

### Exegesis

**Vs. 4b** – This marks a transition from the section of the Farwell Discourse dealing with the *hatred* of the world (15:18-16:4a) to the section that deals with the *nature* of the Holy Spirit (16:4b-15). Jesus says, “And these things I said not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you.” It was “because [the Lord] was with [the apostles]” that there was no need to discuss what it would be like when he *wasn't* with them. This might strike a modern reader as a rather obvious point, but such a possibility hadn't occurred to the disciples. They were ready to die alongside Jesus (cf. 11:16; 13:37), not continue on without him. The Lord did not need to address how they'll be persecuted. So far, he was the only one who had experienced any hostility. But now that it was clear that Jesus was leaving them, his followers must be prepared to face persecution (cf. 16:1). In the words of Bob Dylan, "The times they are a-changing." If they were to survive the transition, the disciples must come to grips with the fact that their entire life, nay, all of history, had been building to this point. They were at the very precipice of a new era. And Jesus did not tell the disciples sooner because they did not need to know back then. Knowledge like that would've likely been more of a burden than a blessing. Best case scenario, the disciples would've been counting down the days till Jesus' departure instead of cherishing them. Worst case scenario, the disciples might've tried interfering with Jesus' destiny (cf. Mat. 16:21-23).

**Vs. 5-6** – “But now I go my way to him that sent me; and none of you asketh me, Whither goest thou? But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart.” In John's account, the phrase "him that sent me" has been used repeatedly to reference God (cf. 1:33; 5:24; 7:16; 12:44; etc.). And the term "now" reminds the disciples, as well as the reader, that "the (cosmological) "hour" is only a few (historical) hours away."<sup>1</sup> With each passing moment, the night grows ever darker (cf. 13:30). Calvary looms large on the horizon.

On the surface, when Jesus says, “none of you asketh me, Whither goest thou,” it seems to be a contradiction of what is stated in 13:36 and 14:5. However, such an interpretation is too mechanical, leaving no room for subtlety (cf. 2:4-5).<sup>2</sup> Nuance is inherent to all languages and literature. Just as in real life, whenever we read the Scriptures, we must be mindful of the possibility that what a character may say or ask is not *always* an indication of what that person means or wants. In fact, one of the most remarkable things about the gospels is how often the Lord spoke in response to something a person *thought* rather than something they *said* (cf.

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<sup>1</sup> Klink (2016), p. 676.

<sup>2</sup> Carson (1991), p. 533.

13:11; Mat. 9:4; Lu. 5:22-23; 9:47; 11:17; etc.). If "all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account" (Heb. 4:13), then indeed, Jesus must've known the hearts of his disciples and always responded accordingly (cf. 2:23-25). As such, what Jesus says reveals more about a person than that person's own words.

Therefore, given Jesus' responses in the context of 13:36 and 14:5, it seems Peter and Thomas were so upset about their master's *departure* that they had little to no concern for Jesus' *destination*.<sup>3</sup> Peter wasn't trying to get more information when he said, "Lord, whither goes thou?" In fact, it wasn't a question at all. It was more of a *statement*, such as, "Wherever you go, I'm going too" (cf. 13:37). And Thomas wasn't asking for directions when he said, "Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?" The skeptical disciple was giving voice to his *exasperation*. The apostles were *reeling* from the revelation that this was their *last night* with their beloved teacher. "None" of them had the presence of mind to sincerely inquire about where Jesus was headed. "Sorrow" had so "filled [their] hearts" that they could not even rejoice as Jesus would've wanted them to (cf. 14:28). And they were so sad that they forgot to ask the most logical question: "Where exactly are you going, Jesus?"

**Vs. 7** – Not only did they fail to ask an obvious question, but they also failed to see the *benefits* that would come as a direct result of Jesus' departure. The Lord explains, "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." As we have said before (see notes 14:16-17), Jesus' departure and the Paraclete's advent is not a one-for-one swap. This whole affair is about *addition*, not subtraction. When Jesus returns to the "one who sent [him]," both the Father and Son will then make their "abode" with the believer (cf. 14:23). Additionally when the Lord "depart[s], [he] will send [the Holy Spirit] unto [the disciples]." So, in the end, God the Father, God the Son, *and* God the Holy Spirit will indwell the believer. But none of that will happen unless Jesus leaves the disciples behind. He says, "If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you." As the Father sent the Son (cf. 14:24), so the Son sends the Spirit (cf. 15:16), but the Spirit cannot be sent by the Son if the Son does not return to the Father. Why? Believers need Christ's sacrifice to be sanctified; without it, they remain unworthy vessels.<sup>4</sup> The coming of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost (Ac. 2) was evidence of Christ's triumphant ascension. The riches of heaven were poured out on believers because the Lord did not stay on earth. This

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<sup>3</sup> Klink (2016), p. 676, "When Peter asked the question in 13:36, he was preoccupied with his own affairs."

<sup>4</sup> Carson (1991), p. 533, "The many biblical promises that the Spirit will characterize the age of the kingdom of God (e.g., Is. 11:1-10; 32:14-18; 42:1-4; 44:1-5; Ezk. 11:17-20; 36:24-27; 37:1-14; Joel 2:28-32; cf. notes on Jn. 3:5; 7:37-29) breed anticipation. But this saving reign of God cannot be fully inaugurated until Jesus has died, risen from the dead, and been exalted to this Father's right hand, returned to the glory he enjoyed with the Father before the world began."

is why Jesus tells the apostles, contrary to what they might think at that moment, "It is expedient...that I go away." For Jesus to remain with the disciples would've deprived the ones he loved of so much. "Contrary to what the announcement of Jesus' departure may signal for his followers, his work on earth has not come to an end; it will be continued by the Spirit. Rather than hold up God's purposes, the crucifixion actually will expedite it."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Köstenberger (2008), p. 470.

## VIDEO DESCRIPTION

### **Deep Dive: The Gospel of John | Week 63 | John 16:4b-7**

SPEAKER: Ben Hyrne, Pastor

When the Eleven heard that Jesus was leaving them, they were shocked and deeply saddened. But contrary to what the disciple might feel, the Lord will clarify that his departure should make them rejoice. Why? Because when he returns to the "one who sent him," God the Son will send God the Spirit to indwell his followers. Christ's ascension is what paved the way for Pentecost.

**Pastor's manuscript can be found here:**

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Season 1 | 62