

Into Thy Word Ministries Bible Study www.intothyword.org

General Idea: Jesus said: *in just a little while, I am going to the Father; I know you are very sad, but this is actually good and for the best. You will see me again soon.* The Disciples had trouble understanding this. For them, Jesus was going to His doom and all they felt was gloom; and yet, Jesus was trying to tell them this would be the greatest triumph and their greatest joy. For He would transform worldly joy to sorrow and the believer's grief to Joy, for He is real and alive, living and working in us all! Then, Jesus used the illustration of a woman and her extreme birthing pains that turn into joy when she finally holds her baby. The pains are temporary, but the baby becomes a dear loved one for a lifetime. Sorrow would be temporary, for they would see Jesus again. We cannot identify with them in this particular loss (Jesus leaving them), but we do experience loss of focus. Jesus is still there, but we rather place our eyes on our circumstances and woes; we become scattered from His percepts, call, and love, and we fuss over our issues until we refocus and face our Lord and see His hands of love that were there the entire time. We have a God who is here, who is there, and to whom we can go directly and commune with Him, ask of Him, know and do His will—all by Christ for Joy. Christ has overcome the world so we can have peace!

Contexts and Background

In this passage, the Disciples realized their world and all their hopes and dreams would soon fall apart, leaving them disillusioned, desperate, and depressed. They would be confused and dazed, and weep, wondering what would happen to them. However, Jesus assured them that it would be OK, and that they would see the risen Christ again. But, at this time, they were not “getting” it. The world may express joy for the suffering and death of the One True Savior and for our troubles, but, true joy will come to those of us in Christ! Then, Jesus reassured them that this would be good, along with a promise of His permanence and that this would all transform to great joy! John and his followers were experiencing the very tribulation Jesus was telling about. They were losing their places in the Synagogues, being betrayed by friends and family, losing their families and lands, losing their jobs, and any influence or inheritance by hostile, prideful Jews and God-hating Romans. The Jews did not believe one could hear God or have a personal relationship with Him as the Christians claimed, and were jealous and/or refused to be convicted. The Romans had an extreme disdain for monotheism and apocalyptic cults (that Christianity was considered then by them), thus the antagonism (John 9:34; 11:50; 12:42).

Commentary—Word and Phrase Meanings

- *Little while.* Meaning some advance warning and instructions with hope, and referring to His Resurrection and Ascension. This was pointing toward the coming crucifixion and sacrifice of our Lord when He would pay the debt that would take our sins away, leading to the Good News of the Gospel that the Resurrection would fulfill and the coming of the Holy Spirit that would empower our belief and trust. These Disciples would personally see Jesus do this—and soon! Some theologians think this refers to the second coming and/or just the coming of the Holy Spirit, but at this time, Christ was on earth and the Resurrection and Ascension were the great acts in future play here. The second coming is more of an application for our joy that we today look forward to, but our real faith and joy is in what has already taken place—not in what will come (John 13:19; 14:18-19; 20:19-23)!
- *See me no more / no longer.* Referring to the sacrifice and then ascension and exaltation of Christ that appeased God's wrath and made possible His approval for our redemption. The Disciples did not know their immediate future, but they did know their Lord, so they had to step up their trust and faith.
- *Don't understand...Where are you going?* The Disciples did not quite “connect the dots” to what Jesus was saying. This is about Jesus' prime and eternal destination, which the Disciples were thinking of in a physical travel sense; Jesus was speaking in a spiritual and character sense. Peter and Thomas did ask Jesus about His departure, but their concern was, for the most part, what would happen to them, not about Christ (John 13:36; 14:5).
- *Weep and mourn.* Expressed as missing something we have had, but in this case, it is about what

they had that would become more. Righteousness grieves over the sins of our world, and the waywardness and disobedience of our churches and our personal lives; Jesus calls to us for authentic repentance (Neh. 1:5-11; Isa. 6:4-39; Dan. 9:4-9; Ezra. 9:6-15; James 4:7-10).

- *World rejoices.* Love rejoices with the truth; sin takes pleasure in evil! The feeble, disjointed, and hurtful ways of the world will seek to come against the grand splendor of what Christ has (John 13:33-35; 1 Cor. 13:6)!
- *Woman giving birth / birth pangs / travail.* Meaning a transition from pain to hope, from persecution to deliverance, and judgment to those who impart suffering to others. This is also a theme for the coming Messiah and the new age of life that Jesus fulfills. The pains and mortality of childbirth was great then—and often feared, yet remembered no more in the joy of new life. What women go through in having babies is daunting and painful; no words can describe it and no man can ever understand. Yet, even in all this pain, it is temporary and the joy of the new baby transforms this pain to joy. Here, we see the image that Christ used to show how He takes our misery and our meaningless lives and transforms us to real joy in Him (Psalm 48:6; Isa. 9:6; 13:8; 21:3; 26:17; 42:14; Jer. 4:31; 6:24; 30:6; 49:22-24; 53:12-54:1; 62:5; 66:7-10; Mic. 4:9-10; 5:1-4; Hos. 13:13-14).
- *Rejoice.* Indicating that we can rejoice in Jesus' sacrifice and death, be glad for the joy of our salvation, and express gratitude for whom and what He is and has done. And the Disciple's joy did erupt for the risen Lord. Jesus doesn't just replace our sorrow with joy; He transforms it. The world's joy is very temporary while ours is forever (Psalm 16:11; 80:1-7, 17-19; 118:24; Isa. 64:1-9; 1 Cor. 1:23-30; 2:2)!
- *Father will give you whatever you ask.* Meaning we are to go to God and express His Holy, consistent name with reverence and awe. There are two different words for "ask" here; one in the Greek means we have the ability to inquire, like to ask a question. The other means to petition or ask for something so to identify with God's purpose, plan, and call. This also means we will receive God's will and revealed truth from His precepts and call from His Word, and by the work of the Holy Spirit. God will hear our prayers, listen to us, and we can commune with Him, which is a rare and sacred privilege. Then, we are to expand our faith and thinking so Christ is our "all in all," working in and through us. When we pray to Christ, we are praying to the Father; the Triune God is complete and in agreement to hear us and we seek to please Him in so doing. This does not mean God is a vending machine and will capitulate to our will; rather, we are to surrender to His purpose. This is perhaps one of the most abused passages in the Bible; it is often taken out of context and used as an excuse for apathy, a get rich magic formula for success, and to satisfy one's lust for power and control (Luke 11:1-13; John 14:12-14; 15:16; 1 John 5:14)!
- *Speaking figuratively / proverbs.* Great teachers, both Jewish and Greek, would use stories, illustrations, riddles, and metaphors to illustrate a moral or spiritual or heavenly truth. Jesus did so too, and used proverbs and parables to challenge minds and open up faith. Perhaps they did not understand the metaphors; maybe they were not listening or were not ready for a full understanding. Perhaps their hearts and minds were closed off. There are times people will not care or listen to us or God. We are still responsible for proceeding with maturity, tact, and love to proclaim His Word. We are not responsible for how people take it or treat us; we are only responsible to trust and obey. The concrete thinker would have trouble with this, and those who refused to think or were overly simplistic or refused conviction did not like this form of instruction. Jesus and the Bible use all forms of genre for all minds to get us ready for His Truth and for the application of His Word (Isa. 6:9-10; Mark 4:13; John 2:22; 6:48, 60; 14:9, 25-26; 16:12).
- *Tell you plainly.* Jesus was teaching farmers and fisherman, who actually had the equivalent of a college education, but were "blue collar" concrete thinkers—not "academics" or philosophers; so they welcomed a straightforward word for clarification. Also, in the context of the last passage, "told you" is a warning. Jesus is telling us in advance what we will face so we can be prepared, ready, and able to handle it (John 13:19; Acts 2:11).
- *Father himself loves you.* Meaning God has great affection and cares for us. He has His beautiful

touch for you; He cares for you! The three persons of the Trinity are united in their love and care for us; thus when we pray to one, we pray to all (John 3:16; Rom. 5:2; 8:34; Heb. 7:25; 1 John 2:1-2).

- *Know all things.* Our God is all knowing (“omniscient”) and, in a timely fashion, gives to us what we can understand; this is also a statement of faith that God the Father did indeed come in the person of Jesus.
- *You believe at last / do you now believe!* The Disciples started to realize what Christ and His mission were about. They had reached a deeper sense of spiritual maturity where their faith was responding, backed by love, expectation, and action. Their faith and their prayers had been too timid and they had focused on their confusion and uncertainty, when in Christ, they (and we) can be strong in faith and committed to His purpose with certainty. There would be no Gospel without the life, sacrificial death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of Christ and thus no saving faith or redemption. Also, His departure from earth paved the way for the sending to and permanence of the Holy Spirit in believer’s lives (Matt. 1:21; John 14:16-26).
- *Scattered.* Sheep only trusted one or two people for their whole existence, thus the value and importance of a good shepherd was obvious. If the shepherd would walk away during their field time, the sheep would get spooked and scatter. We see here an illustration as to what happens when we do not have faith in the One who leads us and when we fail to lead others properly. Yet, God does not forsake us (Psalm 119:176; Isa. 53:6; Jer. 23:1; 50:17; Ezek. 34:6-21; Zech. 13:7; 1 Macc. 12:53; Matt. 26:56; 27:46; John 18:17-26)!
- *Have peace.* This means God-given tranquility, which comes from the surrendering and yielding of ourselves to our Lord. When Christ is in control, we have peace because He is the source of ultimate peace! This will be achieved when we allow tranquility from our harmonious relationship with Christ be our attitude, control, and composure. The closer we are to Christ, the closer we are to contentment and what is really important in life. Because peace allows for wisdom and peace, it promotes virtue and love and forgiveness. Peace is also a Fruit of the Spirit that comes from the tree of love that is fruited with wisdom, pruned with virtue, watered with forgiveness, and produces the sweet fruits of *compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience* (Isa. 26:3; Matt. 5:9; Luke 19:42; John 14:27; 16:33; Rom. 5:1; 12:18; Gal. 5:19-23; Col. 3:15-17; Phil. 4:7).
- *Trouble.* For all time, many religious people have persecuted other religious people for what they thought was right over and against what their sacred texts stated. Strong conviction can go either way—to stand in and up for truth and be fruitful, or remain in pride and be hateful and hurtful (Acts 26:9-11; Gal. 1:13-14).
- *Take heart / cheer up.* Meaning to be courageous; God is in charge!
- *Overcome the world.* Jesus is the Victor! God is our triumph even in the midst of suffering! Jesus, at this time, would endure a real separation from God to take on our sins and in so doing would cheat death, defeat Satan and evil, and give us hope and salvation. This is the dramatic, final victory of the Gospel: the Messiah is here, He saved the day, and He saved us. Let us be grateful and reverent in Him, for there is no fear or worry; our biggest problem has been solved—our sin is removed from God’s sight (Matt. 12:25-29).

Devotional Thoughts and Applications

In the dark moments of life, we often ask and plead *why is God allowing this to happen to me? Is this love and care?* We may not understand what we are going through or understand what is God up to in all of this, but as we find ourselves in these shadows and dark places of life, we can find ourselves in His arms of love too. Like a hug in a very dark room, you can’t see the person giving you the care or love, but you can feel their presence. It is so with God; we can feel our way through by touching His Word and standing on His precepts. We have to allow our trust in Christ to work, believing that He is not smiting us, but He is working out something marvelous in us and even when we can’t see it now, knowing that one day we will. We do have hope and He will not allow anything to happen to us that is not in His will or that will be totally detrimental. There is a limit to what He will do...so we can hang in there and trust in Him!

Our intimate, close, and growing personal relationship with Jesus Christ grows us so there is room in us for the Holy Spirit to flow. Through tough times and persecution, our response is a form of true worship that pleases God. Pride is the biggest taker of space. As we grow closer to Him, we are more usable and available to be His speaking and display platform for the world to know. As we move away from His precepts, our pride fills that chamber reserved for the Spirit's work. Our growth in trust and obedience is what stands us apart from our opponents—the God-haters, the shallow, apathetic, *pseudo* Christians—and the false teachers and prophets who lead them (Isa. 66:5; Matt. 9:2, 22; 14:27; John 3:16-18; 15:22-24; Acts 23:11; Rom. 1:18-28; 8:37).

The Essential Inductive Questions (for more Inductive questions see Inductive Bible Study):

1. What does this passage say?
2. What does this passage mean?
3. What is God telling me?
4. How am I encouraged and strengthened?
5. Is there sin in my life for which confession and repentance is needed?
6. How can I be changed, so I can learn and grow?
7. What is in the way of these precepts affecting me? What is in the way of my listening to God?
8. How does this apply to me? What will I do about it?
9. What can I model and teach?
10. What does God want me to share with someone?

Additional Questions:

1. What was your greatest triumph or joy? What would you need for a great joy now?
2. What do you think the difference is between the love, peace, and joy that Christ offers and what the world offers? What has your experience been between these?
3. What does it mean to you that God will hear your prayers and listen to you so you can commune with Him? How is this truth a rare and sacred privilege?
4. How is Jesus your greatest triumph and joy? How can He be more so?
5. How or why does Jesus transform the world's joy into sorrow and the believer's grief to Joy? How is He real, alive, and living and working in you today?
6. What happens to you that causes a loss of focus upon Christ? How does it make you feel that your sorrow is temporary?
7. If Jesus is here in our midst, then why do we tend to place our eyes on our circumstances and problems? How does this scatter us from His precepts, call, and love?
8. How does Jesus reassure you? What has He done for you that transformed something sorrowful into joy?
9. What does it mean to you that God has great affection for you, that He has His beautiful touch for you, and that He cares for you? How does it help your courage and peace to know that God is in charge?
10. What can you do better to go to God and express His Holy, consistent name with reverence and awe? What do you need in order to be challenged in your mind and opened up to more faith?
11. Why does Jesus want us to expand our faith and thinking so Christ becomes our "all in all," working in and through us? How can you make this happen faster and stronger?
12. Do you fully realize that you have a God who is here, who is there, and you can go directly to Him? How does the fact that Christ has overcome the world so we can have peace strengthen your faith and perseverance? How can you make this more so?