



# Believe

JOHN

MESSAGE

STUDY GUIDE

GROUP MATERIAL

SONGS

## Community Group Material:

*Bible Reading: Jn. 17:1-5*

**John 16:16, 19-24, 33 CSB** “In a little while, you’ll no longer see me; again in a little while, you’ll see me.”

19 Jesus knew they wanted to ask him, and so he said to them, “Are you asking one another about what I said, ‘In a little while, you will not see me; again in a little while, you will see me’? 20 Truly I tell you, you will weep and mourn, but the world will rejoice. You will become sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn to joy. 21 When a woman is in labor, she has pain because her time has come. But when she has given birth to a child, she no longer remembers the suffering [‘tribulation’] because of the joy that a person has been born into the world. 22 So you also have sorrow now. But I will see you again. Your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy from you. 23 “In that day you will not ask me anything. Truly I tell you, anything you ask the Father in my name, he will give you. 24 Until now you have asked for nothing in my name. Ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be complete... 33 I have told you these things so that in me you may have peace. You will have suffering [‘tribulation’] in this world. Be courageous! I have conquered the world.” (Jn 16:16, 19-24, 33)

**SUMMARY:** In his farewell address, Jesus forewarns his disciples of fleeting sorrow followed by joy, analogous to the joy of childbirth outweighing its preceding pain. Yet, a conspicuous absence emerges – John lacks the Synoptics’ prophetic warnings of apocalyptic events like war, famine, death, the Great Tribulation, & the Antichrist. Jewish writings also affirm there will be a final tribulation period before the Age to Come. What explains John’s glaring omission? Upon exploration, Jesus’ childbirth analogy subtly references messianic birth pains predicted by OT prophets. Jesus saw his imminent ordeal as an integral part of the Great Tribulation. Under the lens of John’s ‘realized eschatology,’ Scriptures’ end-time prophecies are reinterpreted in terms of Jesus’ passion, so, in his crucifixion Christ absorbs the Great Tribulation, vicariously shouldering ‘messianic woes’ & freeing followers from End-time wrath. This perspective liberates Christians from anxiety about apocalyptic events and fixation with prophetic timelines. For us there’s no looming ‘mega-tribulation’; despite

enduring trials, believers find courage in Jesus' triumph over Satan, sin, and suffering. We can stand courageously in Christ's victory, experiencing solace amid life's challenges.

### QUESTIONS:

1. Comparing John with the other Gospels, it's evident that "John possesses no equivalent to Mark 13 [Jesus' 'Olivet Discourse']. What reasons/factors might explain John's "glaring omission"? Discuss
2. "The Great Tribulation" is important in both OT & NT prophecies. It's mentioned in Rev. 7:14 and Rev. 3:10 ('the hour of trial'), plus it's described in the Synoptics: "For those will be days of tribulation, the kind that hasn't been from the beginning of creation until now & never will be again." (Mk. 13:19). What is your understanding of "the Great Tribulation"? Discuss. (Help group-members who are not so familiar.)
3. When you read John 16:16, 19-24 in isolation, as a 'stand-alone piece,' does Jesus appear to be...
  - a. ...simply warning his disciples that their brief sorrow will soon be turned to joy? Or
  - b. Could Jesus' words have a more profound meaning? If so, what is it? Discuss.
4. Now consider the Jn. passage and the following OT context: "This [Child-birth] metaphor [has] theological meaning. The arrival of the Messianic 'Age to Come' is portrayed as a woman in labor... Thus...Isaiah, declares:
  - o "Wail! For the Day of the Lord is near. It'll come as destruction from the Almighty. Therefore everyone's hands will become weak, & every man will lose heart. They'll be horrified; pain & agony will seize them; they will be in anguish like a woman in labor. They'll look at each other... [in] fear." (Isaiah 13:6-8 cf. other OT examples)
  - o In John 16:20-22 "Jesus is speaking of the travail & with it the sorrow, of the coming of the Messianic age. But with the arrival of the day of the Lord there'll be rejoicing..." –Thomas Weinandy
5. Against this Jewish OT background, do Jesus' words take on a more profound meaning? What is it? Discuss
6. In "John's 'realized eschatology': ...future [End-time] expectations are seen to be fulfilled in present events." How does 'realized eschatology' apply to the "great tribulation" in terms of Jesus' passion/death? Discuss.
7. "Christ's death...vicariously embraced the...Great Tribulation so that his people would not have to." – Marvin Pate. Discuss the meaning & significance of this statement.
8. D. Aune says, "realized eschatology must...express the piety or spirituality of the Johannine community." If so, what would a 'Johannine church' look like as an expression of John's 'realized eschatology'? How would a 'Johannine church' differ from (say) a 'Pauline church,' based on the Apostle Paul's teachings/writings?

### APPENDIX: Key Terms Explained.

- 'Abomination of desolation': major covenant violations, especially idolatry, which defiles God's Temple.
- Antichrist: a person prophesied by the Bible, who opposes [is 'anti-'] Jesus Christ & substitutes himself in Christ's place before the Second Coming (return) of Jesus Christ.
- Apocalyptic: describing "the end of the world," &/or visions & events depicted in the book of Revelation.
- Apostasy: falling away, departure from faith & adherence to Christ
- 'Atoning tribulation': Jesus Christ vicariously experienced Great Tribulation so his people wouldn't have to
- 'Birth Pangs': describes terrible, painful events: earthquakes & famines ushering in the Messianic Age

- 'Dispensationalism' is a Bible-interpretation which maintains that history is divided into multiple ages or 'dispensations' in which God deals with his chosen people (Israel, the Church) in different ways.
- Eschatology: concerning 'the last things,' referring to Christian beliefs about the end of history, End-time events, Jesus' return, the resurrection of the dead, the Last Judgment, the messianic era, etc.
- 'Realized Eschatology': Where future (End-time) expectations are fulfilled in the present. Events forecast for the End of history are moved from the future to the present, from expectation to realized experience.
- "Future Eschatology': interprets parts of Revelation, Ezekiel, Daniel, & NT books as prophetic predictions of future, end-time events, often interpreted in a literal, physical, apocalyptic, & global context.
- Exorcism: evicting demons, evil spirits, or other malevolent spiritual entities from a person, or an area
- 'Jesus' Parousia': A Greek term meaning "arrival", "coming", or "presence." Used of Christ's Second Coming ('2nd Advent') — the Christian belief that Jesus will return (physically) to Earth after his ascension to heaven.
- 'Jesus' Passion': The final period leading to the death of Jesus on the cross, described in the 4 Gospels.
- 'Messianic Age': the future period of time on Earth in which the Messiah will reign & bring universal peace, without any evil. Many believe it's the consummate "kingdom of God" or the "world to come."
- 'Messianic Woes': the period of intense suffering & tribulation preceding the coming of the Messiah
- "Olivet Discourse": Jesus' teaching in Mark 13 is called "The Olivet Discourse" because He & the disciples are on the Mount of Olives. Jesus prophesies about the fate of the temple, Jerusalem, and the end times.
- Synoptic Gospels: Matthew, Mark, & Luke, characterized by 'the same view' (syn: same; optic: view, sight)
- Tribulation (Greek: thlipsis: 'being squeezed under pressure or crushed by a weight'). Hence suffering, travail. It does not refer to minor inconveniences, but to real hardships.
- 'The Great Tribulation' (Greek: thlîpsis megál?) a relatively short period of intense hardships, persecution, disasters, famine, war, pain, & suffering, affecting all of creation prior to Christ's Parousia/Second Coming.