

## Comments on John 16

The present divisions between ch. 15, 16, and 17 are largely artificial. Verses 1-4 of this chapter are an explanation of the motivation behind 15:18-27 and v. 5-15 are an expansion on the subject of 15:26. Then, verses 16-33 of this chapter lead in to the subject of ch. 17. Thus, based upon subject, ch. 16 really shouldn't exist. It should be divided and grouped with the preceding and following chapters.

In 15:18-16:4 the disciples are forewarned they will be subject to considerable persecution after Jesus' own demise. This brings them sorrow, cf. 16:6. Clearly, they would be sorrowing over the imminent threat of persecution, but their sorrow is moreso over their hopes for a Messianic kingdom being dashed with Jesus' death. Just days before all of Jerusalem was heralding Jesus as the Son of David, deliverer of Israel (cf. 12:12-19), and now Jesus is telling them he is about to be murdered and they will all be hated and persecuted.

While they are sorrowful and their hopes have been dashed, Jesus tries to explain to them it is necessary he leave them so he can send the Holy Spirit (cf. v. 7). Jesus, acting as intercessor before the Father, sends the Holy Spirit to all nations marking the advent of a new dispensation: the Times of the Gentiles, cf. Luke 24:49, John 7:38-39, Rom. 11:25, Acts 1:4, Acts 2:33, D&C 45:28, JS-H 1:41. It is expedient that Jesus go away because otherwise he could not fulfil the Abrahamic Covenant, which gives all nations the opportunity to be grafted into Israel.

Why couldn't the Spirit be dispensed to the Gentiles until after Jesus' ministry was completed?

1) Jesus' ministry was to natural Israel per the Abrahamic Covenant, cf. Matt. 15:24. But, Jesus is rejected in general by natural Israel after fulfilling the covenant with them in specific, so the covenant is made available to all mankind in general. See Acts 13:46, 1 Ne. 10:11, 1 Ne. 15:17, 3 Ne. 9:16, 3 Ne. 16:7, D&C 10:57. The grafting in of the Gentiles is intended to strengthen Israel in the process of offering salvation to Israel, cf. Jacob 5:34.

2) The Gentiles are "cleansed". The Law of Moses declared the nations "unclean" and imposed separation between Israel and them. With the fulfilment of the Law (cf. 3 Ne. 9:17)

comes the end of separation, cf. Acts 10:15.

3) While the Abrahamic Covenant was through Abraham's literal offspring, it also contained language that included all nations of the earth being blessed through the same covenant, cf. Abr. 2:10-11. See also 1 Ne. 15:18, 1 Ne. 22:8-11, 3 Ne. 20:25-27. Also, Isa. 56 makes a number of predictions concerning permitting Gentiles to participate in ordinances they were at that time excluded from.

4) Israel's complete scattering is imminent, cf. Matt. 24:2. In order to ensure that the gospel go to Israel, it must go to all nations because Israel is no longer a corporate entity, cf. Luke 21:24, 1 Ne. 22:7-11, D&C 39:11.

Thus, this new dispensation of the Holy Spirit is intended not only to impel the apostles in the Christian cause, but also to be the agent of proselyting all nations.

It is not that the Holy Spirit was not active among mankind previously, as that is clearly not the case (cf. Num. 11:25-29, Num. 27:18, Judges 3:9-10, 1 Sam. 10:6-10, 1 Ne. 1:7-12, 1 Ne. 4:6-12). This is a new dispensation of the Holy Spirit, a dispensation which includes not just Israel but the Gentiles also.

**1 THESE things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended. 2 They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. 3 And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me. 4 But these things have I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them. And these things I said not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you.**

v1-4 Jesus warns them they will be persecuted just as he has (cf. 15:18-25) so they will be ready for what lies ahead (v. 1). The apostles will initially be unwelcome among their own religious brothers, but eventually the persecution will turn deadly (v. 2). This is because the Jews in general do not understand God's will or the purpose of the Messiah (v. 3). Jesus is forewarning them so when it happens, they will not be blind-sided. Jesus then explains he had not told them this previously because he was with them (v. 4) and was the subject of persecution. But, now that Jesus is leaving them, they will be persecuted in his place.

v1 "that ye should not be offended", a better translation would be "that you may be kept from stumbling" (NAS). Jesus is warning them ahead of time in order to prepare them for the harsh reality they face.

v4 "these things I said not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you", during Jesus' mortal ministry he was the focus of the Pharisaic hostility and he was present to foil the Pharisee's attempts to undermine him. Now that he is leaving them, they need to be apprized of what will shortly be happening.

5 But now I go my way to him that sent me; and none of you asketh me, whither goest thou? 6 But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart. 7 Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. 8 And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: 9 Of sin, because they believe not on me; 10 Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; 11 Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.

12 I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. 13 Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, [that] shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. 14 He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew [it] unto you. 15 All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew [it] unto you.

v5-15 Jesus continues by echoing the question that prompted the discussion (v. 5, cf. 14:5) and noting their sorrow over the answer they received has put an end to their curiosity (v. 6). Regardless, Jesus explains to them it is essential he leave them so the Helper will be sent to them (v. 7). The Holy Spirit will convict sinners, reveal righteousness, and bring judgement (v. 8). It convicts people of sin because it testifies of Christ and they do not believe in him or in his teachings (v. 9). It testifies of righteousness because the Son returns to the Father to send the Holy Spirit (v. 10), and the Son must be righteous to do this. And the Holy Spirit brings judgement because the adversary is overthrown and judged (v. 11).

There are many things Jesus could tell them now, but they cannot comprehend it as of yet (v. 12). So, when the Holy

Spirit is sent to them it will enlighten them concerning the truth (v. 13) because it will only speak according to the will of the Father and Son (v. 14-15).

v5-6 The answer to Thomas' question (v. 5, cf. 14:5) is not what the apostles anticipated, and it leaves them unhappy given the rather grim forecast (v. 6).

v10 The Son returns to the Father, proving the loyalty and righteousness of the Son. He is unjustly accused of many sins during his mortal life, but he is vindicated when the Father accepts him.

Those who no longer see him are the wicked, as it is plain the apostles see him again repeatedly after his death. While even the wicked can see Jesus' in mortality and revile him, when he returns to his Father the wicked will not be able to see him with their natural eyes anymore, and will not enter in the Father's presence after mortality.

v11 Compare v. 33, 14:30.

v13-15 These verses emphasize the unity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit will only say what the Father and Son have said, and the Son only says what the Father tells him to say. Thus, the Holy Spirit and the Son are united with the Father.

16 A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father. 17 Then said [some] of his disciples among themselves, what is this that he saith unto us, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me: and, Because I go to the Father? 18 They said therefore, what is this that he saith, A little while? we cannot tell what he saith. 19 Now Jesus knew that they were desirous to ask him, and said unto them, Do ye enquire among yourselves of that I said, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me? 20 Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. 21 A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. 22 And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.

v16-22 Jesus gives a succinct distillation (v. 16) of the rather lengthy sermon (cf. 14:6-16:15) which was in reply to Thomas' question (cf. 14:5), but the apostles are not clear on what Jesus is trying to say (v. 17-18). Jesus perceives they do not understand (v. 19), so he elaborates. He tells them they will shortly be lamenting his death while the world rejoices over it, but their sorrow will be turned to joy (v. 20). Just as when a woman is in great pain when giving birth but then rejoices when the baby is born (v. 21), so too will they be in great pain but rejoice when they see the resurrected Christ (v. 22).

Jesus has been speaking rather ambiguously about his death for some time now, and when he says he is returning to his Father the apostles are trying to figure out what he means by it. Is Jesus being literal, or figurative? The apostles cannot tell.

Then the description of their sorrow being turned to joy is relatively ambiguous as well. That obscurity is probably what leaves the apostles incredulous when his resurrection is announced (cf. ch. 20, Luke 24). It is plain they presently do not anticipate him actually showing himself to them after his death. They must have interpreted these words as referring to when they would each die and be reunited with Christ in heaven.

v17-18 The apostles are talking amongst themselves trying to figure out what Jesus meant when he said he was leaving them.

23 And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give [it] you. 24 Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full. 25 These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs: but the time cometh, when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall shew you plainly of the Father. 26 At that day ye shall ask in my name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you: 27 For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God. 28 I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father.

v23-28 When Jesus is no longer among them they will instead directly pray to the Father in his name (v. 23), which they have not previously done, and be given what they need (v. 24). Previously Jesus spoke to them figuratively on a great many things, but from now on he will speak to them plainly (v. 25)

because they will be praying to the Father rather than him praying to Father for them (v. 26). This is because the Father loves them, since they love His Son (v. 27). And now the Son came into the world from the Father, and leaves the world to return to the Father (v. 28).

Here Jesus is also commenting on Philip's statement in 14:8. There Philip asked Jesus to reveal the Father to them and Jesus tells them they have seen the Father because they have seen the Son. Here, Jesus tells them they can enjoy the same witness and experience of knowing the Father as he does because they love the Son and will do his works.

v24 "Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name", the apostles apparently did not exercise the Priesthood in the name of Jesus at that time, probably because of his presence, cf. 4. Now, in his absence, Jesus instructs them to invoke his name.

v25-27 Jesus is speaking of the apostles gaining spiritual maturity of their own. In his presence they are dependent upon him to a great degree, but in his absence they will mature and will no longer need to rely on Jesus to pray to the Father for them, they will pray to the Father themselves. And, the Father will hear them, because they love the Son.

v26 The final prayer Jesus makes to his Father in behalf of his disciples in the great intercessory prayer in the following chapter. After that prayer, the apostles and disciples will be praying to the Father on their own in the name of Jesus.

v28 Jesus reiterates v. 16, but in a fashion that makes it plain he is going to die. He is not simply leaving them to go someplace else, he is leaving this world to return to his Father in heaven.

29 His disciples said unto him, Lo, now speakest thou plainly, and speakest no proverb. 30 Now are we sure that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee: by this we believe that thou camest forth from God. 31 Jesus answered them, Do ye now believe? 32 Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me. 33 These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

v29 The disciples understand they have received a plain statement as to his imminent departure (v. 29) and make statements of belief and confidence regarding his prediction (v. 30). Jesus questions the strength of their conviction (v. 31) by making an additional prediction that they will be scattered and all will abandon him except his Father (v. 32). Jesus then reiterates the subject of v. 1, letting them know they will be subject to trials but ultimately will obtain peace through their faith in Christ (v. 33).

v30 Based upon their experience with Jesus they realize he knows things they do not. They also know from all of the Pharisees who have tried and failed that no person is in any position to question him. Because of this, they believe he is from God, so his prediction must be good. This is a statement of confidence where they tell him they believe his prediction of the future based upon his past performance.

v33 As Jesus has overcome (cf. v. 8-11, 14:1-3, 14:30), those who believe in him will be able to overcome as well.

Copyright © 2023 by S. Kurt Neumiller <kurt.neumiller@gmail.com>. All rights reserved. No part of this text may be reproduced in any form or by any means for commercial gain without the express written consent of the author. Digital or printed copies may be freely made and distributed for personal and public non-commercial use.