

## John 16:23–28

### Introduction

Throughout this “Farewell” Discourse, the disciples have had many questions. Peter asked in chapter 13, “Lord, where are you going,” and, “Lord, why can I not follow you now?” (13:36-37) Thomas asked: “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” (14:5) Judas (not Iscariot) asked: “Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us, and not to the world.” (14:22) No doubt, the disciples had other questions that they didn’t ask out loud. John said last week that they were confused and *wishing* to “*question*” [*erotao*] Jesus (16:19).

- John 16:17–18 — Some of His disciples then said to one another, “What is this thing He is telling us, ‘A little while, and you will no longer 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 responded to these questions by telling His disciples that they would cry and lament, but also that their sorrow would be turned into joy because He would see them again – and because *they* would see *Him* again. When the disciples see the resurrected Jesus, then the veil of His fleshly weakness will be taken away and they will see and understand. And when they see and understand, then they will rejoice with a joy that no one can take away from them. So now Jesus continues:

**I. John 16:23a** — “And on that day you will not question [*erotao*] Me about anything.”

“On that day” is a phrase full of meaning. Throughout the Old Testament it refers to the eschatological “last day” of judgment and salvation; it’s the messianic day of fulfillment.\* Here this phrase refers specifically not to Christ’s second coming, but to the time beginning with Christ’s resurrection from the dead. What Jesus is saying is that it’s His resurrection that will usher in the eschatological “last days” of judgment and salvation (cf. Jn. 3:16-19, 36; 5:21-24; 9:31; 12:31). It’s His resurrection that will usher in the new creation and the messianic age of fulfillment. These are the days that we are living in.

“And on that day [when I see you again and your heart rejoices (cf. 16:22); on that day] you will not question [*erotao*] Me about anything.” The disciples won’t have any more questions. Their joy will be the joy of understanding. They’ll understand why Jesus had to die and be raised from the dead. They’ll understand how the Hebrew Scriptures are all fulfilled in the incarnation of the eternal Word, in Jesus’ earthly life and ministry, in His sufferings and death on a cross, and then in His resurrection life and heavenly session at the Father’s right hand. On that day—when Jesus sees them again, and they see Him, and their hearts rejoice—they won’t have any more questions.

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\* Cf. Isa. 2:11, 17, 20; 4:2; 10:20; 11:10-11; 12:1, 4; 24:21; 25:9; 26:1-2, 12-13; 28:5; 29:18; 30:23; Jer. 30:7-8; Ezek. 38:10, 14, 18-19; 39:11; 45:22; Hos. 2:16, 18, 21; Joel 3:18; Amos 8:9; 9:11; Mic. 4:6; 5:10; 7:11; Zeph. 3:11, 15; Hag. 2:23; Zech. 2:11; 3:10; 9:16; 12:3-11; 13:1-4; 14:4-21

This doesn't mean they'll have a perfect knowledge of all God's plans and ways or of all the mysteries of the universe. But on that day they'll finally see clearly the one in whom are hidden *all* the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Col. 2:3). It's in this sense that we do have a kind of perfect and complete knowledge, so that we no longer need anyone to teach us. It's in this sense that we can say we *do know* "all things" without denying the necessity of growing into a deeper and truer understanding of the "all things" that we know. As Christians, we shouldn't underestimate what we have come to know. If we know the Gospel as that Gospel is revealed in Jesus Christ, then we know "all things." We know all things not just about one narrow "topic," but rather the "all things" that sums up the goodness and the power and the wisdom of God. We know the entirety of the truth upon which life can be safely built.

- 1 Corinthians 2:7–10, 12, 14–16 — But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But, as it is written, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, 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... Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God... The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one. "For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ.
- John 14:26 — "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you."
- John 16:13a — "But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth."
- 1 John 2:20, 27 — But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you all know... The anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him.

If we have believed the Gospel—if we've savingly understood the Gospel—then we know all things. We see clearly the one who is "the truth" (Jn. 14:6) and who has made known to us "all things" that He heard from His Father (Jn. 15:15). So let us not look for any other philosophy or for any other wisdom upon which to build our lives. We should instead be striving to *grow into* a truer understanding of that perfect and complete "knowledge" that we've already been given. This knowledge is a living knowledge by which we experientially prove what God's will is – that which is good, and acceptable, and perfect (cf. Rom. 12:1-2). I believe this helps us make sense of why Jesus says what He says next.

**II. John 16:23b–24** — "Truly, truly, I say to you, if you ask [*aiteo*] 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 complete."

Why have the disciples not yet asked (*aiteo*) the Father for anything in Jesus' name? The simple answer is because they're still asking questions (*erotao*; v. 23a). On that day you will not question me about anything. And so on that day you will ask the Father in My name. When the disciples' questions have all been answered then they'll know "all things." They'll see clearly the one in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. And as a result of the fullness of this knowledge, they'll bring all their requests to the Father in Jesus' name. What this means is that their prayers will reflect the character of the brand-new day (the eschatological day) in which they're living. So what will be the nature of the things they're asking for? They'll be asking for the things that will cause them to grow into a truer understanding of that perfect and complete "knowledge" that they've already been given. They'll be asking for the things that will enable them to experientially live out all that they know and all that they've seen in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And so they'll be asking the Father *in Jesus' name*.

In verse 22, Jesus said: "Therefore you also have sorrow now; but I will see you again, and your heart will rejoice, and no one will take your joy away from you." And now Jesus says, "Ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be made complete." So that *what* joy may be made complete? Your joy in knowing that I have seen you and that you are My redeemed offspring. Your joy in truly *seeing* me and knowing "all things." The reason we ask is so that *this* joy may be made complete. The things that we ask for are the things that will bring *this* joy to completion.

When we ask in Jesus' name, the Father will always give us exactly what we ask for. Therefore, if our Gospel joy is not complete, it's because we're not asking — or else it's because the things we're asking for are not the result of our knowledge of "all things"; they're not the result of the joy that we *already have* and that no one can take away from us. Jesus goes on to make this even more explicit in verses 25-26:

**III. John 16:25–26a** — "These things I have spoken to you in figures of speech; an hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figures of speech, but will tell you plainly of the Father. On that day you will ask in My name..."

What does Jesus telling us plainly about *the Father* have to do with asking in *Jesus' name*? What we have to remember here is that throughout John's Gospel Jesus and the Father are always seen in the closest possible connection. The divine honor that belongs to the Father belongs to the Son (Jn. 5:23). The divine works that the Father does are the works that He has given to the Son to do (Jn. 5:17-27). The Son speaks whatever He has heard and seen with the Father (Jn. 8:26, 38, 40; 14:24; 15:15). Jesus is the way to the Father (Jn. 14:6). Jesus said, "All things that the Father has are Mine" (Jn. 16:15), "He who has seen Me has seen the Father" (Jn. 14:9), "I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me... the Father abiding in Me does His works" (Jn. 14:10; cf. 10:38), "I and the Father are one" (Jn. 10:30). We read in the first chapter of John:

➤ John 1:18 — No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.

When Jesus says that He will tell us plainly of the *Father*, that's as much as to say that He will fully disclose *Himself* to us (Jn. 14:21). When Jesus tells us plainly *of the Father*, that means that we'll see, *in Jesus*, the full extent of the *Father's* love for us. We'll see, *in Jesus*, the full extent

of all the wisdom and power of God revealed in our salvation. Then we won't have any questions. Then we'll know all things. *Now* we don't have any questions! *Now* we know all things! So now we ask *the Father in Jesus' name* — as no one before could ever do. Now our asking is the expression of our desire to know more fully and live more faithfully the “all things” that we know — this completed revelation that we've been given in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Jesus isn't saying that we can't ask for healing when we're sick, or for a better job, or for the restoration of a broken relationship, or for the salvation of a neighbor or a family member. It's good and right that we should ask for these things. But these aren't the things that Jesus promises the Father will give us when we ask in His name. What Jesus promises the Father will give us— *only when we ask*—is the always increasing joy of knowing the Gospel more fully and living the Gospel more faithfully. If we don't know what that means or what that looks like, is it because we're too accustomed to asking wrongly, to spend on our pleasures (cf. James 4:2-3)? Or maybe it's because we're not really in the habit of asking for much at all. But Jesus is very clear. Our joy will only be made complete when we're asking and receiving. Apart from this constant asking and this constant receiving, where is the joy in the Christian life? Apart from this constant asking and receiving, how can we be knowing the Gospel more fully and living the Gospel more faithfully (cf. Jn. 15:1-11)? To think that we can is to think that we can do so in the flesh by the “power” of our own striving. It's ultimately to have a form of godliness, but not the true power thereof (2 Tim. 3:5).

Listen again to the words of Jesus:

“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 [the joy that you have in knowing Me and in knowing that you are My redeemed offspring] may be made complete.”

“These things I have spoken to you in figures of speech; an hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figures of speech, but will *tell you plainly of the Father*. On that day you will *ask in My name*...”

**IV. John 16:26b-27** — “...and I do not say to you that I will request [*erotao*] 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.”

How can we be so sure of the Father giving us whatever we ask in Jesus' name? The simple answer is: Because He loves us. He loves us not just with the general, benevolent love with which He loves everyone in the world, but with that saving, electing love that calls us *to Himself* and draws us *to Himself* and makes us *His own* and fits us for heaven. And how do we know that the Father Himself loves us like this? Because we have loved Jesus and have believed that He came forth from the Father. Our love for Jesus isn't what caused the Father's love for us. It's the opposite that's true. Remember what Jesus said in chapter six:

- John 6:44 — “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him.”
- John 6:37 — “All that the Father gives Me will come to Me.”

If we have loved Jesus and believed that He came forth from the Father, then we know that the Father Himself loves us (and that He *has* loved us from before the foundation of the world). And if we know that the Father Himself loves us, then we know that He will never fail to give us all that we ask for in Jesus' name. It's that simple, and that wonderful! The more we know the Father's love for us, the more time we'll spend asking, and then the more abundantly we'll receive, and then the more complete will our joy be. And then the more we will know the Father's love for us.

Jesus just said that the disciples have believed that He came forth from the Father. Now He goes on to say all that this single belief ultimately includes.

**V. John 16:28** — “I came forth from the Father and have come into the world; I am leaving the world again and going to the Father.”

Here, in a nutshell, is the whole Gospel, viewed in the person of Jesus. Here, in a nutshell, is the “all things” that we know so that we no longer have any questions.

“**I came forth from the Father.**” In this we see the divine origin of Jesus and therefore His divine person and authority. In this we see that Jesus is, Himself, the revelation of the Father.

“*I came forth from the Father* **and have come into the world.**” In this we see Jesus humbling Himself by becoming flesh and living among us and suffering and dying for us and in our place. In this we see the saving mission of Jesus as the light and life of the world.

“*I came forth from the Father* and have *come into the world*; **I am leaving the world again.**” In this we see Jesus' resurrection insofar as this fallen world can no longer be the home of Jesus in His resurrection glory. In this we see Jesus' victory over the world insofar as the world has no hold on Jesus.

“*I came forth from the Father* and have *come into the world*; I am *leaving the world again* **and going to the Father.**” In this we see the Father's full acceptance and approval of Jesus' finished work on the cross. In this we see Jesus as our great High Priest who advocates and intercedes for us at the Father's right hand. In this we see Jesus as our Lord and King who rules over us and is directing all things in this world to the end of His return and the consummation of His kingdom.

### **Conclusion**

The disciples have believed that Jesus came forth from the Father, but they're still full of questions. Today, all our questions have been answered. We have believed—as even the disciples still couldn't—that Jesus came forth from the Father and came into the world, and that He has left this world again and gone to the Father. Today, we know “all things.”

So let us be always *asking* in Jesus' name so that we might be always *receiving*—so that our joy in the “all things” that we know might be made *complete*.