

Exegetical Notes, John 16:17-33 “Coming Again”

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John 16:17-33

Verses 17-18

At this, some of his disciples said to one another, “What does he mean by saying, ‘In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me,’ and ‘Because I am going to the Father?’”¹⁸ They kept asking, “What does he mean by ‘a little while’? We don’t understand what he is saying.”

- In John 16:16 Jesus had told his disciples, “In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me.” In John 16:5 and 10, Jesus had told them that he was “going to the Father.” This teaching confused the disciples. They did not understand what Jesus meant.

Verses 19-27

Jesus saw that they wanted to ask him about this, so he said to them, “Are you asking one another what I meant when I said, ‘In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me’?”²⁰ Very truly I tell you, you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices. You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy.²¹ A woman giving birth to a child has pain because her time has come; but when her baby is born she forgets the anguish because of her joy that a child is born into the world.²² So with you: Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy.²³ In that day you will no longer ask me anything. Very truly I tell you, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.²⁴ Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete.²⁵ “Though I have been speaking figuratively, a time is coming when I will no longer use this kind of language but will tell you plainly about my Father.²⁶ In that day you will ask in my name. I am not saying that I will ask the Father on your behalf.²⁷ No, the Father himself loves you because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God.

- Jesus understood that the disciples were confused by his teaching and afraid to ask him what he meant. Knowing that, he asked them if that is indeed what concerned them.
- He then told them that the situation was like that of a woman who was giving birth. The process of giving birth is painful, but when the baby is come, all the struggle is put behind in the joy of the child's birth. Jesus explained that they were now at such a time. What they were about to experience, his crucifixion and death, would cause them great pain. The persecution that would follow his resurrection would be intense. But when he called them home to him, their joy would be overwhelming, and that joy would not be taken from them.
- He told them that then they would feel free to ask him anything, and they would be answered completely. There would be no confusion.
- Jesus then explained that he had been speaking to them figuratively. He explained that a time was coming when such language would be unnecessary. Then God, who loved them because they loved Jesus, would, through the Holy Spirit (see John 16:12-15), lead them into all truth.

Verses 28-33

I came from the Father and entered the world; now I am leaving the world and going back to the Father.”²⁹ Then Jesus’ disciples said, “Now you are speaking clearly and without figures of speech.”³⁰ Now we can see that you know all things and that you do not even need to have anyone ask you questions. This makes us believe that you came from God.”³¹ “Do you now believe?” Jesus replied. ³² “A time is coming and in fact has come when you will be scattered, each to your own home. You will leave me all alone. Yet I am not alone, for my Father is with me.”³³ “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”

- Jesus then explained things to them in plain language. He had been sent to earth by the Father. Now, through the events which were about to unfold, he was returning to the Father.
- The disciples then understood what Jesus was saying. They were impressed that he answered their question when they had not asked it. They confessed that because of this their belief that he was Israel's Messiah was confirmed.
- Jesus then told them that their faith in him would soon be questioned and that when it was they would leave him alone. They would not stand with him when the danger came. He explained that even when they had deserted him, he would not be alone for the Father would be with him.

- Jesus told them that it was important for them to know all these things because, when they had trouble with the world, -- which they would have, -- they would remember what he said and take courage because they knew that he had defeated the world.

(These exegetical notes are the foundational study for the sermon entitled *Coming Again*. They have been prepared by the Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen, Senior Pastor at Cornerstone Fellowship, Coatesville Pennsylvania. All rights are reserved by *Cornerstone Fellowship* & The Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen. They are used here by permission.)