

Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

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Returning To The Father Who Loves Us – John 16:16-33

“A little while, and you will no longer behold Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me...” (Jn. 16:16)

-- Jesus is still trying to prepare the disciples for His rapidly approaching death. **Though He will die, they will see Him again, ...a hint of the victory of resurrection.**

The disciples, confused by His remarks, talk among themselves, not able to understand His words (vss. 17,18). Jesus acknowledges their confusion, and attempts further clarification (vss. 19-22). *“Truly, truly I say to you”* - Introduction to a very serious, solemn declaration. *“...you will weep and lament...”* -- The word for “lament” was commonly used in reference to lamentation for the dead (e.g., translated as “we sang a dirge” in Matt. 11:17; also used in I Samuel 1:17 in the LXX to translate David's “lament” over Saul and Jonathan). **This was a very specific prediction of His death, and their sorrowful response.** *“...but the world will rejoice...”* -- The world, referring to those who were not His followers, especially those prompted and manipulated by the “ruler of this world” (12:31; 14:30; 16:11), would rejoice at His death because He had confronted them with truth (3:19-21), or because they saw Him as a potentially explosive political liability (11:47-53). *“You will be sorrowful”* -- Notice that **Jesus did not rebuke them for this; He expected it.** It was a normal response to an emotionally painful event. It was not wrong (nor a “lack of faith”) for them to mourn or experience the pain of sorrow. *“...but your sorrow will be turned to joy”* -- Only the resurrection could produce this emotional change. In vs. 21, **Jesus likens their experience to that of a woman in labor.** During the birthing process, she is in pain, pain so great at times that she may want to “give up and call the whole thing off”, if she could. Once the child is born, however, the resulting joy overshadows the pain. *“...she remembers the anguish no more”* -- This does not imply that her memory banks are wiped clean of any remembrance of pain. The Greek means “to keep in mind, call to mind”, thus **the new mom occupies her mind with the joy of the newborn, not with the painful memories of the labor.** In the same way, *“...you too now have sorrow, but I will see you again”* (a clear prediction of resurrection), *“...and your heart will rejoice....”* He was not saying that they would *forget* the painful scenes that they would experience and witness in the next twenty-four hours, but the pain of those times will be overcome with the joy of reunion with Him. *“...and no one takes away your joy.”* -- **The resurrection event will be irreversible, and nothing else can reach to overshadow its impact. No matter what they may face from that time, that event will provide a base and support for joyous victory that this world cannot remove.**

“In that day you will ask Me no question...” (vs. 23) -- A misleading translation. The Greek simply says, “In that day you will ask Me nothing”. Jesus is not limiting the context to questions. **He is changing the focus of His teaching to prayer. He wishes to direct them to the Father, not just Him.** *“Truly, truly, I say to you...”* -- Take note. *“...if you shall ask the Father for anything, He will give it to you in My name”* -- The Greek word order is different, “...ever anything y'all might ask (at a point in time) the Father in My name, He will give [it] to you”. **The emphasis is on our “asking in Jesus’ name”, not the Father's “giving in Jesus’ name”.** Asking in Jesus’ name means more than simply tacking that label on the end of our prayers. It means asking according to the authority of His character and purpose, in agreement with Him and His will. It is a reminder that **they are given access to the Father, His resources and abilities (16:15) by means of their identification with Him.** Their relationship with the Father is not on the basis of their own merit or religious accomplishments, but by virtue of their connection to Jesus.

“Until now you have asked for nothing in My name...” (vs. 24) -- This is *new*. It had not been their practice to ask in Jesus’ name. They approached God as any OT saint would have. *“...ask, and you will receive...”* -- Jesus never said that their prayers would not be heeded *at all*, if they did not do as He suggested, ...only that **they would have greater success in prayer, when they did ask in His name.** *“...in order that your joy may be full”* -- Joy is to be one of the motivations for seeking God in prayer. God is the One who set things up this way, making obedience to be an exciting pleasurable experience. The Greek for “may be full” expresses that our joy is filled at a point in time with ongoing result. It is not to be a “flash in the pan” type of experience, but one that continues to affect us.

“These things I have spoken to you in figurative language...” (vs. 25) -- Much of what He had been telling them has been somewhat obscured by the analogies, allusions, and figures of speech He had used to try to talk about spiritual truths, or of the events concerning His death and resurrection. *“...an hour is coming when I will speak no more in figurative language, but will tell you plainly of the Father”* -- Some things could not be understandable until after His resurrection (cf. Lk. 24:26,27; 44-49).

Jesus speaks of a new relationship with the Father (vss. 26,27). *“In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say that I will request the Father on your behalf...”* -- **We may have to rethink some of our theology on**

Christ's role as mediator and intercessor. Here he says that He will *not* act as a go-between. When you think of it, how dysfunctional would our relationship be with the Father, if it *were* necessary for Jesus to act as a “communication filter”, or a “buffer”, to make us and our requests acceptable to Him? **This kind of thinking is based upon the assumption that God is still *angry* with us, ...that Christ's payment for sin covers us, but we are still fundamentally evil and unacceptable to God. Therefore we had better keep our distance, lest we be destroyed by His holy wrath.** This theology does not fully come to terms with the idea of new birth (Jn. 3:1-8), new creation (II Cor. 5:14-21), or the new man (Rom. 6:2-11; Eph. 4:22-24). **The NT declares that God accepts us as His own children, and that we can have confident access when we come to Him in prayer. Why? “...for the Father Himself loves you...”** -- The Greek word translated as “loves” is a form of *phileō*, meaning **God enjoys us, He likes us, He has affection toward us.** *Agapē* love (e.g., Jn. 3:16) communicates more the idea of a consistent benevolent attitude and action toward another, even if possibly they might be an undesirable, unpleasant person. Hence, Jesus could tell us to “love (*agapē*) your enemies and do good to those who hate you” (Lk. 6:27). Jesus' point, here in Jn. 16, is that He doesn't need to stand up to defend our interests, or to convince the Father to be nice to us. No, the Father *Himself* takes delight in us and enjoys us. Therefore, we can pray with confidence that God receives us and hears us. Cf. Heb. 10:19-22. **“...because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came forth from the Father”** -- **The basis of our favor with the Father is in our treatment of and response to the Son. Again the word for our “love” for Jesus is a form of *phileō*, implying affection, friendship, and enjoyment of Him. The word implies *relationship*, ...not a sterile, distant admiration, or worshipful deference.** For the disciples, it had grown out of three years of spending time with Him, walking and talking throughout the Palestinian countryside. The challenge for *us* is to avoid the “religious trap” of *distancing ourselves in reverence* toward Him to the point where we can never come close enough to Him to really *enjoy Him as a Friend*. **Delighting in Jesus**, along with acknowledging and trusting who He really is as the Message having “come out from God” (Jn. 1:1), **opens the Father's heart of love and affection toward us.**

“I came forth from the Father, and have come into the world...” (vss. 28) -- The image conveyed by these words is that Jesus had been with the Father before He was born into this world as a human being (cf. Jn. 8:23,42). **“I am leaving the world again, and going to the Father.”** -- This was the place He had said that He would be going to, a place where they would not be able to come (7:33-36; 8:21,22; 13:33). **“His disciples said, ‘Behold, now You are speaking plainly’...”** (vs. 29) -- The language is finally straightforward enough for them to understand that He is saying that He is returning to God, ...though how much they grasped beyond that is unclear. **“Now we know that You know all things, and have no need for anyone to question You”** (vs. 30) -- Some have used this verse to support the idea that Jesus was omniscient while He was here on earth. Other passages clearly refute this notion, e.g., Matt. 24:36; Mk. 5:30-32; Heb. 2:17. What, then, did the disciples mean by their response? I think what they meant was that **they were finally convinced that Jesus knew what He was talking about, and what He was doing.** He did not need them to give Him their two cents' worth of counsel. It was a declaration of their trust in Him. **“...by this we believe You came from God”** -- The Greek is “with this”, as “with this [realization] we (now) trust that you came from God”.

“Do you now believe? Behold, an hour is coming, and has already come, for you to be scattered, each to his own home, and leave Me alone” (vss. 31,32) -- Jesus responds to their affirmation by prophesying of their abandonment of Him. In Matthew's version (26:31), Jesus quotes an OT prophecy that says “strike... the shepherd and the sheep of the flock will be scattered”. **“...and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me.”** -- **The Father remains His source of strength** to face the trials of the coming hours. **We are given the same assurance of His presence on our behalf** (Matt. 28:20; Jn. 14:16; Heb. 13:5,6; Psa. 46:1).

“These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace” (vs. 33). The Greek is a purpose clause. The force of the first verb is that these words have been spoken but will have an ongoing effect. It is not a simple past action. **It means that the words are still there, available for their comfort. Note that the thrust of Jesus statement is that He has spoken these things in order that they might have peace in Him.** The second verb describes an ongoing possibility. **“...that you might-have-and-be-having peace...”** **Peace in that culture meant more than just inner tranquility.** Because of the influence of the Hebrew “shalom”, **this word also meant “balance, order, wholeness.”** **“In the world you have tribulation...”** -- **The word for “tribulation” here means “pressure, pressing together; a suffering brought on by outward circumstances, oppression, affliction.”** In other words, the affliction of the world is primarily external. It presses in upon us. **It can be painful, but it does not own or control our inner selves. We have a choice as to how we respond to these pressures.** Jesus' answer? **“...but take courage; I have overcome the world”** -- The word translated by “but” is a strong negative disjunction, “rather”. It describes a radical departure from being grieved, afraid, defeated or sorrowful. **“Take courage” means to “be confident, to be positive, to be cheerful and unafraid.”** Why? Because, Jesus has overcome, defeated and conquered the world system.