

“From Cryptic To Clear” (Jn. 16:16-33)

1. Cryptic Chronology (16-19)

- a. What time is it? All throughout John’s record, Jesus spoke of His hour to come and that it had come (e.g. 2:4; 7:30; 8:20; 12:23; 13:1). And now He speaks of “a little while.”
- b. Such would have been cryptic as the salvific plan was still unfolding in earnest before them. But as promised (v. 25) they would soon perceive what He spoke of and what He was going to do in the “hour.”
- c. The crucifixion of Christ is the center of history and history is salvific – it is His-story. And thus after such, things would be unveiled fully.
- d. The Eschaton: What aids us (and then the Jew) is how Scripture speaks of two ages: one current evil age and one everlasting to come. However, there is a meeting of the two at the crux of history.
- e. The end times or “last days” were prophesied by the Prophets and such was clearly accompanied – and indeed, ushered in by the Prince, Warrior, Servant, Prophet, Messiah, King, Redeemer, etc.!
- f. It is clear the Spirit revealed the fulfillment of such to Peter on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:16 ff.).
- g. With the atonement of Christ the veil was torn granting access to God and the OT ceremonial laws and events were fulfilled. With the ascension of Christ, the OT prophesies and Psalms were realized in the reign of the King. And with the resurrection of Christ, the commencement of His Kingdom was sprung forth not unlike a dead seed is buried and subsequently springs up new life cf. 2 Cor. 5:17.
- h. Therefore there is an overlap in the two mentioned ages. The eschaton, or end times (last days), are the final days before the new age – which has been inaugurated yet not consummated. The end days before AD 70 brought an end to Temple worship and animal sacrifices. And, the last days are a current reality as we await the consummation of the Kingdom.
- i. The New has dawned! The King has conquered, is crowned and is reigning till all enemies are put under His feet (1 Cor. 15:24-27). That chapter consists of three emphases viz. Jesus’ personal past resurrection, the believer’s current resurrection from death to life (see Eph. 2:1,5; Col. 2:12; Rev. 20:4-5; 2 Cor. 5:17), and the universal physical resurrection of all people (cf. Jn. 5:28-29).
- j. The ‘age to come’ (Mk. 10:30) is eternal life – which we can have now (see Jn. 3:3, 16). Richard Phillips rightly notes: “It is clear that Jesus’ disciples believed that the age to come had arrived in his ministry. In important ways, their belief was correct. Jesus began his ministry, proclaiming, “The kingdom of God is at hand” (Mark 1:15), which is another way of speaking about “the age to come.” His miracles involved an inbreaking of heaven’s healing and liberating power. Through his teaching, Jesus was able to say, “The kingdom of God is in the midst of you” (Luke 17:21).”¹
- k. The NT also speaks of a time which is near at hand, at the door, coming soon, etc. Now it is irresponsible to make what would be spoken clearly (v. 25) and make it cloudy. Jesus did not mean that He would speak plainly but then their explanations (the NT writings) would be cryptic. So then near means near and “this generation” cannot mean 20 centuries later! So what was near? And, back to “a little while,” to what is that referring? Let’s consider them in reverse:

¹ Phillips, R. D. (2014). *John* (R. D. Phillips, P. G. Ryken, & D. M. Doriani, Eds.; 1st ed., Vol. 2, pp. 353–354). P&R Publishing.

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- i. The “in a little while” of which Jesus spoke would simply be His removal from them in the immediate future – for which He was preparing them that evening. They would not see Him after His death for a “little while” but “again in a little while, and you will see Me” after His resurrection. But as foretold, He would ultimately (after 40 days) ascend to the Father to reside (until He returns as He left i.e. physically) but not w/o sending the Counselor! And meanwhile, their joy would return and remain upon meeting with Him after His resurrection and receiving His Spirit around ten days after His ascension.
 - ii. Briefly, The phrases spoken of by Jesus and affirmed by the NT writers regarding the day of the LORD being nigh; it was! Jesus had warned them of the signs of looming judgment which would fall before those of that generation had died. Those who took heed to His warning and instruction avoided death and those who followed the standard procedure of barricading themselves and their families behind the “safety” of Jerusalem’s walls were utterly decimated just as He prophesied. This is precisely what was at the door when the aged John shared the Apocalypse (aka Revelation). Nevertheless, there will come a day when even these last days end and the new age is consummated and the evil age and its perversions which corroded creation will be “rolled up as a scroll” (Isa. 34:4; Rev. 6:14; 1 Pet. 3:10). And the LORD Jesus (888) will present His Bride spotless, carrying Her over the threshold of Jordan into paradise to enjoy a new day that never ends! Jesus’ return in Judgment was not an appearance but a divinely directed decimation of the generation who failed to see their visitation (Lu. 19:44) and it was near viz. w/in a few decades – a generation. His “second appearing” (Heb. 9:28) is unknown and will come as a thief in the night – not like the judgment over Jerusalem which was preceded by signs which they were to heed.
2. Cryptic Comfort (20-24)
- a. Sorrow before comfort. They would lament the horrific treatment, scourging, and execution of Jesus but the world would rejoice that they had successfully rid themselves of Him, His claims, and commands.
 - b. It would add to their perplexity that Jesus had never been bested by any of them. “For three years, the disciples had known Jesus to be the master of every circumstance, more than equal to the threats and plots of the religious leaders. But after his arrest later that evening, they would witness the shocking injustice of his mock trial, when Jesus stood mutely while falsely charged with blasphemy (Matt. 26:57–65).”²
 - c. The world (in great part) has thought it has pretty much done away with Jesus. We are here to testify He is alive, well, and on the throne!
 - d. But why be cryptic in His stating that He must leave, return, and leave again? Though Jesus had plainly stated His looming execution, David Gooding articulates in part why Jesus didn’t articulate His resurrection, “And, when the apostles saw him suffer and die, it would be seriously misleading if talk of his resurrection body, only half-understood, had made them think that his sufferings were in any degree unreal or unfelt. And what is more, the disciples themselves must be allowed to face and feel the full reality of the world’s hatred, both to Christ and to them, exhibited in his crucifixion. They must face the worst that the world could do, not only its physical cruelty, but its malicious sense of joy and triumph.”³

² Phillips, R. D. (2014). *John* (R. D. Phillips, P. G. Ryken, & D. M. Doriani, Eds.; 1st ed., Vol. 2, p. 355). P&R Publishing.

³ Gooding, D. (2013). *In the School of Christ: Lessons on Holiness in John 13–17* (p. 201). Myrtlefield House.

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- e. Turning sorrow to joy. Ps. 30:5.
- f. Not compensating the sorrow with joy, or replacing sorrow with joy but “turning” what was sorrowful i.e. the Cross, into a reality of celebration! What was the source of their lament, fear, confusion, and despair became the reason for their joy, courage, understanding, and victory!
- g. The Cross was His choice of weapon to defeat the enemies of truth, righteousness, and love. Eph. 4:8.
- h. The Cross was the means by which He cancelled our debt to the righteous Law (Col. 2:13-14).
- i. The Cross was the instrument He used to disarm the rulers and authorities putting them to open shame (Col. 2:15). In fact, it was the joy set before Jesus which helped Him endure the Cross and shame (Heb. 12:2). Conversely, His shame becomes that of those who deny Him.
- j. It is the ‘foolishness’ of the Cross and preaching Christ crucified by which we are saved (1 Cor. 1:18-25; 2:1-2).
- k. It is the Cross of Christ alone in which we must boast (Gal. 6:14).
- l. For what was cruel, obscene, grotesque, and horrifying; is now celebrated as our only means of knowing our precious God and Savior (see 1 Peter 1:18-19).
- m. Such was foreshadowed in the Passover and affirmed by John the Baptizer and Jesus (Jn. 1:29; Rev. 5:9).
- n. This joy of Jesus’ person and work marks each believer even in this dark and hostile world.
- o. It is a cryptic comfort in that it is also the Cross of Christ which enables us to bear our own and follow Him (Lu. 9:23). And we have joy in the Cross as we are privileged to share in His sufferings (see Phil. 3:8-11).
- p. And this joy we have in Jesus, no one can take away v. 22. After their great sorrow “for a little while,” and when Jesus returned, taught, ascended, and then sent the Counselor; they had a new joy impervious to the circumstances of the world. The Spirit gave them (and now us) an endowment of assurance (as Jesus’ promises were and are confirmed) and power to live above the sin. And, to live in the peace of the world’s storms. Leon Morris describes a painting that matches Jesus’ meaning. It depicts a storm beating against a rocky shoreline with waves crashing and foam flying high. A ship has been driven up against the rock and is falling apart, bodies falling into the deep. But in the foreground is seen a mighty rock with a crack. In the crack is a dove nesting securely, the storm unable to reach within. This expresses Jesus’ gift of peace. Morris explains: “Believers are not immune to the storms of life. They must bear them.... But they are secure. The Rock of Ages is their sure refuge and there they have peace.”⁷⁴
- q. There is another analogy for the power which the Spirit endows us. Though the pull of the carnal nature still resides in us, the Spirit introduces a power to defeat it. It is as an airplane flies with the law of gravity still in place. The Spirit gives us new spiritual aerodynamics to rise above our sin natures (see Rom. 8:2).
- r. Another cryptic reality that was not yet understood was the need for access to the Holy One who is triune! Vv. 23-24 indicates a direct access to the Father via Jesus. They would no longer ask Jesus but the Father directly and they would do so in Jesus’ name.

⁷ Leon Morris, *Reflections on the Gospel of John* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1986), 563.

⁴ Phillips, R. D. (2014). *John* (R. D. Phillips, P. G. Ryken, & D. M. Doriani, Eds.; 1st ed., Vol. 2, p. 379). P&R Publishing.

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- s. Jesus’ discourse with them that evening was rich with allusions to the triune persons of the Godhead (Godhood). The Counselor “the Spirit of truth” would encourage, empower, and equip them and they would have direct access to the throne of the Father.
 - t. Again, this is only possible by the person and work of Jesus. We now, like they would, have a relationship with the LORD Almighty because of Jesus’ High Priestly position and atonement.
 - u. In his name means:
 - i. Jesus = “YHWH is salvation” (Mat. 1:21). He didn’t merely reveal the Way but became it (Jn. 14:6)!
 - ii. Christ is not Jesus’ last name but a title which indicates a triad of positions. Christ or Messiah = anointed one. Prophets, priests, and kings were anointed to service. Jesus is the Prophet greater than Moses and all (Deut. 18:15-19). Jesus is the High Priest who was without sin and was able to sit down after making the perfect offering (Heb.). Jesus is King of kings and LORD of lords who rules over creation.
 - iii. In Jesus name also indicates according to His character and will.
 - iv. In Jesus name is not a formula, as if tacking it on to any prayer guarantees a hearing; for if you do not come via the High Priest, you do not come at all!
 - v. I was appalled to watch a video of Joel Hunter pray at the DNC some 14 yrs. ago and stop before finishing and asking each one to pray in the name of their god! I wonder if he has ever preached this verse. Or these verses: Jn. 14:6; 10:7-10 etc.
3. Cryptic Conquering (25-33)
- a. Jesus promises to speak more plainly. We must remember that He has indeed done so before. See e.g. Mat. 20:28; Lu. 9:22. You can’t get more plain, clear, and concise than that.
 - b. Certainly He would speak more plainly about unfolded events but they needed to see them before understanding them. It is not so much the language that is cryptic but the understanding of what had to transpire and the reasons why such had to take place and be accomplished. →
 - c. Even the cryptic OT language was illuminated in their minds by the Spirit who authored such hundreds and up to two thousand years prior. In fact, Matthew and John would be two of a about 10 contributors of the NT which completes the canon of Scripture. The NT authors (secondary authors as the Spirit led them) explained much of how the OT pointed to Jesus person and work. Therefore, the Word (1 Pet. 1:23) and the Spirit (2 Pet. 1:20-21) illuminate our understanding. Jesus had to open their minds to understand the Scriptures (Lu. 24:45).
 - d. Vv. 26-27 Carson: “Just as Jesus remains in his Father’s love by being obedient to him (8:29; 15:10), and just as believers remain in Jesus’ love by being obedient to him (15:9–11), so this circle of love is large enough to include the Father himself: he loves (*philei*; cf. notes on 5:20; 11:3; 21:15–17) the disciples because they love Christ and believe that he came from God (v. 27). The thought, in short, is an extension of 15:9–16.”⁵
 - e. Vv 29-30 the Disciple pretend to be following Him or at least fooling themselves (in part) to understand Him – when in fact He more or less repeats what He’s said (v. 28). We have all likely done some pretending to understand so as not to draw attention to ourselves, be made fun of, or to just not interfere with things moving forward. And this is why Jesus poignantly called them out, “Now you believe!” or in in a rhetorical question form “Do you now believe?”

⁵ Carson, D. A. (1991). [*The Gospel according to John*](#) (p. 547). Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans.

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- f. Carson points out an obvious error of judgment in that Jesus didn't say He was now speaking plainly but “the time is coming” when He'd do such. “No misunderstanding is more pathetic than that which thinks it no longer exists. Ignoring or not comprehending Jesus' insistence that the time for speech without enigma lies just ahead, his disciples think he is already (note the repeated *Now* in vv. 29, 30) speaking ‘without figures of speech’”⁶
- g. Plainly citing the cryptic scriptures, Jesus mentions a prophesy that they are about to experience (in a negative manner), and then assures them that the Father is with Him (32). “The impending disaster is again announced in terms of the coming *hōra* (‘hour’), but this hour *has come*—it is even nearer than the hour for plain speaking predicted in v. 25. The disciples' temporary defection is cast in the language of Zechariah 13:7, specifically quoted in Mark 14:27 par.; cf. Mark 14:50. But however badly he will be abandoned by his disciples, Jesus is assured of his Father's support: *Yet I am not alone, for my Father is with me* (cf. 8:16, 29). Even so, Dodd's comment (*IFG*, p. 416 n. 1) is astute: The damping down of an enthusiastic confession of faith might seem surprising, if we did not remember that it corresponds to a constant pattern, not only in the Fourth Gospel but elsewhere: cf. John 6:68–70, 8:38; Mark 8:29–33 (and parallels), 10:28–31, 38–40, 14:29–31. It is part of the character and genius of the Church that its foundation members were discredited men; it owed its existence not to their faith, courage, or virtue, but to what Christ had done with them; and this they could never forget.”⁷
- h. And such is why He could reaffirm them that they could and would have peace, joy, and victory. He tells them beforehand they will scatter (as predicted in Zach.) so they can remember that even while affirming their abandoning, He had promised their victory.
- i. How? Because by the unfolding events in the subsequent hours, He would indeed “overcome the world.”
- j. However, Jesus also promised them tribulation.
- k. Richard Phillips notes: The world is the place of testing where our faith is revealed and made strong through trial. A. W. Pink writes: “While the Christian is left down here he suffers from the weakness and weariness of the body, from temporal losses and disappointments, from the severing of cherished ties, as well as from the sneers and taunts, the hatred and persecution of the world.”⁹ “Men design to cut [believers] off from the earth,” notes Matthew Henry, “and God designs by affliction to make them [ready] for heaven; and so between both they shall have tribulation.”¹⁰ Though in Christ we have peace, in the world we have tribulation: we should therefore direct our hearts not to the things of the world but to the blessings of Christ, which alone convey peace.⁸
- l. But more than peace is promised; in Christ we will share His triumph over the world. It is, as we noted, an increasing ability to live above the pull of evil.
- m. John, along with Paul and Jesus confirm our victory over sin in Christ (Jn. 12:31; 1 Cor. 15:57; 1 Jn. 2:13–14; 4:4; 5:4–5).
- n. Carson articulates it nicely, “the verb [overcome] indicates victory; Jesus has *conquered* the world, in the same way that he has defeated the prince of this world. Jesus' point is that by

⁶ Carson, D. A. (1991). *The Gospel according to John* (p. 548). Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans. par. and parallel(s).

IFG C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge University Press, 1953)

⁷ Carson, D. A. (1991). *The Gospel according to John* (pp. 548–549). Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans.

⁹ Arthur W. Pink, *Exposition of the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975), 17.

¹⁰ Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, 6 vols. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2009), 5:927.

⁸ Phillips, R. D. (2014). *John* (R. D. Phillips, P. G. Ryken, & D. M. Doriani, Eds.; 1st ed., Vol. 2, p. 381). P&R Publishing.

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his death he has made the world’s opposition pointless and beggarly. The decisive battle has been waged and won. The world continues its wretched attacks, but those who are in Christ share the victory he has won. They cannot be harmed by the world’s evil, and they know who triumphs in the end. From this they take heart, and begin to share his peace.⁹

- o. The gates of Hades (lit. the “grave”) i.e. death will not even stop God’s Kingdom – in fact death puts those in Christ directly into His presence! He overcame death by death (Eph. 4:8)! He conquered evil, sin, Satan, the world, and the grave and all who reside in Christ ipso facto share the victory.
- p. Such “conquering is cryptic is it not? As we battle and prevail over the world, it (the unregenerate souls) thinks it has the Church ‘on the ropes’ and all but utterly defeated. Satan knows better (Rev. 12:12) and so do we! Our cryptic conquering is seen all throughout a NT which promises discrimination, persecution, and martyrdom while stating that enduring such till the end proves our triumph! See Mat. 10:22. a plethora of passages confirm that our victory looks like loss from the world’s perspective (e.g. most of Rev., 2 Cor. 4, Matt. 10, 1 Peter) but when we look back to the Cross, we see that Jesus had overcome the world and sin by taking captivity captive and trampling over death via death!

Why progressive revelation?

If then, right from the beginning, Jesus had both announced and exhibited the divine majesty of his essential relationship with the Father, one of the major purposes of the incarnation would have been frustrated. They might still have fallen flat on their faces and acknowledged him as the Creator in whom, by whom, and for whom, the universe was created. But God was seeking a relationship with men infinitely higher than that of a Creator with his creatures. He wanted to raise his creatures, by a spiritual ‘birth from above’ to a relationship of children, and then grown-up sons, with the Father. And that spiritual birth would depend on their forming a one-to-one personal relationship with his Son. That in turn would depend on their being attracted to him, and unafraid of him, with growing faith, and an ever-deepening understanding, with enough revealed of himself at any one time to draw out their faith and love still more, yet never so much that it overwhelmed their human personalities and made it impossible for them to act as friends toward him.

Many nations have in their folklore the story of a royal prince who unaccountably falls in love with a poor girl in the town. Determining to win her as his bride, he leaves the palace, puts on ordinary clothes, approaches her as an ordinary man, though somewhat above her level and handsome not only in looks but more importantly in his demeanour and behaviour. Yet generally he hides his glory so that she should not be afraid of him, nor, at the other extreme, love him simply for the sake of his wealth and position and not for his own sake. And then when he has won her heart and she has demonstrated her loyalty to him, gradually he reveals to her, so the story goes, ever more of his wealth and majesty until the stunning glory of the public wedding and the eventual coronation.

Such—not in folklore, but in historical reality—is the story of the incarnation of God’s Son, when he came to earth truly Man, yet God of very God, to seek us for himself. And what can we say but to exclaim, Oh blessed enigma! ‘Great ... is the mystery of godliness: He [God] was manifest in the flesh’ (1 Tim 3:16).¹⁰

⁹ Carson, D. A. (1991). *The Gospel according to John* (p. 550). Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans.

¹⁰ Gooding, D. (2013). *In the School of Christ: Lessons on Holiness in John 13–17* (pp. 208–209). Myrtlefield House.