



**John 16:16-22**

*A Joy No One Can Take Away*

**16 " A little while, and you will not see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me, because I go to the Father."**

**17 Then some of His disciples said among themselves, "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 go to the Father'?"**

**18 They said therefore, "What is this that He says, 'A little while'? We do not know what He is saying."**

**19 Now Jesus knew that they desired to ask Him, and He said to them, "Are you inquiring among yourselves about what I said, 'A little while, and you will not see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me'?"**

**20 "Most assuredly, I say to you that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; and you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned into joy.**

**21 "A woman, when she is in labor, has sorrow because her hour has come; but as soon as she has given birth to the child, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world.**

**22 "Therefore you now have sorrow; but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you.**

**I. Context – the Disciples Confusion:**

Sometimes as we read the scriptures we may be tempted to wonder why on earth the disciples had so much difficulty understanding what Jesus was saying. We read Christ's words – "A little while and you will not see me" and the meaning is clear to us, he is about to go to the cross and die.

We read with our post resurrection viewpoint, on the other side of the cross his words are clear to us, but not the disciples.

**a) Remember: despite all that Jesus had been teaching them - their expectations were different**

The believed Jesus was the Christ, the Messiah, and that He Had come to purify and restore the Kingdom. They had heard the *Hosannas!*

Right up to the crucifixion they were arguing about who would be the most important person in this kingdom.

Immediately after He tells them in Matthew 20:18-19 that he is going to be betrayed, condemned to death, delivered to the gentiles, mocked, scourged, and crucified and then rise again on the third

day, the mother of James and John comes and asks that her son's be given the #1 and #2 positions in the restored kingdom. Predictably all the others are irritated by this.

***Leon Morris "If Jesus wishes to found the Messianic Kingdom, why go away? If He does not wish it, why return?"***

We don't get it. – And admittedly even commentators today are still not sure what Jesus meant, by *a little while and you will see me*.

II) Expositors have held out three plausible explanations - "A little while and you will see me"

1) That Jesus was referring to His appearance immediately after the resurrection, this would be the view of commentator like Morris and Carson

2) That Jesus was referring to His Second Coming at the end of the Age – this would be the view of commentators like JC Ryle. For those of you who might object, 2,000 years and counting is "a little while" – a *micron* in the Greek should remember as Peter put it "*with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.*"

3) That Jesus was referring to His abiding presence with church at the coming of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. This, believe it or not, is the majority position amongst Reformed commentators. They read the clause "because I go to the Father" as the clause that explains how they will see Him. He has already explained to them that He has to go away in order that the Comforter might come, and that the Comforter's ministry would be to Glorify Christ. As Calvin says, "***Nor ought we to think it strange when he says that he is seen, when he dwells in the disciples by the Spirit; for, though he is not seen with the bodily eyes, yet his presence is known by the undoubted experience of faith.***"

Now which do I think is right? I think there is a lot to recommend all three, but I tend to think that in matters like this we need to apply Occam's razor that "The simplest explanation is usually the best." And for that reason I tend to favor the first explanation that Jesus is referring to His reappearance after the resurrection.

Everything at this point in the gospel of John is focusing on the imminence of Christ's Death, His Crucifixion, which will be when he departs. Immediately after that as Christ warns in verse 20 they would "weep and lament" and that is exactly what happened, they were devastated. But when does all that change? When on the third day, they find out that Jesus has RISEN. Then their sorrow turns to JOY.

When for instance the two Marys visit the tomb expecting to find the body of Jesus, and find instead that it is empty and are met by an angel, we read:

**Matthew 28:8** So they went out quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to bring His disciples word.

**9** And as they went to tell His disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, "Rejoice!" So they came and held Him by the feet and worshiped Him.

**10** Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell My brethren to go to Galilee, and there they will see Me."

Later we read in **John 20:20** *When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.* (were glad is lame – the word there is *Chairo* – they rejoiced!)

Joy, from that point on becomes their constant emotion because as the disciples told Thomas in John 20:25 “*we have seen the Lord*” – just as he promised they would after a little while.

III. But before they can feel that Joy they must first be **prepared to experience the incredible pain** and sorrow of His death and burial.

a) He points out something that would make their grief even harder to bear, the fact that the world would rejoice. Kids - one of the things that makes losing really hard is the gloating of the winner. Here the world would be crowing that they had defeated Christ, even though he had actually won the victory.

So to prepare them for this pain and how it will actually work for their good, Jesus uses the example of Child Birth – and it is a very apt analogy for at least 5 reasons –

- 1) There is no greater pain. Its almost unbearable to watch. Worst nail marks.
  - 2) Although it doesn't seem that way at the time – it doesn't last long
  - 3) At the end of the pain you have REJOICING – you forget it in a moment and suddenly >snap< weeping is turned to joy.
  - 4) While sometimes we have a time of Joy that follows a time of pain, the two usually aren't directly related. The pain doesn't lead to the Joy. In Childbirth they are related.
  - 5) Lest we forget, the pain of labor is a consequence of sin –
- Gen. 3:16 “16 To the woman He said: "I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; In pain you shall bring forth children; Your desire shall be for your husband, And he shall rule over you."

This pain is also a consequence of sin, it is because of sin that Christ must suffer and die on the Cross in order to make atonement for sin. But the result of that pain will be a joy unspeakable, a joy that goes on for eternity. A Joy no one can take from them.

### **Applications:**

- 1) The Bible tells us that there are two ages or eras, this present evil age, which is the age that will continue till Christ returns, and the Age to Come, which is the age that will begin when he returns and will continue on forever.

If we understand what Christ said about the Birth pangs, it will help us to understand the pain of living in this age which Paul rightly calls this “Present Evil Age” – life here for the believer will include tribulations until we either go to be with Christ or He returns for us:

*“let us know that we too must groan, until, having been delivered from the incessant afflictions of the present life, we obtain a full view of the fruit of our faith. To sum up the whole in a few words, believers are like women in labor, because, having been born again in Christ, they have not yet entered into the heavenly kingdom of God and a blessed life; and they are like pregnant women who are in childbirth, because, being still held captive in the prison of the flesh, they long for that blessed state which lies hidden under hope.” - Calvin*

Jesus said that the evil that is abroad in the world are the “birth pangs” of the age to come: Matthew 24:8 “All these are the beginning of sorrows.” (Birth Pangs)

Also in the OT - Isa. 13:6 Wail, for the day of the LORD is at hand! It will come as destruction from the Almighty.

7 Therefore all hands will be limp, Every man's heart will melt,

8 And they will be afraid. Pangs and sorrows will take hold of them; They will be in pain as a woman in childbirth; They will be amazed at one another; Their faces will be like flames.

But Christ came to free us from the curse of this age:

***Gal. 1:3 Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ,***

***4 who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father,***

***5 to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.***

2) What will carry us the believer through the tribulation is the Joy that He gives them - “This Joy is independent of the world. The world does not give it, and the World cannot take it away.” – Leon Morris

So many times I have had people point to their circumstances and discontents and say nothing can give me Joy -

***Acts 16:23 And when they had laid many stripes on them, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to keep them securely.***

***24 Having received such a charge, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.***

***25 But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them.***

Joy in prison, in concentration camps, etc.

It cannot be taken, but it can be interrupted, ***Psalm 51:12 Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, And uphold me by Your generous Spirit.***

***True believers may have the assurance of their salvation divers ways shaken, diminished, and intermitted; as, by negligence in preserving of it, by falling into some special sin which woundeth the conscience and grieveth the Spirit; by some sudden or vehement temptation, by God's withdrawing the light of his countenance, and suffering even such as fear him to walk in darkness and to have no light:[15] yet are they never utterly destitute of that seed of God, and life of faith, that love of Christ and the brethren, that sincerity of heart, and conscience of duty, out of which, by the operation of the Spirit, this assurance may, in due time, be revived:[16] and by the which, in the meantime, they are supported from utter despair.[17] WCF 18.4 (p.858)***

You may have lost this joy, perhaps in the same way that David did, by falling into some special sin, well then I would encourage you to do what He did. When Nathan confronted Him, He did not make excuses as his predecessor Saul had, he said simply “***I have sinned against the LORD.***” And there and then the process of restoration began.

4) The value of the joy is greatly enhanced by its perpetuity; for it follows that the afflictions are light, and ought to be patiently endured, because they are of short duration. By these words Christ reminds us what is the nature of true joy. **The world must unavoidably be soon deprived of its joys**, which it seeks only in fading things; and, therefore, we must come to the resurrection of Christ, in which there is eternal solidity.

**The Joys of the world are all literally, “here today, and gone tomorrow” Foolishness of embracing them.**

**Violet example – Three course dinner gum. Best dinner you’ve ever had, then you turn into a blueberry.**