

John 16:16-33

16 "A little while, and you will see me no longer; and again a little while, and you will see me." 17 So some of his disciples said to one another, "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 am going to the Father'?" 18 So they were saying, "What does he mean by 'a little while'? We do not know what he is talking about." 19 Jesus knew that they wanted to ask him, so he said to them, "Is this what you are asking yourselves, what I meant by saying, 'A little while and you will not see me, and again a little while and you will see me'?"

16-19 Jesus had to prepare them for what was about to happen. He tried to in a number of ways. He told them this same thing earlier in His ministry. In John 7:33 *Jesus then said, "I will be with you a little longer, and then I am going to him who sent me.* (ESV) He warned of being betrayed, handed over, beaten, crucified, and rising on the third day (Matthew 16:21). And yet, the disciples did not know what to make of it. They were asking each other what it could mean and wondering if they dare ask Jesus anymore about it (Luke 18:34).

Having read the whole account, we can tell that Jesus meant that He was going to die and then return through the resurrection. Prophecy addresses a current situation, often an intermediary one that seems to fulfill even more but not entirely, and then an ultimate fulfillment. That is because God is not bound by time. He can address situations throughout time with a single statement. This is one of those statements.

The disciples would surely see it fulfilled over the next three days. Then they would see it fulfilled again during the week between Jesus' ascension and Pentecost. We await the final fulfillment when Jesus returns with our spirits and calls our bodies up from the grave to live in His presence forever (1 Thessalonians 4:16). We do not see Him now, but we await His glorious appearing (1 Peter 1:8; Titus 2:13). To see God was the great longing of Moses (Exodus 33:20). The phrase, "You will see me," may ultimately be referring to seeing Him as He is in His glory (1 John 3:2; Revelation 1:12-16). That is when His work in us will be complete.

20 Truly, truly, I say to you, you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice. You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy.

20 Jesus noticed they were confused about what He had said so He addressed the issue. To weep and mourn was the language of grief over a deceased loved one (Jeremiah 22:10). This is again reminding them that He is going to die, and it will be a painful time. The Jews were very vocal in their wailing over their departed family members followed by a long period of mourning. Jesus unexpected twist to the warning was that their grief would turn to joy (Jeremiah 31:13; Isaiah 61:2,3).

Jesus is talking about a great joy, a joy of salvation and freedom that can endure the trials of life. It is the joy of knowing that Jesus is alive and has conquered death and hell for us! It is the joy of knowing our sin debt is paid in full. It is the joy of knowing God loves us!

21 When a woman is giving birth, she has sorrow because her hour has come, but when she has delivered the baby, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world.

21 If you have ever witnessed a birth, you can instantly relate to this description. You wonder if the mother and baby will survive the ordeal and then suddenly, everyone is smiling, even laughing, bubbling over with joy, especially the mother who one moment earlier was screaming at the top of her lungs that she could not take any more. It is the most sudden extreme reversal of emotion you will probably ever witness. Jesus was saying that is how it will be in the days ahead.

I have tried to put myself in the shoes of those disciples after Jesus breathed His last on the cross. That is despair. They never really understood the “rise in three days” predictions or they would have been at the tomb on that Sunday morning waiting to greet their risen Lord. Three years of miraculous events one day after another and suddenly it was over.

Before the crucifixion their hopes and expectations could not have been higher. The wonder that such a rabbi would choose them was incomprehensible. Then suddenly it all changed. In a matter of hours, things went from bad to horrible to hopeless. They had to wonder if they would be the next to be crucified (Luke 24:20-21).

But just as suddenly as it all turned bad, it all turned wondrous again. Jesus appeared to them. ^{36b} “Peace to you!” ³⁷ But they were startled and frightened and thought they saw a spirit. ³⁸ And he said to them, “Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? ³⁹ See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.” Luke 24:36b-39 (ESV) From the valley of the shadow of death to the mountain peaks of glory in an instant! Jesus used the perfect description. He always does. Birth pains to joy!

22 So also you have sorrow now, but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you. 23 In that day you will ask nothing of me. Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask of the Father in my name, he will give it to you.

22,23 That joy they would experience would never leave them. The hatred Jesus predicted that would be directed at them would not rob them of that joy. No one can take it away. They knew He was alive forevermore (Psalm 32:21).

The same is true for those of us who have had a revelation of what Jesus did for us. If you have really seen what Jesus did for you, if you know how much He loves you, you have a joy no one can take from you. The world may be coming apart before our very eyes, but we have an unshakable joy (Isaiah 66:14).

Jesus then went on to invite them to ask of Him and promised that they would receive. This is now the third time in John that Jesus had invited them to make requests. Billy Graham once said, “Heaven is full of answers to prayers to which no one bothered to ask.” God longs for us to pray His will into the earth. When the disciples faced difficulty and uncertainty, Jesus wanted them and us to know that He is ready to hear our prayers and answer them.

24 Until now you have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full. 25 "I have said these things to you in figures of speech. The hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figures of speech but will tell you plainly about the Father.

24,25 He used the expression of complete or perfect joy that we saw in the last chapter (John 15:11). This is telling us that by participating with Jesus in praying His will into the earth, we are experiencing the kingdom of God. We do not have to wait to know

what full joy is; we can taste it now. In the previous passage He spoke of joy in conjunction with obedience (John 15:16). "In my name" implies the same thing. When we get in His yoke and walk at His direction, He will work through us in ways that will make our hearts overflow with joy.

There are times when the working of the Holy Spirit becomes evident, and I know that I am participating with Him. My heart feels like it will explode with joy. There is no way to really convey the fullness of it.

Jesus said that He had spoken to them in an obscure way about the Father. I think that is because up until the time His departure had arrived, speaking more clearly would have resulted in His death. Now He can speak freely (John 8:20).

²⁶ In that day you will ask in my name, and I do not say to you that I will ask the Father on your behalf; ²⁷ for the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God.

26,27 We can go straight into the Holy of Holies without fear, knowing that we are in Christ and loved of God (Hebrews 10:19). We can go right to God. Some people pray to Mary and saints, and I wonder if they do not understand what Jesus is saying here. God loves you. You do not need someone as a go between, though Jesus helps us ask in the way that we should (1 Timothy 2:5). How would you like it if your son or daughter had messages relayed to you through a friend and never talked directly to you? You would think they were upset with you. God invites us in. His arms are open to us in love. He wants to hear your request if it is in Jesus' name, or in our terminology, with Jesus' authority. He is never too busy.

Notice that Jesus said the Father's love for you is based on your love of Jesus and belief that He came from God. It is not based on your works, your lineage, or your doctrinal understanding. It is based on just two things, your love for Jesus and belief that He came from God. Here is another way to describe salvation, a way that we are not as familiar with. Of course, this implies that you will repent of your sin and trust in Him for salvation. Do you love the Jesus of Scripture and believe God sent Him? Then you are loved of God! You have access to God. Pray His will into the earth, fellow believer! The Father is waiting for you to ask (Matthew 7:7).

²⁸ I came from the Father and have come into the world, and now I am leaving the world and going to the Father." ²⁹ His disciples said, "Ah, now you are speaking plainly and not using figurative speech! ³⁰ Now we know that you know all things and do not need anyone to question you; this is why we believe that you came from God."

28-30 There it is. He is speaking plainly. The time had come. He knows where He is from and where He is going (John 8:14). The disciples conclude that He knows all things and does not even need to have anyone ask you questions. What in the world does that mean? In the period between the Old and New Testaments, the Jews believed that God knew questions before people asked them (Isaiah 65:24). He would answer before we asked the question. Jesus taught that this was true (Matthew 6:8). They were attributing this ability to Jesus, which means they believe He is God.

³¹ Jesus answered them, "Do you now believe? ³² Behold, the hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home, and will leave me alone. Yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me.

31,32 They finally all believed the night before the crucifixion. Will they still believe tomorrow? Jesus is warning that that belief is about to be tested. The prediction from Zechariah 13:7 was about to be fulfilled. The shepherd would be struck, and the sheep would be scattered. Even though they believe, they will abandon Him (Mark 14:27). That must have been hard for them to accept, but in a few hours, it would prove it to be true.

The Father walked with Him through the trial, the brutality, and the crucifixion. The hours of darkness on the cross was the only time Jesus did not experience the Father's presence, and yet He knew He was waiting for Him on the other side (Psalm 22:1; John 8:29). The Father loves us and is with us as well (John 14:23). He will walk through the storms of life with us. He will not leave or forsake us. Whatever you are going through, the Father will go with you through it (Psalm 23:4). Jesus experienced that separation from the Father when He bore the sins of the world so that you will never have to endure the darkness of being separated from the Father.

33 I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."

33 We are to take heart (be courageous) because Jesus has overcome the world. The word for overcome occurs only once in the Greek version of the Old Testament, Psalm 51:4 which is quoted in Romans 3:4. God overcomes through His righteous judgments. Jesus was about to make a righteous judgment of sin, hell, death, and Satan. Since Jesus has overcome, you and I can take heart.

In this world we will have trouble (Acts 14:22). Our governments may turn from God. Our neighbors may not want to hear the gospel. It may become illegal to speak out on Biblical truth, but take heart, Jesus has overcome. You may face dark hours, as dark as those the disciples faced. The world is full of death and decay, but Jesus has overcome. We are counter agents in a world of sin trying to rescue those who will join us in leaving this sin sick world for the one our Overcomer is preparing for us (Revelation 21:1).

11 And they have conquered him (Satan) by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death. Revelation 12:11

What are the multiple levels of verse 16?

How did Jesus describe what they were about to go through?

How does verse 22 apply to us?

How can we experience complete joy?

Why does the Father love us? Implication?

Is the believer ever alone? Why or why not?

What are we promised in this world?

Why are we to "take heart"? Implications?