 14:13; 15:16**).

Note: To pray in Jesus' name doesn't mean to add His name to the end of the prayer; it means to pray in manner that acknowledges our complete dependence upon the Lord for everything in this life and the next, and that what we pray is consistent with the person of Jesus Christ and the Word and Will of God.

Up to this point, the disciples had not asked for anything in the name of Jesus, because they simply asked Him personally or they prayed to the Father in heaven. But now, Jesus tells them to pray in His name, expecting to receive what they have prayed for, in His name, so that their joy may be made full.

To pray in a manner that brings honor and glory to God, while being obedient to the Word of God, as we live out our lives for Christ, will make our joy full, even in the midst of the grief and suffering that we will, no doubt, experience in this life (cf. **2Timothy 3:12-13**).

As Christians we are God's children, and as such we are granted the privilege of bringing our joy, as well as our grief, suffering, and fear, before God our Father, and His Son Jesus Christ, our Savior, for this is made effectual through His Spirit who is in us, forever!

No wonder God's Word commands us (**1Thessalonians 5:16-18**), "Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."

And all God's children said, Amen!

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