

# John – An In-Depth Study

## [Part 18]

**John 16:1-4** [NIV] *“All this I have told you so that you will not go astray. They will put you out of the synagogue; in fact, a time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is offering a service to God. They will do such things because they have not known the Father or me. I have told you this, so that when the time comes you will remember that I warned you. I did not tell you this at first because I was with you.”*

By the time that the apostle John wrote this gospel account of Jesus’ life [approx. AD85] it was inevitable that some Christians should fall away because persecution had struck the Church.

Unbelievers and fearful are condemned in **Revelation 21:8** and are not in good company.

**2 Peter 2:21-22** [NIV] *“It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than to have known it and then to turn their backs on the sacred command that was passed on to them. Of them the proverbs are true: ‘A dog returns to its vomit,’ and, ‘A sow that is washed goes back to her wallowing in the mud.’”*

For Peter to give this warning means that some must have been thinking of leaving the Church because of the pressure of persecution.

Jesus tells us of two ways in which true Christians would be persecuted.

**Excommunication from synagogue** – For a Jew that was a very hard fate. Some rabbis taught that prayers were ineffective unless offered in a synagogue.

Most of the Jewish Christians were simple folk and needed the fellowship of other human beings. To be ostracised in this way meant that all doors were shut against them and people were reluctant even to trade with them.

Sometimes loneliness among other human beings is the price we pay for fellowship with God.

**People would consider it God’s Will to murder Christians** – Saul [later named Paul] is a prime example of this misguided zeal for God. [**Acts 8:3; Acts 26:9-11**]

This is still happening in parts of the world today.

**The nations where it is happening are increasing in number as Satan-influenced religions are seeking to destroy all Christianity.**

**John 16:5-11** [NIV] *“Now I am going to him who sent me, yet none of you asks me, ‘Where are you going?’ Because I have said these things, you are filled with grief. But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counsellor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me; in regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.”*

Although the disciples had asked Jesus about His going [**John 13:36; John 14:5**] they had never wondered about its meaning. They were more concerned about themselves.

If Jesus went away what would happen to them?

In spite of His own impending pain and sorrow Jesus shows Himself deeply sensitive to the disciples' feelings.

The answer once again lies in the promise of the Counsellor [Holy Spirit].

Unless Jesus did what He came to do, there would be **no** removal of the penalty of our sins.

Unless Jesus rose from the dead He could **not** defeat death.

Unless Jesus went back to the Father, the Holy Spirit could **not** come.

Christ on earth, as the physical Son of Man, was limited to one place at one time.

The Holy Spirit is **not** limited in this way. He can be present anywhere at any time, all at the same time. [Psalms 139:7-16]

Jesus then outlines the work that the Holy Spirit will do on earth when He comes.

a) Convince people of their sins and the eternal outcome if they do **not** repent and accept Jesus as their Saviour.

b) Show people where righteousness that is acceptable to God comes from, for our own is **not** acceptable to God. [Isaiah 64:6]

The righteousness that is acceptable, is the righteousness of Jesus Christ, credited to us through our faith and trust in what Christ has done for all humanity. [Romans 4:13, 16, 18-24]

c) To constantly remind all humans that they face the judgement of Jesus Christ. [2 Corinthians 5:10; Romans 14:10-12]

With this assurance of the Holy Spirit's activity, the disciples need not fear what lay in store for them.

**John 16:12-15** [NIV] *"I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you."*

**This section of scripture deals with another aspect of the work the Holy Spirit will do.**

Jesus' very short ministry and teaching of the disciples He was leaving behind to continue the work among humanity, was far too limited, so this work would be continued by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is referred to as the Spirit of Truth just as Jesus claimed to be the truth [John 14:6] and is also given the title Spirit of Christ. [Romans 8:9]

It is also the Holy Spirit that inspired all scripture. [2 Peter 1:20-21]

**John 16:16-22** [NIV] *"In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me." 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'?" They kept asking, "What does he mean by 'a little while'? We don't understand what he is saying." 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'? I tell you the truth, you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices. You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy. 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. 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."*

The lack of understanding that the disciples still had is again expressed for as yet the Holy Spirit had **not** opened their minds.

Truth and hence understanding is **not** something that humans can discover, it is God's gift to us.

**Truth is what the Holy Spirit brings to us from God.**

Truth is **not** something which we create by the process of our mind, it is something already waiting for us to discover.

Truth is something we appropriate, but do **not** create, it is received through a union of the Holy Spirit and our human spirit. [Job 32:8; Proverbs 20:27; 1 Corinthians 2:9-14]

Again we see the contrast between the disciples and the rest of the world. The grief and the rejoicing at the death of Jesus Christ, both the disciples and the world being ignorant of what was happening.

**John 16:23-28** [NIV] *"In that day you will no longer ask me anything. I tell you the truth, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete. 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. In that day you will ask in my name. I am not saying that I will ask the Father on your behalf. No, the Father himself loves you because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God. I came from the Father and entered the world; now I am leaving the world and going back to the Father."*

Jesus is talking about a new relationship with God for every believer in Him.

**Previously people approached God through physical priests. After Jesus' resurrection, any believer could approach God directly. A new day has dawned for all humanity.**

**Hebrews 10:19-23** [NIV] *"Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful."*

The most holy place in the temple was sealed from sight by a curtain. Only the high priest could enter this holy place, and he did it only once a year on the Day of Atonement when he offered a sacrifice for the nation's sins. But Jesus' death removed this curtain, and now all believers have access to God's presence in the most holy place. [Matthew 27:51; Mark 15:38]

**We approach God, not because of our own merit, but because Jesus, our great High Priest, has made us acceptable to God.**

**John 16:29-33** [NIV] *"Then Jesus' disciples said, 'Now you are speaking clearly and without figures of speech. 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.' 'You believe at last!' Jesus answered. 'But a time is coming, and has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home. You will leave me all alone. Yet I am not alone, for my Father is with me. 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.'"*

The concluding section reveals a further case of inadequate understanding on the part of the disciples. They thought they understood, but Jesus has again to make them aware of their coming failure to support Him. [Mark 14:50]

Jesus gives a reassurance to them on the ground of His victory over the world. Jesus regards His work as if it were already complete [the perfect tense is used.]

Jesus is telling us that the victory over death He was about to fulfil with His death followed by His resurrection, can be our victory also over death. [**Romans 6:1-11**]

**John 17:1-5** [NIV] *“After Jesus said this, he looked towards heaven and prayed: ‘Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.’”*

The entire chapter is Jesus’ prayer.

This prayer is divided into three sections –

**Jesus’ prayer for Himself** – The main theme of this prayer is glory. The glory that Jesus brought to the Father by His dedication to fulfil all that the Father had asked of Him. The glory that the Father gave to Jesus by granting Him all authority over the completion of the plan for humanity that was devised before any physical creation happened. [**Genesis 1:26-27**]

Eternal life is given to all humans who qualify, by their already desiring to have a relationship with God as their Father.

Eternal life will allow Christians, God’s created children, an opportunity to have an even more intimate relationship with the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ.

The pre-existence of Jesus is mentioned again as He comes near to the end of His physical existence on earth.

The pre-existence of Jesus the Christ is where John started his record of the life and words of our Saviour. [**John 1:1-14**]

Jesus’ resurrection and ascension together with the vision given to the dying Stephen [**Acts 7:56**] attest that Jesus did return to His exalted position at the right hand of God the Father.

**John 17:6-19** [NIV] *“I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word. Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me. I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours. All I have is yours, and all you have is mine. And glory has come to me through them. I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one. While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled. I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them. I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.”*

**Jesus’ prayer for His disciples** – The Greek translated “you” is “*ōmōma*” meaning name, authority and character.

This was in contrast to the Jewish refusal to pronounce the name of Yahweh. The disciples of Jesus had learnt to use the name Father, which gives us a guide to the more intimate relationship that God wants to have with us as His created children.

Jesus mentioned that the disciples whom God the Father had chosen for Jesus to teach, had obeyed His word, in contrast to the vast majority who had rejected His teaching.

The disciples' acceptance of the message Jesus had brought from the Father and He being the messenger from the Father, was very important to Jesus. It is the hallmark of a disciple of Jesus.

This prayer was for the disciples specifically, **not** the world in general, that was still under the influence of Satan. [**2 Corinthians 4:4**]

Again the idea of gift and possession of the disciples is emphasised as well as the fact that the obedient disciples brought glory to Jesus.

We all have to ask the question, does our life bring glory to Jesus our Saviour? [**Matthew 5:16**]

It is because the disciples were left in an adverse environment that this prayer for protection is vital.

The power of the name is the unity of that name, the unity of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

The unity of Christians standing together in the name of God is the power that protects them from the destructive power of evil in this world. [**Ecclesiastes 4:12; Revelation 12:11**]

The prayer then turns to past achievements and future prospects.

Jesus claims the secure faithfulness of the disciples, except for Judas. The Greek translated "perdition" [King James] or "doomed to destruction" is "apōlēia" indicating a loss of wellbeing and a waste of opportunity, especially in the case of Judas Iscariot who lost his proper destiny. [Download and study our article under 'Judas Iscariot' under main heading 'Ancestors'.]

The future prospect for the disciples is one of joy, fulfilled in their future life as Jesus' disciples.

Notice that Jesus' joy was indicated by the word "my", this was Jesus Christ's approach to the sacrifice He was about to make on the cross. [**Hebrews 12:2**]

If we are, as disciples of Jesus Christ, willing to become "living sacrifices" for Jesus Christ, we also will experience this inner joy that nothing else can ever give us [**Romans 12:1-2**] when Jesus refers to have given His disciples God's Word, that includes the commission to take that word to all the world. [**Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 1:8**]

The truth that the disciples were to preach to the world would sanctify, set them apart from the world to fulfil the will of God.

The truth, God's Word [**John 17:17**] also purifies us as it works on our thoughts and actions [**Hebrews 4:12**] making us more acceptable to God.

There is a close correspondence between the mission of Jesus and of the disciples, the determination to complete the work of redemption and salvation of all humanity.

**John 17:20-26** [NIV] *"My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory,*

*the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world. Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them.”*

**Jesus prays for the Church** – Two great characteristics of Jesus are in this passage of scripture are displayed.

Jesus’ complete faith and certainty in fulfilling the commission given to Him by the Father.

Jesus’ complete confidence in His disciples, even when at that time they did **not** fully understand Him and His mission.

**The unity that Jesus was praying for was not ecclesiastical unity, but a unity of personal relationship with God the Father, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.**

A union of love and obedience, that Jesus is still working to strengthen as our High Priest at God the Father’s side.

The prayer then extends to Jesus’ second coming when all Christians will be able to look on the glory of Jesus Christ.

The prayer ends with a promise that Jesus will continue to work with them as they make known to the world the great Creator God.

Directly after this prayer Jesus faced betrayal, the trial and the cross.

It is a wonderful thing to remember that before those terrible hours of pain and humiliation Jesus’ last words were **not** of despair but of glory and confidence in the future.