



## The Gospel of John - Chapter Sixteen

### III John 13:1-20:31 - The Farewell Discourse and the Passion Narrative (continues)

III.a John 13:1-17:26 - The cleansing and instruction of the new messianic community and Jesus' final prayer (continues)

III.a.ii John 15:1-17:26 - Final Teaching of the Disciples (continues)

III.a.ii.2 John 15:18-16:4a - The World's Hatred (continues/concludes)

#### Summary of Chapter Sixteen

Jesus concludes his teaching on the persecution the disciples will face from the world that formed the second half of Chapter 15. He is talking primarily of Jewish opposition for they will put the Jewish disciples out of the synagogues and will even believe they are doing God's work in eliminating these heretics!

Jesus then returns to the coming of the Holy Spirit when he departs. Their sadness at the loss of Jesus will soon turn to joy when they receive the Spirit who will lead them in all truth and remind them of what Jesus has taught them. He will also teach them many things that Jesus was not able to bring to them for they would not have understood until after his death and resurrection.

Jesus concludes the chapter by reassuring the disciples that they will know his peace despite what he must go through and their own suffering also. They believe that they now understand Jesus' cryptic teaching, to which he responds by informing them that they will soon desert him in his hour of need but that he will not be alone for the Father will remain with him.

<sup>1</sup> 'I have said these things to you to keep you from stumbling.

#### John 16:1

Jesus uses his words, now recorded in Scripture, as the means to keep believers from stumbling or falling away, and for such perseverance they will be blessed: <<**Blessed is anyone who does not stumble on account of me**>> (Matthew 11:6 NIV).

<sup>2</sup> They will put you out of the synagogues. Indeed, an hour is coming when those who kill you will think that by doing so they are offering worship to God.

### John 16:2

They will put you out of the synagogues. Jesus warns that expulsion from the synagogue and even death awaits the disciples as it did for the man born blind (9:34). The expulsion of Christians from the synagogue occurred initially on a local basis and then more widely late in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century.

Those who kill you will think that by doing so they are offering worship to God implies a deep deception, ultimately inspired by Satan, who is a murderer and the father of lies (8:44). Not all religions are good, for some religions will teach their followers that they are doing good when in fact they are doing the horribly evil act of murdering true followers of the Son of God. The apostle Paul himself, prior to his conversion, thought he was serving God by persecuting Christians: <<*That day a severe persecution began against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout the countryside of Judæa and Samaria. Devout men buried Stephen and made loud lamentation over him. But Saul was ravaging the church by entering house after house; dragging off both men and women, he committed them to prison*>> (Acts 8:1-3), where Paul is still known by his Hebrew name Saul. This was something that Paul did not try to hide because it was evidence of the grace of God that he was then chosen as an apostle of Christ: <<*You have heard, no doubt, of my earlier life in Judaism. I was violently persecuting the church of God and was trying to destroy it. I advanced in Judaism beyond many among my people of the same age, for I was far more zealous for the traditions of my ancestors*>> (Galatians 1:13-14), and: <<*I am grateful to Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because he judged me faithful and appointed me to his service, even though I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and a man of violence. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief*>> (1 Timothy 1:12-13).

<sup>3</sup> And they will do this because they have not known the Father or me.  
<sup>4a</sup> But I have said these things to you so that when their hour comes you may remember that I told you about them.

### John 16:3-4a

They will do this because they have not known the Father or me. Believers may think opposition means that God opposes them, but Jesus emphasises that persecution is to be expected. Therefore, the knowledge of the Father and the Son, which is the very source of the disciples' joy and peace, is also the cause of their troubles in the world: <<*See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him*>> (1 John 3:1).

I have said these things to you. Jesus tells them about these troubles ahead of time so they will not go astray. This verb *skandalizo* does not refer to making a mistake but to something preventing one's progress, in this case a falling away.

These are the disciples who have received Jesus' words, and they are to remember these words so they do not fall away. John has mentioned before that the disciples did remember the words and deeds of Jesus later on, such as: <<*After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken*>> (John 2:22).

### III.a.ii.3 John 16:4b-15 - The Work of the Spirit

Jesus now comes to his final teaching about the Holy Spirit. Jesus' departure, the talk of which has caused the disciples so much distress, is necessary in order that the Holy Spirit might come (vv.4b-7). When the Holy Spirit does come he will continue the work of revelation begun in Jesus, both his judgment of the world (vv.8-11) and the revelation of God to the disciples (vv.12-15).

<sup>4b</sup> 'I did not say these things to you from the beginning, because I was with you. <sup>5</sup> But now I am going to him who sent me; yet none of you asks me, "Where are you going?"

#### John 16:4b-5

I did not say these things to you from the beginning. Jesus did not teach the disciples explicitly about his departure, although he did make references to his death as recorded in the Synoptics, e.g. <<*Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again*>> (Mark 8:31), explicitly about the persecution the disciples would face or the giving of the Holy Spirit while he was still with them for there were other lessons to be learned first.

Because I was with you. Jesus' presence means that he is there to guide the disciples through the opposition and persecution they faced for the three years. Now that he is going away he needs to teach them additional things so that they will be prepared to face new situations without Jesus' physical presence, although he will be with them through his Spirit.

None of you asks me. But Peter did ask this exact question: "Where are you going?" in 13:36, as did Thomas (14:5), so the present tense of asks probably has the sense, 'none of you at the present time is asking me'. They had asked earlier, but now they are grieving instead of asking. Perhaps Jesus is saying that they lack trust, that they are grieving when they should be taking into account where he is going. Jesus' statement here was some time after Peter's question as indicated by the probable change of location in 14:31.

<sup>6</sup> But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your hearts. <sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.

## John 16:6-7

But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your hearts. It is fully understandable from a human perspective that the disciples should be saddened at the news that Jesus will no longer be with them. However, Jesus does not want them to focus on themselves but on him and what it will actually mean for them once he has departed.

It is to your advantage that I go away. This is because while Jesus was on earth he could be in only one place at a time, but the Holy Spirit would carry on Jesus' ministry over the entire world at all times. In addition, in God's sovereign plan for the unfolding of history, the Holy Spirit would not come in new covenant power and fullness until Jesus returned to heaven.

The Advocate or Helper refers back to the anticipation of the pouring out of the Spirit and the inauguration of the Kingdom spoken of in OT prophetic literature, such as Isaiah 11:1-10, 32:14-18, 42:1-4 and 44:1-5; Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 11:17-20, 36:24-27, and 37:1-14; and Joel 2:28-32.

I will send him to you. The coming of the Spirit is not some automatic, impersonal response. He is personally sent by Jesus, and he is sent not to the world but to the disciples. Before explaining further what the Spirit will do for the disciples, Jesus describes the effect that the Spirit's presence among and within the disciples will have on the world (vv.8-11).

<sup>8</sup> And when he comes, he will prove the world wrong about sin and righteousness and judgement: <sup>9</sup> about sin, because they do not believe in me; <sup>10</sup> about righteousness, because I am going to the Father and you will see me no longer; <sup>11</sup> about judgement, because the ruler of this world has been condemned.

## John 16:8-11

He will prove the world wrong or convict the world gives hope that many who are in the world and currently opposed to Jesus will not be part of the world forever but will repent of their sins and believe in Christ.

There are three parts to the exposure of the world's errors:

1. The world is wrong about sin because it does not believe in Jesus. Here, as throughout this part of the discourse (15:18–16:15), the Jewish opponents are understood as representing the world. The opponents had condemned Jesus as a sinner, which is both explicitly stated (9:16) and implicit in all their accusations. However, they are really the ones who are guilty before God, because the work of God is to believe in the one whom he sent and rejecting Jesus is the most basic sin.
2. The world is wrong about righteousness because Jesus is going to the Father. The word righteousness, *dikaiosyne*, probably includes its sense of justice. His opponents did not judge with right judgment (7:24), and this is seen especially in their condemnation of Jesus for his claim to be God's Son (19:7). Jesus' return to the Father will expose their justice as unjust.

Jesus adds: and you will see me no longer, which reinforces it is to the disciples' advantage that Jesus go to the Father (v.7).

3. The world is wrong about judgment, because the ruler of this world has been condemned. The opponents had condemned Jesus, but the Spirit will reveal that it was the evil one who was judged and condemned at Jesus' glorification. This judgment in turn condemns the world itself (12:31), since they have the devil for a father (8:44).

Each of these terms: sin, righteousness or justice, and judgment, were quite familiar to the Jewish opponents, but now they are redefined around Jesus. Sin is rejecting Jesus; justice is what God has achieved for Jesus in his righteousness; judgment is what Jesus has accomplished already by his death. The conflict with the Jewish opponents is therefore put in perspective. These opponents represent the world itself, that which is in rebellion against God. The conflict reflected in this rebellion is here seen in cosmic terms, with the Son of God and the ruler of this world as the leading actors, each desiring the allegiance of the world. The main characteristics of each actor in the drama are here revealed: the world consists of all who fail to believe in Jesus, Jesus is known as the just or righteous one: <<*My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous*>> (1 John 2:1), and the devil is judged. Thus the Holy Spirit will reveal the verdict of the trial that has been in session throughout the Gospel.

Because I am going to the Father means that Jesus will no longer be in the world to teach about true righteousness, and so the Holy Spirit will come to carry on that function, through illumination (v.13) and through the words of believers who bear witness to the Gospel.

Because the ruler of this world, i.e. Satan, has been condemned could also be translated 'has been judged'; the perfect-tense verb *kekritai* has the sense of 'has been judged and continues in the state resulting from that judgment'.

The Spirit exposes these realities to the disciples and to the world itself through the disciples (15:26-27). This witness will be through oral and written proclamation, of which this Gospel is itself a supreme example. But the primary witness will be in the quality of life that the Spirit produces within the community as the new birth brings them into union with God:

- Firstly, faith in Jesus brings a new freedom from sin, although not sinlessness apart from the cleansing of Jesus' blood: <<*Everyone who commits sin is guilty of lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. You know that he was revealed to take away sins, and in him there is no sin. No one who abides in him sins; no one who sins has either seen him or known him. Little children, let no one deceive you. Everyone who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous. Everyone who commits sin is a child of the devil; for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The Son of God was revealed for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil. Those who have been born of God do not sin, because God's seed abides in them; they cannot sin, because they have been born of God. The children of God and the children of the devil are revealed in this way: all who do not do what is right are not from God, nor are those who do not love their brothers and sisters*>> (1 John 3:4-10).

- Secondly, they are able to live the pattern of righteousness and justice that was present in Jesus because they have his Spirit, which he sent to them after his return to the Father: *<<But now, irrespective of law, the righteousness of God has been disclosed, and is attested by the law and the prophets, the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe>>* (Romans 3:21-22a). The world may not see Jesus, but the disciples continue to be close to him (v.19).
- Thirdly, the defeat of the evil one by Jesus is now evident in the lives of his disciples, who also overcome the evil one: *<<For the love of God is this, that we obey his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome, for whatever is born of God conquers the world. And this is the victory that conquers the world, our faith>>* (1 John 5:3-4).

More generally speaking, it is primarily the community's life together that witnesses to Jesus and, by the same token, exposes and condemns the world, in particular by their love (13:35) and unity (17:21). Such love and unity reveal that they are sharing in God's own life, and, consequently, their rejection and persecution show that the opponents are acting against God. The very judgment that Jesus brought into the world continues through his disciples and elicits the same hatred (7:7).

<sup>12</sup> 'I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. <sup>13</sup> When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. <sup>14</sup> He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you. <sup>15</sup> All that the Father has is mine. For this reason I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

### John 16:12-15

I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. Jesus has been speaking to them of matters that were not appropriate to share earlier because the time was not right (vv.4-5). Now he says there are still more things he has to say to them, but they are not yet ready to hear them: *<<With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it>>* (Mark 4:33). Their grief makes it hard enough for them to follow what Jesus is saying. However, on a deeper level, until the Spirit comes and they receive the new birth, they will not be able to understand Jesus or the things of his Kingdom: *<<But, as it is written, 'What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him' – these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For what human being knows what is truly human except the human spirit that is within? So also no one comprehends what is truly God's except the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit that is from God, so that we may understand the gifts bestowed on us by God. And we speak of these things in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual things to those who are spiritual. Those who are unspiritual do not receive the gifts of God's Spirit, for they are foolishness to them, and they are unable to understand*

*them because they are discerned spiritually. Those who are spiritual discern all things, and they are themselves subject to no one else's scrutiny. 'For who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?' But we have the mind of Christ>> (1 Corinthians 2:9-16).*

Jesus also referred to the Advocate as the Spirit of truth in 14:17. The Spirit's ministry of guiding Jesus' followers into all the truth is a promise especially directed toward these 11 disciples, and it finds particular fulfilment in the subsequent work of these disciples in personally writing or overseeing the writing of the books of the NT. The promise, like the other things that Jesus says in these chapters, also has a broader application to all believers as the Holy Spirit leads and guides them: <<*For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God*>> (Romans 8:14), <<*But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not subject to the law*>> (Galatians 5:18).

For he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears. Although the Spirit will guide believers into all the truth, it is Jesus who is the way and the truth. All truth is ultimately from God and the Spirit's role is to lead disciples in the truth: <<*Lead me in your truth, and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all day long*>> (Psalm 25:5), and to pass on what the Father has instructed him in the same way that Jesus has always done. Through his work he will glorify Jesus, because he will take what belongs to Jesus and will declare it to all believers.

The activity of the Holy Spirit in declaring the things that are to come suggests that he knows the future, something that is true of God alone; this gives evidence of the full deity of the Holy Spirit.

He will declare to you the things that are to come. The coming of the Holy Spirit will help the disciples truly understand the death and resurrection of Jesus, and that is probably in view here. However, John received insight from the Holy Spirit about things that were much further away in history, the Revelation of Christ: <<*I was in the spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet saying, 'Write in a book what you see and send it to the seven churches, to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamum, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea'*>> (Revelation 1:10-11).

The word declare, Greek *anangellō*, occurs over 40 times in the Septuagint translation of Isaiah, where declaring things to come is said to be the exclusive domain of God: <<*Assemble, all of you, and hear! Who among them has declared these things? The Lord loves him; he shall perform his purpose on Babylon, and his arm shall be against the Chaldeans*>> (Isaiah 48:14), and where God challenges anyone to declare the things that are to come, as in Isaiah 41:21-29, 42:9, 44:7, 45:19 and 46:10.

All that the Father has is mine. For this reason I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you. This is another statement by John that shows his understanding of the uniqueness of each person of the Trinity and yet the true oneness of God.

So Jesus' promise is not of new revelation but of insight into the one revelation found in him. Throughout the history of the church, leaders within the church,

as well as groups on the fringes of Christianity, have appealed to this passage to justify new teachings. Any such new teaching must, however, be true to the revelation received in Jesus. The flower will continue to unfold, but it must be the same flower; the genetic code must be the same. The Scriptures, including the apostolic witness of the NT, has been the benchmark for this continuity throughout the life of the church. Indeed, the present passage speaks primarily of that apostolic witness, since Jesus is promising this work of the Spirit to those who have been with him from the beginning (15:27), whom the Spirit can remind of what Jesus has done and said (14:26). The idea of further revelation to others besides the eleven is not here addressed.

#### III.a.ii.4 John 16:16-24 - Sorrow Will Turn into Joy

Earlier Jesus told the disciples he would be with them only a little longer (13:33) and encouraged them not to mourn. Now he points to the time in the future when their grief will be turned to joy. Earlier Jesus' statements had triggered questions by the disciples (13:36–14:8). His teaching on the Spirit also raises questions, but instead of asking Jesus what he means, the disciples question one another (vv.17-18). They want to ask him (v.19) but hold back. Perhaps they despair of getting an answer that makes any sense.

While the grief is already beginning, the joy is coming, for Jesus says 'I will see you again' (v.22). Earlier Jesus had said that they would see him, and now he says it is also he who will see them. Such a statement makes it clear that what they see will not be the result of some sort of inner experience with no objective grounds in Jesus himself, although it is not clear whether this is the intention of Jesus' words. At least it encourages the disciples that they will once again be of interest and concern to him. This restored relationship is the cause of their joy. Because the relationship is secure so is the joy, even in the midst of the suffering that Jesus says is awaiting them (15:18–16:4). There will be those who want to take this joy from the disciples, but they will not be able to do so.

<sup>16</sup> 'A little while, and you will no longer see me, and again a little while, and you will see me.' <sup>17</sup> Then some of his disciples said to one another, 'What does he mean by saying to us, "A little while, and you will no longer see me, and again a little while, and you will see me"; and "Because I am going to the Father"?' <sup>18</sup> They said, 'What does he mean by this "a little while"? We do not know what he is talking about.' <sup>19</sup> Jesus knew that they wanted to ask him, so he said to them, 'Are you discussing among yourselves what I meant when I said, "A little while, and you will no longer see me, and again a little while, and you will see me"?'

#### John 16:16-19

A little while, again a little while. The first reference is plainly to the brief period between the crucifixion and the resurrection of Jesus, and the second reference is to the resurrection appearances, the little while after which the disciples will see Jesus again. The phrase is repeated by both Jesus and the disciples, recalling four previous instances of a little while in John's Gospel (7:33, 12:35, 13:33, and

14:19). The Greek word for a little while, *mikron*, is used seven times in this passage. Although the disciples may not have fully understood what Jesus was talking about it does highlight to them that something of significance to do with Jesus' departure is about to happen very soon.

You will no longer see me, you will see me. Jesus is referring to the time he will spend in the tomb and then their meetings together following his resurrection, the time when he inaugurates for the disciples a qualitatively new life and relationship with God.

Jesus knew that they wanted to ask him. The disciples had been talking privately, then some of his disciples said to one another, so Jesus did not overhear their conversation but still knew what they were saying. This is an indication of his omniscience, something he displayed on other occasions also, such as the time he healed a paralytic: <<*Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, 'Why does this fellow speak in this way? It is blasphemy! Who can forgive sins but God alone?'* At once Jesus perceived in his spirit that they were discussing these questions among themselves; and he said to them, 'Why do you raise such questions in your hearts?>> (Mark 2:6-8); or being tested by his opponents: <<*Others, to test him, kept demanding from him a sign from heaven. But he knew what they were thinking and said to them, 'Every kingdom divided against itself becomes a desert, and house falls on house>> (Luke 11:16-17).*

Because I am going to the Father. Although Jesus had spoken of coming from heaven, God being his Father and his imminent return to be with his Father, the disciples still did not comprehend that Jesus was going to die, be raised to life and then ascend into heaven. How could they understand such a thing before it happened?

<sup>20</sup> Very truly, I tell you, you will weep and mourn, but the world will rejoice; you will have pain, but your pain will turn into joy. <sup>21</sup> When a woman is in labour, she has pain, because her hour has come. But when her child is born, she no longer remembers the anguish because of the joy of having brought a human being into the world. <sup>22</sup> So you have pain now; but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you.

#### John 16:20-22

You will weep and mourn. The word mourn, Greek *threneo*, clearly refers to grief at a death. Weeping need not refer to grief at a death, but in John it is only used in such a context in Chapters 11 and 20. Thus, Jesus is referring to the grief they suffer at his death: <<*Now after he rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, from whom he had cast out seven demons. She went out and told those who had been with him, while they were mourning and weeping>> (Mark 16:9-10), and: <<*A great number of the people followed him, and among them were women who were beating their breasts and wailing for him>> (Luke 23:27).**

The world will rejoice. The world thinks it has conquered its enemy and rejoices. The disciples' grief will only last a little while and then it will turn into joy. The world and the disciples are utterly opposed, which means one will be grieved and the other filled with joy. These responses clarify which coming Jesus is referring to. Both the joy of the world and the grief turned to joy of the disciples are more appropriate in response to Jesus' death and resurrection than in response to the coming of the Spirit or Jesus' Second Coming.

When a woman is in labour, she has pain, because her hour has come. Before applying his point directly to the disciples Jesus uses an image to interpret their grief and its cause. The pain a woman experiences at childbirth is predictable, brief - although it may not feel that way at the time - and followed by joy. It is predictable because it is following an established order. Jesus refers to the time of birth and its pains as her hour coming upon her. Jesus has spoken throughout this Gospel of his own hour, meaning his death and the resurrection, and the new life that follows. So the theme of birth pangs and of new life entering the world speaks powerfully of the significance of what is now taking place in him and his disciples.

The disciples might have grasped something of this significance because the image of childbirth is used in the OT to refer to God's actions. In particular it is used, with both its pain and joy, to refer to God's decisive future act of salvation: <<*Like a woman with child, who writhes and cries out in her pangs when she is near her time, so were we because of you, O Lord; we were with child, we writhed, but we gave birth only to wind. We have won no victories on earth, and no one is born to inhabit the world. Your dead shall live, their corpses shall rise. O dwellers in the dust, awake and sing for joy! For your dew is a radiant dew, and the earth will give birth to those long dead. Come, my people, enter your chambers, and shut your doors behind you; hide yourselves for a little while until the wrath is past. For the Lord comes out from his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity; the earth will disclose the blood shed on it, and will no longer cover its slain*>> (Isaiah 26:17-21), which even includes reference to resurrection of the dead and mentions the phrase 'a little while', which itself is often used in such eschatological material: <<*For thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Daughter Babylon is like a threshing-floor at the time when it is trodden; yet a little while and the time of her harvest will come*>> (Jeremiah 51:33).

Further allusions to this illustration were prophesied in: <<*Now why do you cry aloud? Is there no king in you? Has your counsellor perished, that pangs have seized you like a woman in labour?*>> (Micah 4:9), and Paul also uses the same metaphor: <<*When they say, 'There is peace and security', then sudden destruction will come upon them, as labour pains come upon a pregnant woman, and there will be no escape!*>> (1 Thessalonians 5:3).

She no longer remembers the anguish because of the joy of having brought a human being into the world. Such eschatological OT material is also echoed in Jesus' reference to the woman's anguish, since that word *thlipsis* is often used of the tribulation that will come when God acts decisively, for example: <<*At that time Michael, the great prince, the protector of your people, shall arise. There shall be a time of anguish, such as has never occurred since nations first came into existence. But at that time your people shall be delivered,*

*everyone who is found written in the book>> (Daniel 12:1), and: <<The great day of the Lord is near, near and hastening fast; the sound of the day of the Lord is bitter, the warrior cries aloud there. That day will be a day of wrath, a day of distress and anguish, a day of ruin and devastation, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness>> (Zephaniah 1:14-15). So Jesus' imagery and language speak of God's climactic act of salvation. He is providing an interpretive framework in which the disciples can make sense out of what he and they are about to experience (v.33). They are in the midst of the event for which so many within Judaism were longing: <<Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him>> (Luke 2:25), <<But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place>> (Luke 24:21). The pain will be intense but limited.*

I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice. Jesus promises to meet with his disciples after his death and resurrection and lets them know that their pain will be replaced with great joy on that occasion. This was in fact the case when he first appeared to them in the upper room on the day of his resurrection: <<After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord>> (John 20:20). Although the disciples would face further tribulation and, for all but John, martyrdom, their joy would remain always in their hearts: no one will take your joy from you.

<sup>23</sup> On that day you will ask nothing of me. Very truly, I tell you, if you ask anything of the Father in my name, he will give it to you.

#### John 16:23

On that day, that is, after Jesus' resurrection, you will ask nothing of me probably means that Jesus' disciples will not have to ask him questions about the meaning of his death and resurrection, because they will understand and because the Holy Spirit will be present to guide them <<*into all the truth*>> (v.13).

If you ask anything of the Father in my name, he will give it to you. As previously noted, this statement does not mean that Christians can wish for anything they desire. They will have the Holy Spirit within them to guide them as to what they should ask God for.

<sup>24</sup> Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be complete.

#### John 16:24

Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. While Jesus was on earth the disciples had not prayed to the Father in the name of Jesus. But now he was saying that they should do so.

Ask and you will receive reminds believers that frequent answers to prayer will give Jesus' followers great joy as they see God actively at work in the world in answer to their prayers.

So that your joy may be complete. John the Baptist found joy in the coming of the promised Saviour, even though it would cost him his life: <<*He who has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice. For this reason my joy has been fulfilled*>> (John 3:29). Jesus made a similar statement in John 15:10 and was commented on there.

### III.a.ii.5 John 16:25-33 - Peace for the Disciples

Jesus provides greater clarity to his teaching by the manner of his departure. He came from the Father into the world and is now about to depart from the world and return to the Father. Thus he reveals the fundamental grounds for the climactic salvation he has been speaking about. At the heart of this salvation is the Father's love, not just for those who turn to him through Jesus and are saved, but for the whole of his creation, many of whom will be lost for all eternity.

The disciples believe that they finally understand what Jesus is referring to and they have no need to ask him any further questions. However, Jesus response to this is to inform them that they will soon desert him, although he will not be on his own for his Father will remain with him at all times.

<sup>25</sup> '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, but will tell you plainly of the Father.

#### John 16:25

I have said these things to you in figures of speech. Jesus' teaching had always been about a true revelation of God the Father. However, he frequently spoke in parables, which were unintelligible to many: <<*Jesus told the crowds all these things in parables; without a parable he told them nothing*>> (Matthew 13:34), something that was not uncommon in Scripture: <<*I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings from of old*>> (Psalm 78:2), and: <<*Then I said, "Sovereign Lord, they are saying of me, 'Isn't he just telling parables?"*>> (Ezekiel 20:49 NIV). This was not only something that was misunderstood by his opponents who rejected Jesus own divinity, it had also troubled his disciples who had failed to realise here that Jesus was talking about his own death and resurrection that was so necessary in order to reveal God's salvation and reconciliation with mankind.

The hour is coming refers to the time after Jesus' resurrection when he would explain much more directly to them the meaning of all that he had done, for example on the Road to Emmaus: <<*Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures*>> (Luke 24:27), and recorded more generally by Luke: <<*After his suffering he presented himself alive to them by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over the course of forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God*>> (Acts 1:3).

I will no longer speak to you in figures, but will tell you plainly of the Father. Although many commentators believe this passage refers to Jesus' teaching between his resurrection and ascension, when he was able to speak more openly to

his disciples and they would understand the context and power of what had occurred, in light of his references to asking in his name, it seems more likely that he is referring to a time after his ascension as well. Although Jesus and the Spirit are unique persons, it is apparent that Jesus' presence remains with his followers through the Spirit, thus his teaching can continue.

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

### John 16:26-27

Jesus returns to the theme of asking in my name, adding a very powerful point. Asking in his name is not a matter of his disciples asking him and then his asking the Father on your behalf. He is indeed an advocate before the Father (1 John 2:1), and the one who intercedes on behalf of his followers: <<*Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us*>> (Romans 8:34), and: <<*Consequently he is able for all time to save those who approach God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them*>> (Hebrews 7:25). Such texts deal not with petitionary prayer but with the status of the Christian before God, for the Father himself loves you, a status which rests entirely upon the eternal consequences of the priestly work of Christ: because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God.

<sup>28</sup> I came from the Father and have come into the world; again, I am leaving the world and am going to the Father.'

### John 16:28

I am leaving the world and am going to the Father might be an initial reference to Jesus' spirit returning to heaven when his body died and remained on the earth, prior to his resurrection: <<*Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, 'Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.'* Having said this, he breathed his last>> (Luke 23:46), and: <<*When Jesus had received the wine, he said, 'It is finished.'* Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit>> (John 19:30), but more likely refers to his ascension into heaven 40 days after his resurrection: <<*Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and, lifting up his hands, he blessed them. While he was blessing them, he withdrew from them and was carried up into heaven*>> (Luke 24:50-51), and: <<*When he had said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight*>> (Acts 1:9). The parallel truths that Jesus was going to leave the world and go to the Father but also that he promised to come and dwell with all who love him: <<*They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them.'* Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, 'Lord, how is it that you will reveal yourself to us, and not to the world?' Jesus answered him, 'Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them>> (John 14:21-23), reflect Jesus' humanity, which is in one place at one time, and his deity, which is everywhere present – both of which are true of Jesus as one divine-human person.

<sup>29</sup> His disciples said, 'Yes, now you are speaking plainly, not in any figure of speech! <sup>30</sup> Now we know that you know all things, and do not need to have anyone question you; by this we believe that you came from God.'

### John 16:29-30

Now we know that you know all things, and do not need to have anyone question you. As the one sent from God, Jesus' knowledge is complete; thus one can trust him and not fret over the questions one might have. His revelation has validated his claim to be the one sent from God. A believer's knowledge of Jesus' identity grounds their faith in him, both in the sense of belief about him and trust in him.

By this we believe that you came from God. Earlier, in the face of very cryptic teaching, Peter had made essentially the same statement (6:69). Despite this affirmation the disciples have been full of questions until now, when they think they finally get it. However, they have not yet seen the Cross, and therefore they do not yet know the Father's heart of love revealed in the laying down of the Son's life. So in fact their expression of knowledge reveals their ignorance.

<sup>31</sup> Jesus answered them, 'Do you now believe? <sup>32</sup> The hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, each one to his home, and you will leave me alone. Yet I am not alone because the Father is with me.

### John 16:31-32

Do you now believe? Jesus does not doubt their faith. Instead he is telling them they have not yet taken the final test, so their celebrations are premature. Their faith will be tested and deepened enormously in the next few days. Everyone of them, without exception, will be scattered. John himself will return to Jesus and be at the Cross, but he, like Peter, both of whom follow Jesus to the High Priest's house after his arrest, will not remain close enough to Jesus to be in any real danger. They will all be scattered until they are gathered again beyond the Cross by the resurrected one, after a little while.

Jesus' prediction of a coming hour at which each of his followers will be scattered, each one to his home probably alludes to: <<*Strike the shepherd, that the sheep may be scattered; I will turn my hand against the little ones*>> (Zechariah 13:7b), also quoted in Matthew 26:31 and 26:56b. The good shepherd (10:11) will be deserted by his sheep: you will leave me alone.

Yet I am not alone because the Father is with me. This shows the tremendous faith that Jesus had in his Father. His death on the Cross would require that the two be separated for the only time in all eternity, a painful experience, but he would not be forsaken by his Father.

**They will all abandon Jesus, but the Father will still be with him. How does this correspond to Jesus' cry of abandonment on the Cross: <<At three o'clock Jesus cried out with a loud voice, 'Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?' which means, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'>> (Mark 15:34). When Jesus took mankind's sin upon himself on the Cross, he who had always known**

complete intimacy with the Father, experienced for the first time, the gulf that separates God from sin, light from darkness. However, something deeper was also at work. This abandonment and its experience do not mean Jesus lacked faith in God. In fact, the cry of abandonment is a quote from the beginning of Psalm 22, and the whole meaning of the Psalm is that God does not desert his suffering servants. His cry expresses both the reality of what he was undergoing and his faith in its outcome. If Abraham could offer up Isaac in the hope of resurrection: <<*By faith Abraham, when put to the test, offered up Isaac. He who had received the promises was ready to offer up his only son, of whom he had been told, 'It is through Isaac that descendants shall be named after you.'* He considered the fact that God is able even to raise someone from the dead – and figuratively speaking, he did receive him back>> (Hebrews 11:17-19), how much more could Jesus have confidence in God, whom he knew far better than Abraham did, and in the power of God's life, which he understood far better than Abraham did. Rather than contradicting the Synoptic accounts, Jesus' statement in v.32 helps to interpret them correctly.

<sup>33</sup> I have said this to you, so that in me you may have peace. In the world you face persecution. But take courage; I have conquered the world!'

### John 16:33

In the midst of the suffering and hardship that was to come, Jesus' disciples, and all following them, can have such peace in fellowship with Christ. Fittingly, Jesus' farewell discourse ends on a note of triumph: <<*For the love of God is this, that we obey his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome, for whatever is born of God conquers the world. And this is the victory that conquers the world, our faith. Who is it that conquers the world but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?>> (1 John 5:3-5). For more on peace refer to the comments made on 14:27.*

In the world you face persecution. While Jesus must warn the disciples that the suffering is far from over, he does not end on that note. Now, as he has throughout the farewell discourse, Jesus warns them ahead of time so they will be prepared. He has told them not to let their hearts be troubled (14:1) but to receive his peace (14:27). This peace, as he now emphasises, is found in him, not in the world.

The world will give them trouble, that is, the opposition that comes from those who are in rebellion against God. But they can take heart because he has conquered the world; he has met it in battle and overcome it. The theme of conflict has been present throughout the Gospel, since the beginning of the prologue, but this is the only place this word occurs. The peace and salvation spoken of throughout the Gospel all depend on his having conquered. His conquest, in turn, enables the disciples themselves to conquer the evil one, as John stresses in one of his letters: <<*Little children, you are from God, and have conquered them; for the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world>> (1 John 4:4). In doing so, they will receive a truly honourable reward: <<*To the one who conquers I will give a place with me on my throne, just as I myself conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne>> (Revelation 3:21). Thus, this is indeed a fitting line for the conclusion of Jesus' teaching.**