

### Exegesis

**Vs. 16** – Jesus says, “A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father.” These verses signal the closing portion of the Farewell Discourse. The Lord speaks about how there will be a brief passage of time (“a little while”), and the disciples will “not see” him. However, this absence will not last for very long because after “a little while,” they will see Christ again “because [he] go[es] to the Father.” When first spoken, these words must've seemed cryptic to the Eleven. In fact, as we'll see, they had no idea what Jesus was saying. On the other hand, John's audience would've immediately recognized that the Lord was referring to his crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension.<sup>1</sup> And, given the rest of the story, Jesus' initial disappearance was indeed only for “a little while;” three days, in fact.

**Vs. 17-18** – “Then said some of his disciples among themselves, What is this that he saith unto us, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me: and, Because I go to the Father? They said therefore, What is this that he saith, A little while? we cannot tell what he saith.” Once again, the disciples are brought to the foreground. The last time one of them spoke was in 14:22. Since then, Jesus has continued to move from one topic to another, seemingly without interruption for *fifty-two* verses. And, unsurprisingly, we find the apostles are once again confused. Unlike John's readership, they had no framework to understand what Jesus meant. In fact, by John repeating the phrases “a little while” and “I go to the Father,” we know the Eleven were as clueless about the Passion at the *end* of the Farewell Discourse as they were at the *beginning*. And, given that the phrase “a little while” is repeated multiple times, it seems the *timing* was the most perplexing part of Jesus' words.<sup>2</sup> They could not fathom that things were about to change.

**Vs. 19-20** – Though the disciples were quick to admit “among themselves” that they did not understand what their master was saying, they were slow to ask Jesus directly. Regardless, the Lord saw fit to address their questions anyway. John tells us, “Now Jesus knew that they were

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<sup>1</sup> Köstenberger (2008), p. 474-475, notes that some commentators suppose Jesus refers to the Parousia. However, Carson (1991), p. 543, points out such an interpretation ignores how the interim period being referred to here, the disciples would “weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice,” whereas, after a little while, their “sorrow shall be turned into joy” (16:20). They shall “rejoice,” and “no man” will be able to take that joy from them (16:22). These words are a better description of the disciples' experience after Jesus' resurrection rather than a depiction of the hardship experienced by believers after Jesus' ascension. Morris (1995), p. 623, agrees, although he admits that “there may be a secondary meaning as well.”

<sup>2</sup> Morris (1995), p. 624, “Godet sagely remarks, “Where for us all is clear, for them all was mysterious. If Jesus wishes to found the Messianic kingdom, why go away? If He does not wish it, why return?””

desirous to ask him, and said unto them, Do ye enquire among yourselves of that I said, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me? Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy." The time between when the disciples will not see Jesus and when they will see him again will be marked by both sorrow and joy. Jesus' followers will be sorrowful because the Lord departs by way of the cross, and, sadly, his death will bring the world joy. But though the apostles "shall weep and lament," their mourning will not last forever. To use Jesus' words, after *a little while*, their "sorrow shall be turned into joy." In 20:20, John tells us, "the disciples [were] glad, when they saw the Lord." The resurrection will cause the disciples to sing, "weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning" (Psa. 30:5). Easter mourning wipes away even the most sorrowful tears. And the very thing which caused them such sorrow—i.e., the cross—will be transformed into something which will give them cause for great joy (cf. Gal. 6:14).<sup>3</sup>

**Vs. 21-22** – Such a quick transition from sorrow to joy is not without precedence. Jesus explains, "A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man<sup>4</sup> is born into the world. And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you." Labor is a standard figure of speech in the OT and is often associated with the messianic age (cf. Isa. 13:8; 21:3; 26:17-18; 42:14; 66:7-13; Jer. 4:31; 6:24; 13:21; 22:23; 30:6; 49:22-24; 50:43).<sup>5</sup> As a woman goes through tremendous pain during childbirth, so will the disciples experience great sorrow during the crucifixion. In the same way that a woman's "anguish" is, in effect, disregarded when she holds her newborn babe, so will the disciples' grief be forgotten when they behold their risen Savior. Just as a mother knows how quickly happiness can replace pain, so will the disciple learn how easily joy can displace sorrow. At that moment, when they are face to face with Jesus after he was dead for three days, they will know the sort of joy that "no man taketh from [them]." This is not to say they will never experience sadness.<sup>6</sup> Instead, they will never again experience the same *sort*

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<sup>3</sup> Morris (1995), p. 626, explains that it is likely significant that Jesus uses the verb "turned" and not something like not replaced. The cross, a thing of shame (cf. Deut. 21:23), will be turned into something that glorifies God.

<sup>4</sup> Carson (1991), p. 544, properly a 'human being.'

<sup>5</sup> Köstenberger (2008), p. 476, also points out that the birth metaphor is also applied to eschatological events (cf. Matt. 24:8, 21, 29; Ac 14:22; Rom 2:9; 1 Cor 7:26; 2 Cor. 4:17; Rev. 7:14). Carson (1991), p. 544, says Isa. 26:16-21 is of particular relevance to this passage as it "combines the figure of the woman in child birth, the words 'a little while' and the promise of resurrection."

<sup>6</sup> Morris (1995), p. 627, "The thought is not, of course, that believers will never know sorrow. It is rather that after they have come to understand the significance of the cross, they will be possessed by a deep-seated joy, a joy independent of the world. The world did not give it and the world cannot take it away."

of sadness. *Never again* will their hearts be broken in the same way. *Never again* will they weep as they did when their Lord was crucified. If Jesus conquered death, they will *never again* sorrow like those with "no hope" (1 Thess. 4:13).

**Vs. 23** – “And in that day ye shall ask me nothing.” The phrase "that day" refers to the day the disciples will "see" Jesus again after the resurrection. On the day when they'll be reunited with their beloved teacher, the apostles will "ask [Jesus] nothing." In other words, there will be no more questions; the disciples will need no further explanation. At that point, all the sayings they thought were so cryptic at the time will have been made clear. Having lived through it firsthand, they will be well-acquainted with the exact timetable of the two "little whiles." Having been indwelt by the Holy Spirit, they will be well-acquainted with the precise meaning of the Farewell Discourse in its entirety.

**Vs. 24** – “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.”<sup>7</sup> As sorrow will be replaced by joy, prayer will displace confusion. Jesus' resurrection will embolden the disciples to pray in a way they've never done before. They will "ask the Father in [Jesus'] name." To do anything in someone's name is to do so with their blessing and authority (*see notes 14:13-14*).<sup>8</sup> Such a foundation ensures that their petitions will be answered favorably because it assumes that the request is in complete agreement with whoever's name is being invoked. Should your prayers be based on the person and work of God's only Son, there is no doubt that "the Father...will give to you." To ask anything in Jesus' name is to ask in accordance with God's *will* and for the sake of God's *glory*, the two things the Lord preoccupied himself with the most (cf. 5:19; 17:1). Thus, there is *no* reason that such payers should *not* be granted should they be so saturated with such a heavenly prerogative.

Those who entangle themselves in matters where God has an invested interest will discover the exercise of prayer to be a most joyful endeavor. Start caring for what God cares about, and you will, naturally, start asking for things that God wants you to have. Such requests that are so aligned with the divine will will be granted. Ultimately, to want the things that God wants, to pray for things that God would have us pray for, and to receive the things that God wants to give us is to know joy in its purest and fullest form. Thus, any pursuit of joy, apart from prayer, will be a fruitless endeavor. Failing to pray about something invites sorrow. As oxygen is to the

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<sup>7</sup> Kruse (2017), p. 388, explains that even though the English term "ask" is translated from two different Greek terms in vs. 23-24, the meaning is the same, and, as such, nothing should be made of the difference. The words are merely synonymous.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

lungs, so is prayer to the believer; we either “pray without ceasing” or we quit breathing (1 Thess. 5:17; cf. Lu. 18:1; Rom. 12:12; Phil. 4:6; Eph. 6:18; Col. 4:2).

## VIDEO DESCRIPTION

### **Deep Dive: The Gospel of John | Week 66 | John 16:16-24**

SPEAKER: Ben Hyrne, Pastor

Today, the disciples will be brought to the foreground in 16:17. Interestingly, the last time one of them spoke in the Farewell Discourse was 14:22. Since then, Jesus has continued to move from one topic to another, seemingly without interruption for *fifty-two* verses. Unsurprisingly, we find the apostles need clarification. Unlike John's readership, they needed a framework to understand Jesus' words.

But, as Jesus will explain, the Eleven's confusion will not last long. Eventually, after the resurrection, all that the Lord has said will make sense. And, when it does, their joy will be *full*—so full and so unique, in fact, that they'll possess a joy that no one can take from them. It is a divine joy that a thief would have to rob heaven to plunder the believer. And that eternal and unstoppable joy will be the *foundation* for their prayers.

Should believers pray in the *name* of the risen Son of God, God the Father will happily answer their requests. The resurrection makes the saints a sweet aroma to God (2 Cor 2:15) and their prayers a beautiful melody, begging for a response.

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

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