

***John 16:16-22***

"A little while, and you will no longer see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me." *Some* of His disciples then said to one another, "What is this thing He is telling us, 'A little while, and you will not see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me'; and, 'because I go to the Father'?" So they were saying, "What is this that He says, 'A little while'? We do not know what He is talking about." Jesus knew that they wished to question Him, and He said to them, "Are you deliberating together about this, that I said, 'A little while, and you will not see Me, and again a little while, and you will see Me'?"

"Truly, truly, I say to you, that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; you will grieve, but your grief will be turned into joy." Whenever a woman is in labor she has pain, because her hour has come; but when she gives birth to the child, she no longer remembers the anguish because of the joy that a child has been born into the world. "Therefore you too have grief now; but I will see you again, and your heart will rejoice, and no one *will* take your joy away from you."

As usual, Jesus spoke in figurative language and so this passage is a bit confusing. Jesus used multiple contrasts which are not captured well in the English translations and He has layered this passage with things that apply to the disciples' current circumstances and things that apply to the time of the end. He talks about the time period after His death, after His resurrection, after His ascension, and even the time of the rapture of the church. But what is difficult is that His use of time is very fluid and non-

linear and He goes in and out of these time periods without giving us obvious transitions. It is therefore going to be very important that we carefully dig and peel back the layers that literally stuff this passage. I think you will be amazed at how full these few verses are in their meaning and implication. So tonight we are going to dig deep and do quite an extensive Bible study—so strap in and get ready to learn.

A very literal and casual reading of this passage will land you on the top layer of interpretation and that is the *immediate* experience of the disciples—Jesus’ death and resurrection. In probably less than an hour from when He spoke these words Jesus and His disciples crossed over into the Kidron Valley and that is when He was arrested. And by 3:00 in the afternoon of the very next day He was dead and soon thereafter buried. For the next 3-days they did not see Him but on the third-day Jesus was resurrected and *suddenly* appeared to the disciples.

### ***John 20:19***

That evening, on the first day of the week, the disciples were meeting behind locked doors because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders. Suddenly, Jesus was standing there among them! “Peace be with you,” he said.

The *suddenness* of His appearance is quite significant for when Jesus said: “A little while, and you will not *see* Me, and again a little while, and you will *see* Me” Jesus uses 2 different Greek words that are translated merely as “see” in English. The first “see” is a word that means to generally observe. So in a little while they would not see Jesus

doing His Jesus stuff any more. But the second “see” refers to a *sudden* appearance. So after a little while, He will *suddenly* appear to them.

This is significant because the disciples’ expectation of the Messiah never included His crucifixion; therefore, they were not anticipating the resurrection. So when Jesus died they were filled with sadness and were mourning. In fact, even after the women reported that His body was missing from the tomb and they told everyone that the angel said Jesus had been resurrected, the disciples still did not believe. This is evidenced in a couple of texts.

First, in *Luke 24:13-34* two of Jesus disciples were walking on the road to Emmaus and sadness was written all over their faces and *suddenly* Jesus appeared to them and walked with them but they did not recognize Him. They were just too upset that He had died. Luke also tells us that when Jesus appeared to the disciples in the upper room that they were deathly afraid of Him thinking they were seeing a ghost (*Luke 24:35-49*). But when they finally realized that it was the resurrected Jesus, they were filled with joy (*John 20:20*). Truly, as Jesus said, their grief was turned into joy.

But the layered understanding of this verse speaks of Jesus’ ascension into heaven (“you will no longer *see* Me”) and our *suddenly* seeing Him when He comes in the clouds and raptures the church (“and again a little while, and you will *see* Me”). Our clue to this layer is the comment Jesus makes that was not fully applicable to the disciples but is fully applicable to those who will be living on the earth at the time when He gathers together His church. Jesus said: “Truly, truly, I say to you, that you will weep and lament, *but the world will rejoice.*”

The reason we know this was not dealing with the disciples immediate circumstances is because when Jesus died the “world” did not rejoice. In fact, the only ones who really knew what happened lived only in Jerusalem. Now when the Bible speaks of the “world” it has many definitions. For example, the cosmos, those in the Roman Empire or those who had been Hellenized by Greek culture, the known world of the day (which included the Roman Empire, Parthian, China, India, and so on), and its definition even applies as a generic reference to the social and moral underpinnings of the “world’s” system. But I have been unable to find a single instance where this word referred just to those who lived in Jerusalem.

Jesus’ death was a localized event. In fact, most of the people who lived outside of Jerusalem did not even know what happened. And when He was crucified, if there was any rejoicing it would have been limited to the religious leaders and perhaps the crowd who were incited by the religious leaders—hardly the whole world. In fact, there is no indication that the Romans in Jerusalem even celebrated as this was not a proud moment in Pilot’s life. He had been coerced by the Jewish leaders into crucifying Jesus and we are told that he was extremely frightened and would rather have released Jesus (*John 18:28-19:16*).

So if this comment did not apply to the time of the disciples, what did Jesus mean when He said: "Truly, truly, I say to you, that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; you will grieve, but your grief will be turned into joy."? A careful search of scripture leads to only one place where true believers are distraught and the world is literally rejoicing but

*suddenly* their sorrow is turned into everlasting joy. This is found in *Revelation 11*.

The scene that which John paints for us in that Chapter is immediately before the rapture of the church when the gospel is preached to the nations and goes forth with unbelievable power and authority. In fact, no one can even come against those who are preaching without facing extreme personal harm, including death. During their preaching they even have the power to shut the skies so that no rain will fall and they have the power to send plagues upon the earth. As such, they will clearly be more than a thorn in the side of unbelievers and that of the Antichrist. In fact, their ministry is likened to torture to all those who belong to the world (*Revelation 11:10*).

Now those who are preaching are described as the two olive trees and two lampstands, which are metaphors for a multiple of Jewish and Gentile believers who are joined in spreading the gospel—both of which together comprise the church that gives light to the world (see *Jeremiah 11:16; Zechariah 4; Revelation 1:20*). This is a picture of the great mystery of Christ which Paul explains is the unification of both Jew and Gentile under the blood of Jesus (*Ephesians 3*).

Those who are preaching are given authority to preach for 3.5 years, exactly half way through the 7-year tribulation period. However, when they complete their time of testimony, the Antichrist (who is called the beast) will come against them and wage war against them. This war will result in mass slaughter of the believers. They will be conquered by the Antichrist although not defeated (See *Revelation 11:7; 12:17; 13:7; 14:12-14; and Daniel 12:7*). We are told in *Revelation 12:11* that although they

are killed, they are the ones who in reality defeated the Antichrist because of the blood of the Lamb and because of their testimony for they were not afraid to die. To them death started their eternal victory.

The lens of revelation then zooms in and we see a shot of the streets of Jerusalem where the Antichrist has left the dead bodies of the saints just lying in the streets while everyone upon the whole earth celebrated this empty victory.

***Revelation 11:9-10***

Those from the peoples and tribes and tongues and nations *will* look at their dead bodies for three and a half days, and will not permit their dead bodies to be laid in a tomb. **And those who dwell on the earth *will* rejoice over them** and celebrate; and they will send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth.

All those who dwell on the earth will rejoice for they think that they have finally conquered Jesus by overcoming His children. Can you imagine; they will even send gifts to each other? In the Greek this phrasing “All those who dwell on the earth” is very literal and is intended to encompass all of mankind. John did not use the word which we normally translate “world” which, as we discussed, has many potential limiting applications. Rather, the word he used for “earth” literally means the dirt of the earth. Thus, all those who dwell on the land will rejoice.

But their rejoicing is cut short because of Jesus' *sudden* appearance in the clouds when He calls His people home and we get to *see Him again*. According to *Revelation 10:7*, when the 7<sup>th</sup> trumpet is blown God's mysterious plan will be fulfilled—the Church comprised of Jewish and Gentile believers will be gathered together with the Lord and there we will always be. And According to *Revelation 11:15*, it is after the slaughter of these believers that the 7<sup>th</sup> trumpet is blown.

***Revelation 11:11-12***

But after the three and a half days, the breath of life from God came into them, and they stood on their feet; and great fear fell upon those who were watching them. And they heard a ***loud voice*** from heaven saying to them, "Come up here." Then they went up into heaven in the cloud, and their enemies watched them.

I believe the voice they heard is the voice of the archangel as described in the infamous rapture passage of 1 Thessalonians 4. The same Greek word for "voice" is used in both passages.

***1 Thessalonians 4:15-18***

For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, ***with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God***, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet

the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words.

Grief and lamenting turned in to joy as our travail is completed and we again *see* Jesus. *See also Revelation 14:14-16*. It is interesting however that Jesus likened the suffering of saints and our gathering together to Him to a woman giving birth. And this passage in John is not the only place where He makes this comparison. In the clearly apocalyptic passages of *Matthew 13:8* and *Mark 24:8*, Jesus said that this persecution, which begun after Jesus ascension and continues even today, is just the beginning of birth pangs. Our travail however will be culminated in this great persecution by the Antichrist and our “birth” so to speak, our moment of great joy, is when the 7<sup>th</sup> trumpet is blown. That is when the mortal is put off and we are raised immortal with transformed bodies.

The blowing of this 7<sup>th</sup> trumpet changes everything. *1 Corinthians 15:35-58* tells us that when this great resurrection occurs we will receive supernatural bodies that are like Christ’s and which are full of power and glory. *Verse 52* however is very specific and says that this transformation will happen only after the last trumpet is blown.

We also know that this imagery about birth pangs and the forgetting of the anguish and pain is talking about a very specific time in the future because the scripture is clear that, prior to the blowing of this 7<sup>th</sup> trumpet, the saints who have been martyred and whose souls are in heaven have not forgotten their sufferings; in fact, they are pretty ticked and are found asking God for revenge.

A little background on the judgments of Revelation will help in understanding what I am talking about. In Revelation there are 7 seals of judgment that are opened in sequential order. Each one (except for the 5<sup>th</sup>) brings some terrible trouble on the earth. The opening of the 7<sup>th</sup> seal ushers in the next series of judgments which are called the 7 trumpet judgments and the 7<sup>th</sup> trumpet ushers in the 7 and final bowl judgments, which are uniquely referred to as the Great Wrath of God.

In *Revelation 6:9-11* we are told that when Jesus breaks the 5<sup>th</sup> seal that the *souls* of all who had been martyred for the word of God and for being faithful in their witness called loudly to the Lord and said “O sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long will it be before you judge the people who belong to this world for what they have done to us? When will you avenge our blood against these people?” So the memory of their persecution is raw and they desire revenge; however, Jesus tells them to rest until the full number of their brethren—their fellow servants of Jesus—have been martyred. So at this point in time the “forgetting” is still to come.

I want you to note that this is also a point of contention for all those who believe that the rapture takes place before the opening of the 1<sup>st</sup> seal. Notice that John saw the *souls* of those who had been martyred, not their transformed bodies. This is because they have not received them—in other words, the rapture has not yet happened—the 7<sup>th</sup> trumpet has not yet been blown.

The other unique event that happens when the 7<sup>th</sup> trumpet is blown is that it ushers in the time for God to reward His servants, prophets, and all His holy people—all who fear His name from the least to the greatest

(*Revelation 11:18*). This is a reference to the judgment of believers which we read about in *1 Corinthians 3:12-15*; *2 Corinthians 5:10*; and *Romans 14:10*). For this judgment to take place it means that Jesus has completely gathered to Himself all believers (both Jewish and Gentile), those who had died in Christ and those who were living when the trumpet was blown. It is only then that we will find rest.

### *2 Thessalonians 1:7*

And God will provide rest for you who are being persecuted and also for us when the Lord Jesus appears from Heaven.

In addition to rest, our joy will be perfected for finally the bride will be given to the bridegroom—the church and Jesus will become one just as the Father and Jesus are one (*John 17:22*). And the celebration will begin with a huge feast called the marriage supper of the Lamb (*Revelation 19:4-10*). This will be an unbelievable time of rejoicing.

Now before we move on you might be thinking that I read a little too much into this passage because Jesus was very specific when He said “A little while and you will see Me” yet it has been 2,000 years and counting; hardly “a little while.” The writer of Hebrews uses similar language when he quotes from an apocalyptic passage in *Isaiah 26:20* which deals with the tribulation and the rapture: “Patience endurance is what you need now, so you will continue to do God’s will. Then you will receive all that He has promised. For in just a little while, the Coming One will come and will not delay (*Hebrews 10:36-37*). When the

writer of Hebrews quoted this it had already been about 700 years since the prophecy had been made; again, hardly “a little time.”

Thankfully, Peter explains things from God’s perspective. “But you must not forget, dear friends, that a day is like a thousand years to the Lord, and a thousand years is like a day. The Lord isn’t really being slow about His promise to return, as some people think. No He is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to perish, so He is giving more time for everyone to repent” (*2 Peter 3:8-9*). So from God’s perspective you have to understand that it has been “a little while,” just over 2-days.

After making this layered statement that was so full of meaning, Jesus then jumps to the time after His resurrection but before His ascension into heaven—the time when He would send the Holy Spirit to His followers.

### *John 16:23-24*

"In that day you will not **question** Me about anything. Truly, truly, I say to you, if you **ask** the Father for anything in My name, He will give it to you. "Until now you have **asked** for nothing in My name; **ask** and you will receive, so that your joy may be made full.

In the same way that Jesus contrasted 2 different words for “see” He also contrasts 2 different words for “ask.” The implications of this contrast are fantastic and should really help you understand what it means to be a child of God. Do you remember last week where we

studied that the Father has given everything to the Son but not to the Holy Spirit. But the Spirit takes what belongs to the Son and gives it to us because we are also sons, we are joint heirs with Jesus Christ, and we get to participate in all that is His. To me that was an amazing revelation. But get this; because Jesus has sent His Holy Spirit to live in us we no longer have to come to Jesus like the disciples did—as students to their master (which is captured in the word “aiteo”). Rather, we can go before the Father on equal footing as the Son and ask as a king would make supplication of another king (which is captured in the word “erotao”).

This is our reality NOW! This is not something that we have to wait to be fulfilled. This is why the writer of Hebrews says that we can boldly go before the throne of grace so that we might receive mercy and find grace to help in our time of need (*Hebrews 4:16*). See also *Ephesians 2:18; 3:12; Hebrews 10:19-23*.

It is so important that we understand the depth, breadth, height and width of what it means to belong to God’s family. Do you live as someone who can boldly come before the throne of God? Do you see Him as your Father who loves you, adores you, and wants you to come running to Him? If you are still somewhat afraid of God in any way, shape or form you need to get over it. You are a Prince with rights and privileges of the Son of the Most High? This is who you are and it is time you believe this fantastic truth!

I have been convinced through our study in *Chapters 13-16* that we are only barely scrapping at the surface of what it means to live by faith in the Spirit of God where He lives His life through us and all that we ask

for we receive because we ask in perfect alignment with His will. I pray that He takes this body here at Pathway Fellowship and continues to press on each and everyone of us so that we no longer trust in ourselves but trust only in Him so that we can understand what it is like to live as Princes here on earth where we overflow with His joy and His love.

***John 16:25-27***

"These things I have spoken to you in figurative language; an hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figurative language, but will tell you plainly of the Father." In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I will request of the Father on your behalf; for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me and have believed that I came forth from the Father.

What is important to understand about this passage is that although we take our requests to the Father in Jesus name, Jesus is not an intermediary between us and the Father. We can go directly to the Father because He considers us as His friends and He has great affection for us because we have been Jesus' friend and have had great affection for Jesus. I use the words "friend" and "great affection" because Jesus used the Greek word "phileo" to describe this relationship and not "agape."

This should remind us how backwards it is for certain people to tell you that you must first go to a man or any other intermediary who will take your supplication before God. Such beliefs are blatantly false and

fail to capture the truth that man can be friends with God. The Father cherishes those who love Jesus and in this we can take great confidence. Therefore, we can come straight to Him and cast our cares upon Him because He cares for us (*1 Peter 5:7*).

Now, Jesus fesses up to the fact that He has been using metaphors to explain metaphors and has been speaking in layers that require the Holy Spirit for proper understanding; which, by the way, is the reason why we have dug so deep in our study of John. Very little of what Jesus said has been straight forward; thus, we have had to learn the language of God and the way He communicates through pictures, symbols, and types.

In addition, I hope we have begun to realize that from God's perspective the tangible reality around us is just the symbol or the type which He uses to communicate spiritual truths. You see, our perspective is backward from God's; all of this around us, the tangible, will be destroyed. It is temporary and God does not consider it to be our reality. The spiritual is eternal and we have become spiritual beings that need to live by spiritual truths as we experience eternity here and now. That is His design, which again is why I said that I think we are just scratching the surface of what it means to live by faith in the Spirit of God.

### ***John 16:28-33***

His disciples said, "Lo, now You are speaking plainly and are not using a figure of speech." Now we know that You know all things, and have no need for anyone to question You; by this we believe that You came from God." Jesus answered them, "Do you now believe?

"Behold, an hour is coming, and has *already* come, for you to be scattered, each to his own *home*, and to leave Me alone; and *yet* I am not alone, because the Father is with Me. "These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world."

Jesus simply said that the Father loved them and they can confidently go to the Father. He also said that He came forth from the Father and would now be going back to the Father and this provoked this great declaration of belief: We now know that you have (in the Greek) *complete knowledge* and therefore no one needs to make requests of you because since you have *complete* knowledge you already know what they want and what they need. We now believe that you are God. Can you imagine, after 3-years and all that they have seen and heard and finally they now believe because of what He said. You can almost hear the tone of incredulity in Jesus' voice: "Do you know believe?"

This next statement, about being scattered, comes from a prophecy in *Zechariah 13:7*: strike the shepherd and the sheep will scatter. Although the disciples now believe Jesus is God, still without the Holy Spirit they do not have the strength in and of themselves to follow. They are still men of flesh and have yet to be born again of the Spirit. Thus, as soon as He is arrested, everyone flees trying to protect their own skin. They are overcome with fear and no one stays with Him. But Jesus is not worried for He knows that the Father is always with Him and He has trusted Himself to Jesus; therefore, He needs no one else.

This is why Jesus said at the very beginning of this Gospel that we must be born again of the Spirit of God (*John 3:3, 7*). On our own we can never handle what the world throws at us. Even a hard-core and steadfast dedication to religion is not enough to make you stand in the face of intense persecution. When it comes down to it you will always resort to self-survival in your relationships and your struggles with those in this world. Imagine, the disciples lived in the presence of the living God for 3-years and still when the *hour* came they folded.

What a contrast we have between this *hour* and just 7.5 weeks later when the disciples stand in the power of the Holy Spirit and preach the gospel without regard for what might happen to them. I think this contrast highlights the whole baseline message of the Gospel of John: *you cannot do anything on your own; you need Him to do it all through you.* And the good news is that if you truly believe then, like Jesus, you will never be alone for the Father will always be with you.

Jesus spoke these things so that in Him we may have peace. I think this is an awesome tie between the Word of God and the living Word. His words are our life and through His words we can know Him and experience His peace. There is no other peace to be found; He is it and our pathway to Him is through the Word of God. We need to know the Word and let His Words be our truth and form our reality. They must be the authority over our lives. Keep in mind, those of you who have the Spirit of God are spiritual beings and you need spiritual food and spiritual strength in order to overcome the world.

In the world we will have tribulation and troubles. It is guaranteed. We will be persecuted, hated, and even killed because we follow Jesus. It

is the way of the things. But we don't have to fear or even stress out because if we find our life in Jesus we will overcome just as He did. We will defy this tangible reality and truly live as citizens of another world.

***1 John 5:4***

For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.

Before we close you have to ask yourself, do you live in His peace? Are you overcome with stress, tension, worry, and anxiety over the affairs of this life? If so, then you know that at this moment you are not trusting yourself to Him. He is peace; therefore, the extent to which we experience peace is directly correlated to the extent to which we trust Him and let Him rule in our lives. If you are still trying to control your own life or navigate your future, stop! Believe that He has complete knowledge of all things and know that it is all in His control. You belong to Him and are loved by Him so you can really just go along for the ride.

I know this is really contrary to most of what we have heard in our religious upbringings, but this is truly how Jesus wants us to live. It is how He lived with the Father how we are to live with Him. After all, we are to follow His example in all things (*Ephesians 5:1-2*).

Let's Pray