

John Chapter 16

John chapters 13 to 17 give us the last words of the Saviour before moving on to Gethsemane and Golgotha. These last hours are very precious to Him, for He is seeking to bring comfort and consolation to men who will soon be deprived of their Lord and Master. He needs to give them comfort that will not only sustain the disciples during the next three days but will indeed sustain every Christian who has ever lived during the past 2,000 years. It is ministry for the period of His absence in heaven, while His own are still on earth.

To understand scripture properly, we must first put ourselves in the position of those who were receiving these words first hand. Why were the words spoken in these particular circumstances and what did it mean to them at that time? It is only by studying the scriptures in this way that we can appreciate the context in which they are found. If anything, the scriptures should mean far more to us than they did to these early believers. We can take time to sit back and examine them with the whole Bible before us. What a great privilege we have today then: what an opportunity to understand the mind of God as revealed in His word.

At first sight then, the words of the Lord Jesus must have met with a mixed reception. He is about to warn them of the hatred that they will encounter in the world. The chapter begins with, "These things have I spoken unto you that ye should not be offended". The phrase "these things" would refer back to what the Lord had been telling them in chapter 15, and in particular what He had to say about the hatred of the world from verses 18 to 27. There He leaves them in no doubt. "If they have hated Me, they shall hate you also". The expression "these things" is repeated again no less than four times over in this opening section. It is in verse 3, in verse 4 (twice), and finally in verse 6. The Lord is holding back nothing, in case they would be offended by what was about to happen to them.

Even John the Baptist was stumbled or offended by his present circumstances. He had been sent by God to be the herald of the King and His kingdom. His hopes would be high that Messiah would soon be taking up His reign over all the earth, with Israel at the head of the nations. But soon, the King's herald finds himself in the dungeon of Herod and his life is in danger. Doubts begin to arise in the mind of John, and he sends messengers to ask the Lord Jesus, "Art Thou He that should come, or look we for another?" The prophet needs to be re-assured by proofs of the Lord's miracles. The Lord also sends a message back, "And blessed is he who shall not be offended in Me".

The hopes of the disciples would still be centred on the events of John chapter 12. Then they followed the Lord in triumphal procession into Jerusalem crying, "Behold thy King cometh". They thought that the Lord was about to take up His kingdom and they would reign with Him as part of that kingdom. Soon these hopes would be dashed. The disciples would be offended that very night. The Lord told them in the upper room, "All ye shall be offended because of Me this night". And His words were fulfilled when the disciples forsook Him and fled from Gethsemane. Peter would soon deny Him, and out of the twelve disciples, only John followed all the way to Calvary.

Think also of the two on the road to Emmaus. They were disappointed. Their hopes had been dashed. They complain to the stranger who joins them about Jesus of Nazareth. "We trusted it had been he who should have redeemed Israel". These two people are at a low spiritual ebb. They have a low appreciation of who the Lord is. To them He was but a prophet mighty in word and deed. They had heard about the empty tomb from the women, they had heard of what they described as a "vision of

angels", and also the empty tomb had been visited by some of their company, presumably Peter and John. And yet despite these facts, they had turned away from Jerusalem and headed home to Emmaus. No wonder then the Lord begins this section with, "These things have I spoken unto you that ye should not be offended". They did fail Him in the hours to follow but His ministry that follows is to comfort all His saints in every generation to come.

Worse is to come in verse 2. "They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service". There was nothing that a Jew would fear more than being put out of the synagogue. In John chapter 9, the parents of the man born blind, now healed by the Lord Jesus, were most reticent in their words. They could indeed testify that this was their son, and that he had been born blind. But by what means he could now see, they were not willing to discuss. Verse 22 of John 9 says, " These words spake his parents because they feared the Jews: for the Jews had agreed already, that if any man did confess that He was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue". There were others too who believed on the Lord Jesus but who would not confess Him openly for fear of the Jews. John 12:42 says, "Among the chief rulers also many believed on Him: but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue". Even worse than being excommunicated might follow. "Whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service". Saul of Tarsus is the prime example of these words. He thought he was doing the work of God and defending the truth of God by persecuting these hated followers of Jesus of Nazareth. He writes later in Phil 3:6, "Concerning zeal, persecuting the church". Even King Herod, after he had beheaded the apostle James, was minded to do the same to Peter, because he saw that it pleased the Jews.

This was the early history of the church but of course there has always been persecution from that day onwards. In the so-called dark ages, any who were true to Christ and the gospel found themselves being persecuted even to death. Think of the Spanish Inquisition when dissenters were tortured and murdered for their dissent. And it was all done in the name of God. The reason why men would do such things is given us in verse 3. "Because they have not known the Father, nor Me". The word for "known" in this verse comes from the Greek word "ginosko", which implies knowledge based upon a personal relationship. Hence we find it used in Matthew 7:23 when the Lord says about the professors of a future day, "And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you, depart from Me, ye that work iniquity". Thus the world will hate the disciples because they have no personal relationship with either the Father or the Son.

Thus we have the warning of verse 4. "These things have I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them". They should not be taken by surprise. There are two other similar verses containing similar warnings in John's gospel. The first of these we find in chapter 13:19. The Lord is starting to indicate that one of them shall betray Him. He makes the point, "Now I tell you before it come, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am He". Could you have imagined the thought that would have passed through the minds of the disciples had not the Lord mentioned the betrayal of Judas before the event. They would have said, "Judas deceived us, but did he deceive the Lord also. Was the Lord not able to see through the profession of Judas?". Thus it would have lessened their faith in the Lord Jesus. Similarly in verse 29 of chapter 14 when He is speaking of His imminent departure, He says, " And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe". Did the cross come as a complete surprise to the Lord?. Was He put there only by the wickedness of men? Surely, if He was God, He would have known about these things. These might have been the thoughts of the disciples, had He not said in chapter 14, "And now I have told you before it come to pass". So in chapter 16, the Lord warns His disciples about the world's hatred, lest they should be stumbled by

these warnings.

The Lord continues in verse 4. "And these things I said not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you". The true meaning is "from" the beginning. The Lord personally bore the brunt of the world's hatred, so to a large extent, the disciples were shielded from it. But once He has gone, the hatred of the world would focus on the disciples themselves. It would not have been right if the Lord had spoken of persecution and hatred from the beginning. As long as He was still with them, they had hope. It is only the imminence of His death that causes Him thus to speak.

This stuns the disciples into silence. "But now I go my way to Him that sent Me, and none of you asketh Me, whither goest thou?" "My way" for the Saviour meant of course the Cross with all its suffering and shame. The Lord was about to begin a journey from which there was no turning back. The Lord was obviously expecting a reply from them at this point. "None of you asketh Me, whither goest Thou". They had plenty of questions earlier as recorded in John 14. Thomas then said to Him, "Lord, we know not whither Thou goest, and how can we know the way?" But now in chapter 16, the disciples are shocked into silence. Sorrow had filled their heart.

In verse 7 however, words would follow that would seem absolutely unbelievable to the disciples, "Nevertheless I tell you the truth, it is expedient for you that I go away". The word "expedient" means profitable. Could it really be profitable for the disciples to be without the Lord. Surely they needed His presence above all things. We can understand Caiaphas using the word expedient in John 11. "It is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not". He was thinking only of himself and his position. The death of Christ was indeed an expedient for him in the modern sense of the word. But surely the Lord's going away could not be profitable for the disciples? Well the Lord goes on to explain why it was profitable for them. "If I go not away, the Comforter will not come to you: but if I depart, I will send Him unto you". They could not have both ie the presence of the Lord and the Comforter. God never allows two different ministries, two different messages, to be proclaimed at the same time. This was true of Elijah and Elisha. It was not until Elijah was taken up into heaven that the mantle of Elijah fell upon Elisha. The ministry of Elijah was almost entirely that of judgment, whereas that of Elisha was a mixture of grace and judgment. So too with John the Baptist - as soon as the work of the Lord came into prominence, the work of John ended. John came as the herald of the King: once the King appeared, the need for the herald was gone. So here in John 16, this verse marks a change of dispensation. When the Lord was still on earth, the nation was still under the law. The present dispensation is not only one of grace, it is also the dispensation of the Spirit of God. As Paul says in Philippians chapter 3, "we worship by the Spirit of God" and "rejoice in Christ Jesus". The Spirit is here on earth but the Lord has gone to heaven. It is because of this distinction between the earthly and the heavenly that Paul will suffer no different gospel to be preached among the Galatians. Such were preaching a gospel which was a mixture of grace and the law. A "different" gospel says Paul which is not another of the same kind. In Ephesians chapter 2, the middle wall of partition is broken down, removed by God, for God never allows two different messages to be preached simultaneously.

This divine distinction between two different ministries will also be apparent in a coming day. The Church today is preaching the gospel of the grace of God. God's witnesses among the nation of Israel will one day be preaching the gospel of the kingdom. Matthew 24:14 gives us one of the signs of His imminent return to earth:

Mt 24:14 And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.

God will see to it that both gospels will not be preached on earth at the same time,

therefore the Church will be raptured home to heaven before the gospel of the kingdom is preached.

At this point in time, however, the disciples would rather have the Lord with them, but the Lord now goes on to explain the reasons why. What He tells them is significant for us also. It is also profitable for us to have the Comforter rather than the Lord. Before we look at what the Comforter brings to us in chapter 16 of this gospel, it may be useful just to recount what the Lord has already said about the Comforter in this gospel. The first mention is in chapter 14:16. There He is described as "another Comforter". The word for "another" here is "another of the same kind". The Lord is saying, "I will send you another comforter who will be just like Me". In John 14:1, the Lord says, "Let not your heart be troubled". He is saying, "Just as I was able to give you comfort while I was with you, the One who comes will comfort you just like Me". The Greek word for "comforter" is "Paraklete" which means literally, "one called alongside to help". This is the work of this divine Person who is sent to comfort us.

But there is something else in John 14:16. "That He may abide with you for ever". Here was something that the greatest of Old Testament saints never knew ie that the Spirit would be with them for ever. In the O.T., the Spirit often came upon men for a limited period to accomplish a particular task. Thus we read of Bezaleel, the workman who built the tabernacle and its furniture, that the Spirit came upon him. Of him, God said, "I will fill him with the Spirit of God". Having come, however, there was no guarantee that He would stay. David for example prays thus, "Take not thy Holy Spirit from me (Psalm 51:11)". Thus the Christian today has more in this respect than OT saints, and at this moment in time in John 16, even more than the disciples had.

But there is more said about the Comforter in John 14:17. He is the Spirit of truth. In verse 26 of the same chapter, the Lord says of Him, "He shall teach you all things". What tremendous potential there is in these statements. It is limitless. It means that it is possible for us to understand the whole of God's revelation to us, from Genesis to Revelation. The only limitation is our own laziness, for if we give time to the Bible and its study, relying solely on the Spirit of truth, then He shall surely teach us all things. This is more than even the disciples knew when the Lord was with them. It is true that they could often go to Him for enlightenment eg the parable of the sower was later explained by the Lord in private, after they had asked Him, "Show us the meaning of this parable". There were however many words spoken by the Lord which were lost on the disciples. "These things understood not His disciples at the first, but after that He was risen, they remembered that He had spoken these things unto them". So it was in John 13. Peter thought that the feet washing was nothing more than a display of the Lord's humility, but the Lord says to Peter, "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter". Thus we today, with the Spirit, have more insight into divine truth than even the disciples had.

Something more is added in John 14:17. "He dwelleth with you and shall be in you". He not only dwells with us, collectively in the Church, but He dwells personally in each one of us.

The Lord says more about the Spirit in chapter 14:26. "He shall bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you". We see this fulfilled in a remarkable way by the writers of our four gospels. How many of us could remember in detail a conversation that took place yesterday. We could remember the gist of the conversation but scarcely word for word. John writes his gospel some sixty years after the death of Christ but see how many of the Saviour's words are recorded in chapters 13 through to 17. It could only be the Spirit working through John to bring all things to his remembrance.

This brings us now to chapter 16, and in verse 7 He says, "If I go not away, the

Comforter will not come unto you". The Lord is here saying that the coming of the Comforter is dependent upon His going away. The second event was dependent upon the first. It is this "exchange" of divine persons that is profitable for the disciples. They would be better off without Him than with Him, and that because of the Comforter. This marks a new phase in God's dealings with men. Under the law, God sent prophets and angels to speak to men. While the Lord was here, God was speaking through His Son. But now the Son is going back to heaven to begin new ministries for His saints. He was to be their Great High Priest, their Advocate, the Head of the Church. He could not be these things while still on earth. So in these ways, it is profitable for us. But He has not left us alone in the world, for here He promises to send another Comforter, another divine person, who shall be with us and in us for ever.

The Lord now goes on to tell us what will be the results of the Spirit with us on earth. "When He is come, He will reprove..." Notice first of all the personal pronoun "he". This proves to us the personality of the Holy Spirit. He is not just an influence, but a real person. No less than twelve times between verses 7 and 15 do we read of "he", "him", and "himself". We find the same words with regards to the Spirit in chapters 14 and 15 of this gospel. The Spirit is a real person.

He is also a divine person, part of the Trinity of the Godhead. This comes out in Acts chapter 5:3-4. Peter said to Ananias in verse 3, "Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost". Verse 4 then adds, "Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God". So the Holy Spirit is God. In Paul's epistles, we also learn that we can grieve the Spirit or offend the Spirit.

John in his first epistle, chapter 5:7, says, "There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one". The Spirit is on an equality with the Father and the Son.

Verse 8 adds, "He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgement". What does the Lord mean by these three things? Sin, righteousness, and judgement. Our understanding of this portion comes down to how we understand the verb translated in our AV as "reprove". We think of "reprove" as to rebuke. Others have translated the word as "to convince" or even "to convict". The Greek word is indeed translated by several English words in our AV. Thus we find convince, convict, reprove, rebuke. It always carries with it the idea of things being brought to light and thus exposed to judgement. Things are exposed by the word of God, by preaching, by our conscience. If we take the idea of convict, how does this stand up in our verse in John 16? He will convict the world of sin, of righteousness etc. As we look at the world around us, do we see the evidence that the world has been convicted of sin? We might well say, "Surely it is quite the reverse. In our day, the world seems to have no conscience of sin at all." They are lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God. But if our word means "to convict" then we would have to draw the conclusion that a divine Person has come into the world to do a work, and that this divine Person has failed. The Lord did not fail in His work. He says to the Father in John 17, "I have finished the work Thou gavest Me to do". Nor should we believe that the Spirit would fail in His. It is still true of course that the Spirit must work in a man's heart to convict him of sin and to bring him to salvation. In John chapter 3, the Lord said to Nicodemus, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God".

So if not to convict the world, what else did He do when He came into the world. It is noteworthy that in his New Translation, Mr Darby translates this expression as "He will make demonstration to the world of sin etc". The word carries with it the idea of making manifest or revealing. It is used for example in John 1. "Men love darkness rather than light, and will not come to the light, lest their deeds should be **reproved**". The word "reproved" here means revealed or manifested. If their deeds are

manifested by the light, then they are exposed to judgement. We can understand now Mr Darby's translation "make demonstration of". The important point in John 16:8 is not what the Spirit does when He comes into the world but rather what His **presence** demonstrates. A less clumsy translation of our verb might simply be "to expose". This is to bring something to light with a view to judgement being brought to bear upon it. If we use "expose", we might paraphrase the following verses as :

He will expose the world with regards to its sin, because they believe not on Me.
He will expose the world with regards to righteousness, for the Father has received into His presence the One whom the world refused.
He will expose the world with regards to judgement, for the prince of this world is judged.

All this would be of some consolation to the disciples about to experience the world's persecution. There might be days when the world seemed to have the upper hand, but the Spirit's presence on earth proves that the world is guilty with regards to sin, righteousness, and judgement. The world however does not see these things today, and that is why the Lord adds in verse 10, "I go to My Father, and ye see Me no more". The world is not looking out for Him, so this must be a word for us as believers.

We might well preface verses 8, 9, and 10 by three questions.

Before verse 8, we could ask, "Why has the Lord gone?"

Before verse 9, we could ask, "Where has the Lord gone to?"

Before verse 10, we could ask, "What is the result of His going?"

Verse 8 says, "Of sin, because they believe not on Me". In Acts chapter 2, the day of Pentecost, Peter says regarding the Lord Jesus, "He hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear". The presence of the Spirit that day was a proof that the Lord was now in heaven. It was the ascended Lord who sent the Spirit. But why was the Lord now in heaven? It was because of the great sin of this world. It had rejected the Lord Jesus. The mob outside Pilate's judgement hall cried, "Away with Him, crucify Him". The Lord has gone because the world rejected Him. The presence of the Comforter in this world is a manifestation of the sin of the world in rejecting the Lord. This answers the question, "Why has He gone?" Because of sin. "Because they believe not on Me".

Verse 9 says, "Of righteousness, because I go to My Father, and ye see Me no more". This answers the question, "Where has He gone?" The Lord has gone back to the Father. The Father in heaven has received the One whom the world rejected as being unworthy. The world called Him a blasphemer (Mark 2:7), a sinner (John 9:24), and a deceiver (Matt 27:63). But the Bible says of the Lord Jesus, "Whom the heavens must receive". The life of the Lord Jesus demanded that heaven must receive Him. It is because of what He has done in His life and death that Paul says in Phil 2, "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him". Every knee should bow, every tongue should confess... "Not "shall" but "should" ie there is a moral necessity that this should be done to Him. So the Lord's presence in heaven, as evidenced by the Spirit's presence here, is a demonstration of the righteousness of God in giving such a place to Christ. God has justified His Son.

Verse 10 says, "Of judgement, because the prince of this world is judged". We see now what is the result of the Spirit's presence. His presence demonstrates the fact that the world is judged. The proof of the world's judgement is that the prince of this world is judged. If the Spirit is here, it is proof that the Lord is now in heaven. His very presence there proves that the devil has been judged. In Hebrews chapter 2, we read concerning the Lord Jesus, "through death, He might destroy (render powerless) him that had the power of death, that is the devil". It is evident that up to the time of the Lord's death, the devil had the power to keep in the grave all who had died. That

is why some think that Michael had to contend with the devil for the body of Moses before that Moses could appear in a glorified body with the Lord on the Holy Mount. (see the epistle of Jude).

When the Lord died and was buried in the grave, one can imagine that Satan would use all his power to keep the Lord there. If Christ be not risen, our faith is in vain. We are yet in our sins (I Cor 15). But the Lord did rise, and in so doing, he rendered powerless him who had the power of death. Satan's power is broken. The prince of this world is judged. The sentence has been passed but not yet carried out. In Rev 12, he will be cast out of heaven down to earth. At the end of the Tribulation, he will be confined to the Bottomless Pit. After a thousand he will be loosed to lead one final rebellion against God. But it will be in vain, and finally he will be cast into the Lake of Fire. If the prince of this world is judged, then so also is the world itself. The sentence has been passed but is not yet carried out.

One might well ask, "If all this is true because of the Spirit's presence in the world, then why doesn't the world believe His testimony". Going back to John 14:17, the Lord says of the Spirit, "Whom the world cannot receive". It is impossible for the world to receive Him, "Because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him". The world cannot believe in someone it cannot see. But we see Him, hence we believe what the Spirit demonstrates by His presence. We do the same regarding the Lord each time we break bread. We show forth the Lord's death till we come. We demonstrate by what we do each time we gather for the Lord's supper, that the man who died upon the Cross was indeed the Lord Himself. To whom do we show forth this fact? Surely not to the world for they pay scant attention to us. Is it not rather to God that we are declaring week by week that we own His Son as Lord?

The Lord had many more things He could have said to them but He says, "Ye cannot bear them now". He realised their lack of understanding at that point. He knew also of the further revelation that would be given when the Holy Spirit took up men like Paul to reveal more fully the mind of God at a later date. Every Christian has unlimited potential to understand divine truth. Only we ourselves can limit that potential. The Corinthians had great limitations imposed by their own carnality as seen in their divisions. In I Cor 3:2, Paul writes, "I have fed you with milk and not with meat: for hitherto, ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able". He thus was constrained from teaching them further the deeper things of God". The Hebrews also imposed limitations upon themselves. In Hebrews 5:12, the writer says, "Ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God, and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat". They had limited themselves by having a desire to return to the old things of the law and not moving on to true Christian ground.

We are therefore told more about the Spirit of truth in verses 13 to 15. Again the Lord says of Him, "He will guide you into all truth". How does this come about? Is there something mystical about it? It is rather through reading the word of God and meditating upon it that the Spirit is able to do His work. How are we to understand the truth of the Great Mystery of Ephesians 3? Well Paul tells us. "When ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of the Christ". The understanding of prophecy often seems to be too difficult for us. The Lord for example speaks of the "abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet". How can we understand such a thing? The Lord says, "Whoso readeth, let him understand". The earnest student of the Bible will know something of the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

We can see an illustration of the Spirit's work in Acts chapter 8, the experience of the Ethiopian eunuch. He is reading the scriptures, the book of Isaiah. He is an earnest seeker after truth and he has come all the way to Jerusalem to find it. Someone then joins him in the desert, Philip. Philip is the illustration here of the Spirit. The eunuch

makes room for Philip in his chariot. Philip asks, "Understandest thou what thou readest?" The man replies, "How can I except some man should guide me". He is reading, he is searching, he is asking questions. And the result, "Philip began at the same scripture and preached unto him Jesus." The last we hear of him, he went on his way rejoicing for he had found greater treasure than that of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians. Do spiritual discoveries excite us in the same way?

It is amazing how, in the words that now follow, there is a distinct resemblance between the Spirit's work in relation to the Son, and the Son's work in relation to the Father. Firstly, we read, He shall not speak of Himself". "Of Himself" does not mean about Himself, but rather from Himself as to the source of His teaching. He will not come to express His own mind and will but rather that of the Son. He is the listener to divine conversations and whatever He hears, He will speak. This is also said of the Lord Jesus when speaking of the Father, "I have given unto them the words Thou gavest Me (John 17)". This was the Lord's work in John chapter 1, "The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him". The Lord has come to reveal the Father. There is therefore a cascade of divine truth. The Son reveals the Father and the Spirit reveals the Son.

Something else is added at the end of verse 13. "He will show you things to come". We give up too easily in our study of "things to come". It is all far too difficult for us, so we say. But within each one of us, there dwells the Spirit of truth who is longing to teach us. In I Peter 1:10-12, Peter speaks of how the Spirit of Christ who was in the prophets spoke before of the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow. In the New Testament men like Paul, Peter, and John wrote of things to come. And we who read their writings can rely upon the Spirit of truth to teach us things to come.

Further, the Lord adds in verse 14, "He shall glorify Me, for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you". We see a lovely example of the Spirit's work in the experience of Simeon in Luke chapter 2, 25 to 27. The Spirit is mentioned no less than three times. In verse 25, "the Holy Spirit was upon him". In verse 26, "it was revealed unto him by the Holy Spirit", and in verse 27, "he came by the Spirit into the temple". The Spirit led him to the child Jesus and he glorified the child in his blessing that follows. Another illustration of this work of the Spirit is seen in Genesis 24:53. "The servant brought forth jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment, and gave them unto Rebekah. The servant was giving her but a foretaste of some of the wealth of his master's son. Such things would endear the heart of Rebekah to Isaac as she approached through the desert".

When reading the gospels, we might well think that the Lord Jesus had no wealth at all. He had nowhere to lay down His head, He had to borrow a penny to make His point about Caesar. We might then think He has nothing. But in verse 15, the Lord says, "All things that the Father are mine". Everything that belonged to the Father also belonged to the Son, and vice-versa. In Phil chapter 4, Paul wrote, "My God shall supply all your need, according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus". In Ephesians 3, Paul speaks about preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ. The word "unsearchable" is not simply "unexplored" but "unexplorable". Parts of this planet may remain unexplored but men will get there one day. The things of Christ are unexplorable. Paul was an old man when he wrote that the great ambition of his life was still to "know Him".

In verses 14 and 15, we read that the Spirit will receive "of mine" and take "of mine". It does not say He shall take mine. "Of" is EK, "out of". Even the Spirit cannot exhaust the riches of Christ.

Again in verse 15, there is a cascading down not just of words but "all things". "All things that the Father hath are mine, therefore said I, that He shall take of mine, and

shall show it unto you". In Christianity there is an unveiling of divine persons such as there never has been before. What an honoured place we have in divine purpose.

Throughout this part of John's gospel, from chapter 13 through to chapter 17, the Lord is speaking about His going away. He is not hiding anything from them but giving them the realities of what will take place within the following 24 hours and beyond. The hopes of the disciples had been raised in John 12 as they followed Him in triumphal procession into Jerusalem. Now, in the next few hours, these hopes would seem to be dashed, so the Lord is preparing their hearts for event of His death.

In verse 16, He speaks of two "little whiles". 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". In a few hours from then, He would be taken from them and they would not see Him. But this period of His absence would be brief. Again, a little while, and ye shall see Me. In three days, He would rise again, and they would see Him. In John chapter 7, the Lord said to an unbelieving audience of Jews in Jerusalem, "Ye shall seek Me and shall not find Me". To His own, however, He says in John 13, "Little children, ye shall seek Me....." He does not add, "And shall not find Me". For when He rose again, He did re-appear, not to unbelieving men, but to those women at the tomb, to the disciples, and the two on the Emmaus road. Hence the words of Ch 16:16 were to be fulfilled, "And ye shall see Me". The verse ends with the reason why they would see Him again – "Because I go to the Father". The 40 days during which the Lord remained on earth between His resurrection and His ascension were but a brief interlude. He stayed long enough to show Himself to those many witnesses that He had indeed risen. The Bible speaks of them as those "to whom He showed Himself alive after His passion by many infallible proofs.

In verses 17 and 18, we read of how His words were received by the disciples. They didn't understand the meaning of these "little whiles". In many ways, we today are more favoured even than the disciples were when following the Lord. We have the full word of God in our hands, and the Spirit of truth within to teach us. Not so the disciples who were often puzzled by the words of the Lord Jesus. This is another example here.

The disciples wanted to ask the Lord what He meant, but they couldn't seem to find the words to express their thoughts. The Lord who knew the minds of all knew what they desired to ask. It is yet another of those many examples in this gospel of the Lord's omniscience. He could read the minds of the disciples and even knew the question that they would have liked to ask. In verse 19, however, time was short on this last night, so the Lord asks the question for them and then proceeds to answer it in verses 20 to 24.

The Lord now speaks not only of sorrow in the next section but also of joy. Joy is mentioned no less than four times in the verses that follow. This is all the more strange when one thinks of the then present sorrow of the disciples. The four occurrences are :-

Verse 20. Your sorrow shall be turned into joy.

Verse 21 The joy of the woman after childbirth.

Verse 22 Your joy no man taketh from you

Verse 24 That your joy may be full

Verse 20 says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, that ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice". This refers to the first "little while". The scripture draws a veil over the disciples during the three days between His death and His resurrection. Only in Mark 16:10 do we read that Mary Magdalene left the tomb having met the risen Lord and went to tell the disciples. "And she went and told them that had been with Him, as they mourned and wept". It had been a dreadful three days for them. Perhaps it is

just as well that we read nothing more for they had a great deal to mull over in this time.

Judas, one of their own, had betrayed the Lord to the chief priests, and now Judas himself was dead. What a shock to the other 11 for Judas had deceived them all. Why did they not see through him? Had they been too gullible themselves?

Peter would still be hanging his head in shame, scarcely believing that he had denied his Lord three times over before a servant maid and with oaths and curses too. Had he not been so self-confident in that upper room and had the Saviour not warned him? How is it that his courage left him so quickly?

Had they not **all** forsaken the Lord in Gethsemane and left Him to His fate? They would all be feeling their guilt. Of the twelve who began, only John was present at Calvary to be with the Lord in His sufferings.

And where was **Thomas** during these three days? He certainly was not with the disciples when the Lord appeared to them the first time. Had he abandoned not only the Lord but the other disciples also?

And were they not all still hiding in fear, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, when the Lord appeared to them as we have it in John 20?

Truly, the Lord's words were fulfilled, "Ye shall weep and lament". Mary Magdalene came also and wept at the tomb. Both the angels and the Lord ask her, "Woman, why weepest thou?". But only the Lord asks the second question, "Whom seekest thou?". The two on the Emmaus road walked and were sad. They felt let down. They were disappointed. "We trusted it had been He which should have delivered Israel".

Yes, the three days were days of weeping and lamenting. But not so for the Lord's enemies. "The world shall rejoice". The rejoicing began that first occasion when Judas walked into the room and offered to betray the Lord. Their problem had been, how to take Him in the absence of the multitude. Now the problem is solved. Mark 14:10-11 says, "They were **glad** and promised to give him money". And once the Lord had been taken into custody, He had to endure the cruel mockery of the High Priest's servants, then of Herod and his men, and finally of the soldiers of Pilate. And there was no let up at Calvary when the people, the rulers, the soldiers, and even initially the two thieves all mocked the Saviour. The world was glad because they thought that they had seen the last of this Jesus of Nazareth.

So, the events about to unfold would bring sorrow to the disciples but joy to the world. But then the second "little while" comes in. After the three days were over, the sorrow of the disciples would be turned into joy. The joy was experienced first by those women who came to the tomb. They not only found it empty but they heard the angelic message, "He is not here: He is risen". Matthew 28:8 says of the women, "They departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and **great joy**. The two who had been with the Lord on the Emmaus road said at the end of the day, "Did not our heart burn with us while He talked with us by the way?". And what of the disciples themselves when the Lord first appeared in that room? "Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord". Sad hearts became **glad** hearts.

In verse 21, the Lord now makes a comparison between a woman giving birth and what would soon be the experience of the disciples. "A woman when she is 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". The joy of having the son makes her forget the pain of child birth. The sorrow is quickly turned to joy. This was soon to be the experience of the disciples.

We note the strong contrast between the words of the Saviour here and the words of Paul in I Thess 5. Paul is speaking about the day of the Lord, the day of God's

judgement upon an ungodly world. Then Paul writes, "Sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape". There will be no joy for the world when their sorrow comes.

Verse 22 tells the disciple why they would be joyful. "But I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice". Moreover, it is said of this joy, "Your joy no man taketh from you". This is not therefore the joy that depends upon circumstances. Nothing that men would do would remove this joy. This we find, for example, in Acts 5:40,41. The apostles have been put into prison, then beaten, and commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus. How did they respond? "They departed....rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name". In Acts 16, Paul and Silas are in prison this time in Philippi. They had many stripes laid upon them, then they are thrust into prison and their feet made fast in the stocks. Did Paul and Silas lose heart? "At midnight, Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises unto God". And what about Paul on his own? The epistle to the Philippians might almost be entitled, "Joy from the jail". The words "joy", "rejoice", and "rejoicing" occur no less than 17 times in the four chapters. Of these 17 times, 8 refer to the joy of Paul himself. How can Paul rejoice when he is in prison, and his very life is in danger? Let's look at the reasons for Paul's joy.

1. The gospel being preached

Chapter 1:18. "Christ is preached, and I therein do rejoice". Many, presumably Judaisers, were preaching Christ out of envy and strife, supposing to add affliction to his bonds. They had it in for Paul, seeking to add to his bonds. But how does Paul react ?. "Christ is preached and I therein do rejoice".

2. The fellowship of the saints

This fellowship took many forms.

- a. Fellowship in the gospel

Chapter 1:4,5 "Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy. For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now"
It is good when the very thought of fellow saints would bring joy to our hearts. This was the experience of Paul as he prayed for the saints. He remembered especially the fellowship he had enjoyed with them in the gospel.

- b. The joy of Christian unity

Chapter 2:2 "Fulfill ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love...". There is nothing that brings so much sadness as disunity and disharmony. Paul though could rejoice in the unity of the saints at Philippi. Is unity an important issue for the Lord Jesus? In John 17 the Lord prays no less than five times for the unity of the saints. Unity comes, not by hiding our differences, but by the activity of gifted men in the church. Evangelists, pastors, and teachers are all given to us until we arrive at the unity of the faith. We start growing up unto Him who is the head, and unity is a by-product of our pre-occupation with Him.

- c. Joy in the service of others

Chapter 2:16 "Holding forth the word of life, that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain".

Paul writes the same thing about the Thessalonians. I Thess 2:19 reads, "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? " This joy would be fully realised at the judgement seat of Christ when Paul would look on with joy and pleasure as the saints would receive their reward. Their reward would be his joy. But I am sure that Paul would enjoy something of this joy in his earthly life.

The Philippians did not even have to be doing anything to bring joy to Paul. In Chapter 4:1, he writes, "Therefore, my brethren, dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown". Paul could take pride in these saints and they were a constant source of joy to him.

d. The joy that came from their gift to him

Chapter 4:10 "But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at the last your care of me hath flourished"

3. Joy in his own service

Chapter 2:17 "Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all". For Paul, it was a joy and a privilege to serve the Lord Jesus. It entailed enormous pain and suffering for him, but was still a great joy for him.

4. Joy in the Lord

Chapter 3:3. Paul says that we "rejoice in Christ Jesus". His joy was in the exalted man in glory. Paul also wants the saints to enjoy this same joy. "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice".

Apart from the experiences of the apostles, and Paul in particular, what other joys are there in the New Testament that no man can take from us? In Luke chapter 10, we have another two. The Lord tells His disciples in this chapter, "Rejoice rather that your names are written in heaven". They came back rejoicing in their service, which was good, but service has to stand up to the fire of the judgement seat of Christ (I Cor 3). But here is a joy that no man can take away - the joy of knowing that our salvation is secure, for our names are written, not just on a church roll, but in heaven itself.

In the same chapter, Luke 10, we have the joy of the Lord Himself. "In that hour, Jesus rejoiced in spirit and said, I thank Thee, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent and hast revealed unto babes". This is the only time in the gospels that the Man of Sorrows was known to rejoice. It was a source of joy to Him that the Father was revealing His ways to His own. I wonder if we ever have the joy of God revealing His ways to us ?

Returning again to John 16, the Lord now introduces the subject of prayer. "And in that day, ye shall ask Me nothing". The Lord has already spoken of prayer in John 14:13. "And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son". In chapter 14, it is answered prayer leading to the Father being glorified. Now in chapter 16, answered prayer will be a cause of further joy. Verse 24 will conclude with, "that your joy may be full". After His departure, their prayers would take on a new dimension. He would no longer be physically present with them. No longer could they ask Him directly for things. Now their prayers would be directed towards the Father in His name. This is now the pattern of prayer for this age. Up till then, they had asked nothing in His name. Now the Saviour says, "Ask and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full". This is the fourth and final joy of this particular section of John 16. Who could imagine the joy of Elisabeth and Zacharias in Luke chapter 1 when Gabriel says to Zacharias, "Thy prayer is heard: thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son". Think too of the joy of the early Church in Acts 4. They asked for two things in their prayer - for boldness to speak the word and also for signs and wonders to be done. The latter request was granted first for the whole building was shaken and they were filled with the Holy Spirit. The second answer came next, for "they spake the word of God with boldness".

In Acts 12:5 we read, "Peter therefore was kept in prison, but prayer was made without ceasing of the Church of God for him". The prayer was answered and Peter was released, even if the saints were slow to realise that their prayer had been met.

And what would bring joy to us in prayer - would it not be in knowing that we have a Father in heaven who not only hears our prayers but answers them. It would be a real boost to our faith – sadly perhaps a joy we know not enough of.

In verse 25, the Lord promises greater clarity in His revelation to them. Truth would no longer be veiled in proverbs or parables. Most of the parables were spoken, not for the disciples, but for the men of the world. Now that the Spirit was about to come, and the complete word of God was to be given, Christians would be able to speak plainly of the Father.

In verse 26, He speaks again of asking in my name. Then He adds, "And I say not unto you that I shall pray the Father for you". Does this contradict what the Hebrew writer says of the Lord in chapter 7. "He ever liveth to make intercession for us". No, the Lord does continue to pray for us, but in John 16, He is opening up a new avenue to us in prayer. We do not **need** Him to pray for us, and verse 27 gives us the reason why – "For the Father Himself loveth you". The Father will respond to our prayers because He loves us. Not just the Lord but the Father also loves us. And why does the Father love us? "Because ye have loved Me, and have believed that I came out from God". It is because of our love for the Son and our faith in Him, that the Father will answer our prayers.

Another reason is given in verse 28. We could well paraphrase this verse, "He came into the world to bring the Father to us. Now He is leaving the world to bring us to the Father". The Father is a much more intimate relationship than that of God. "God" speaks of His holiness and righteousness and Glory, but "Father" speaks of love and affection and nearness. It is only on that first day of His resurrection that the Lord brings us into a full relationship with the Father. He says to Mary Magdalene, "Go tell my brethren, I ascend unto my Father and your Father: to my God and your God". The Lord had before spoken of the Lord as His friends but now in John 20, they are His brethren. The idea of God being a Father to them was unknown to the Jews. Only a man like David, who in many ways rose above the law because of his intimate knowledge of God, ever entered into the thought. In Psalm 89:26, The Lord says about David, "He shall cry unto Me, Thou art my Father, my God, and the rock of my salvation".

The disciples now profess greater knowledge. "We believe that Thou camest forth from God". The Lord replies however that they would soon be scattered and leave Him alone. This was fulfilled a short while later when they abandoned Him in Gethsemane. Yet He was not alone, for the Father was with Him. On the Cross, the Lord prayed, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me". God forsook Him because he was the great sin bearer. But the Father did not forsake Him ever. "He that sent Me is with Me : the Father hath not left Me alone".

Very soon, without an hour or two, the peace of the disciples would be shattered. They would enter a period of turmoil as their Lord was taken from them. Yet the Lord promises them, "In me ye shall have peace". As we come into the New Testament epistles, we read of peace with God through justification by faith (Romans ch 5), and the peace of God which comes through prayer (Phil 4). Soon they would experience tribulation, but His final word in this chapter is, "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world". We are on the winning side.