

John 16:16-33

- III. Jesus Reveals Himself to His Disciples (13:1-17:26)
 - G. Opposition from the World (15:18-16:6)
 - H. The Work of the Holy Spirit (16:7-15)
 - I. The Disciples' Response (16:16-33)

Jesus ends this section of the Upper Room Discourse with a statement in v. 16, saying that in *a little while*, the disciples wouldn't see Him, and then *again a little while*, and they'll see Him again. This is apparently the tipping point for the disciples, because a few of them begin to whisper to one another, asking what Jesus could possibly mean by that. Like any teacher, Jesus' attention is drawn to the side conversation taking place; however, unlike human teachers, Jesus already knows precisely what they want to ask of Him (v. 19)!

Knowing what they want, Jesus continues in v. 20 by telling them that, while they *will weep and lament*, *the world will rejoice* in contrast. This is precisely what is about to unfold in the hours ahead. Jesus will be betrayed, arrested, tried, convicted, and killed for the truth that He and the Father are One. The unbelieving Jews would rejoice that this so-called blasphemer would be put to death. The past three years of seemingly unending conflict would come to an end. Yet, it would not come to an end, because three days later, Jesus would rise up from the grave. On that day, their *sorrow will be turned into joy* (cf. 20:20). Jesus likens it to a woman who has gone through the process of childbirth, only to *no longer remember the anguish* after the baby has been born (Jesus words – not mine!).

On the day of their rejoicing, they will no longer ask questions of Jesus; rather, they will *ask the Father*, and they ought to ask *in [Jesus'] name* (v. 23). Twice in this passage, Jesus tells the disciples to ask in His name (vv. 23, 26; cf. 14:13-14). Back in John 14, we noted Leon Morris' words from his commentary:

Whatever the disciples ask in his name Christ will do. This does not mean simply using the name as a formula. It means that prayer is to be in accordance with all that that name stands for. It is prayer proceeding from faith in Christ, prayer that gives expression to oneness with Christ, prayer that seeks to glorify Christ.¹

Prayer is not a blank check that, so long as we attach Jesus' name to it, the Father will cash it. Instead, as Morris correctly notes, it's prayer that's in accordance with Jesus' person, work, and commands. When we pray with an eye towards the Lord's will, we can be certain of its fulfillment. (And, indeed, when we look at the prayers in the Word of God, particularly those of the Old Testament, we find that their prayers are first and foremost asking God to fulfill that which He has already promised to do!) When we ask according to His will, we *will receive* and our *joy may be full* (v. 24).

As we move down to vv. 32-33, we see Jesus share some news with His disciples that was likely difficult to hear:

Indeed the hour is coming, yes, has now come, that you will be scattered, each to his own, and will leave Me alone. And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me. These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.

¹Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to John*, 574.

This would have been most unwelcome news! Who wants to hear that life will be difficult? Who would willingly choose to be *scattered, each to his own*? Yet, that is what awaited the disciples in the years ahead. Really, they wouldn't even need to wait that long. In the hours ahead, the disciples would scatter upon Jesus' arrest. Peter would outright deny knowing Jesus, let alone confess to being His disciple. But ultimately, the disciples did not ride off into the sunset in a life of luxury. The Word of God tells us that James, the son of Zebedee, was the first martyr among the apostles, beheaded by Herod Agrippa (Acts 12:1-2). The Apostle Paul was no stranger to suffering and tribulation. Tradition holds that many other disciples met their end in martyrdom.²

The Word of God never once promises an easy life to believers. There is one thing that we should come to expect *in the world*, and that is *tribulation*. The Greek word can be defined as "trouble that inflicts distress." It should not catch us off guard or surprise us! Perhaps there could be times and circumstances that a life of comfort could indicate a lack of faithfulness to the Lord, particularly in countries and cultures that are outwardly hostile towards Jesus.

Yet, through it all, through times of "trouble that inflicts distress," we are to *be of good cheer*. We are to be courageous and take heart (cf. CSB, ESV, NASB, NIV), because Jesus has *overcome the world*. He has been victorious over the world. The verb *to have victory* occurs twenty-eight times in the New Testament, all but three of which occur in the writings of John. The person and work of Jesus provides the basis for our joy in life. Jesus has proven Himself victorious over the things of this world, and He will make all things new in the world to come. We ought to remain close to Him until He calls us home!

²Tradition holds that Peter suffered martyrdom under Nero, and Bartholomew (Nathaniel), Matthew (Levi), Andrew, and Thomas (Didymus) suffered similar fates.