



MESSAGE

STUDY GUIDE

GROUP MATERIAL

SONGS

Waiting for Christ or for Antichrist?

Bible Reading: 1 John 2:18, 26-3:3

SUMMARY: John's letter transitions from warning about 'many antichrists' to highlighting the glorious destiny awaiting God's children, who will be transformed into the likeness of Christ when He appears. However, today, many Christians remain preoccupied with end-time events and timelines, trying to predict the dates and discern signs of Christ's return. These efforts are destined to fail. Jesus clearly stated that no one knows, nor can know, the time of His return. Instead of eagerly anticipating Christ's appearance, many are fixated on the rise of an 'Antichrist' and the portents of Armageddon. Jesus displays no interest in who gets the date right; He cares about our relationship with Him and our service for Him. Let's heed John's call to 'live deeply in Him,' motivated by the anticipation of Jesus' imminent return and the transformational event of seeing Him face-to-face.

Future End-time Events in 1 John (1 Jn. 2:18, 28; 3:2-3)

- John's 'realized eschatology' – the Future is Now! Yet there's still 'future eschatology'
- John's Future Eschatology
- Two Aspects of Christ's coming –secret rapture, public arrival

John's Simplicity vs. Complex End-time Schemes

- 1 John: Waiting for Jesus' Appearance
- Waiting for Paul's 'Man of Lawlessness' – John Piper
 - "What I am saying here is that *no one has biblical warrant for being sure Jesus is more than a very few years away, like five to six years. And it may be closer.*" –John Piper
- Waiting for Antichrist – W. Lee
 - "*We are awaiting and expecting the last week of [Daniel's] 70 weeks...to come.*" – Witness Lee
 - "*We can figure out...the year of the rapture of the overcomers.*" —W. Lee
 - "*We can even figure out the day of the rapture of the majority of the saints.*" —W. Lee

D. No Bible-basis for End-time Charts & Schedules

- The Bible “does not... allow drawing of charts & schedules to plot the sequence of events.” –Klyne Snodgrass

Doctrine of Imminence – Jesus could come at any moment!

A. Meaning of Imminence – the ‘any moment return’ of Christ

- “The word ‘imminent’...expresses the theological idea of the *‘any-moment’ coming of the Lord Jesus Christ*: ‘An imminent event is one that...is always close at hand in the sense that *it could happen any moment*. Other things may happen before the immanent event, but *nothing else must take place before it happens*. (Stowers)” [Paul Benware, *Understanding End Times Prophecy*, p.]
- “Since [Jesus’] coming is imminent but its timing uncertain, believers should eagerly expect his return at any time (1 Cor. 1:7; Phil. 3:20).” [J. Daniel Hays (ed.) of *Biblical Prophecy & End Times*, p. 412]

B. A Testimony of Living in the Light of Christ’s Imminent Return

- W.Nee critiques the post-tribulation rapture view, because “Our living on the earth will not be filled with waiting for Christ but for Antichrist. Daily we will only need to look & see if Antichrist has come...This is contrary to the teaching of the Bible, [which] does not tell us to wait for Antichrist, but to wait for the Lord.” [W. Nee, *Collected Works*, Vol. 19, Notes on Scriptural Messages (3), Chap. 8, Sect. #4, pp. 546-7]

The Time of Jesus’ Return is Unknown (& unknowable by us)

- “Can we know the time of Jesus’ return? In short, no. The message of the NT is emphatic: *the time of Christ’s return is unknown. No one will be able to discern the time* – however loosely one wants to define ‘time’ – of Jesus’ return... Even Jesus did not know the time of his return. Jesus... said, ‘Now concerning that day or hour no one knows — neither the angels in heaven nor the Son — but only the Father’ (Mk.13:32).” [Rob Dalrymple, *Understanding the NT & the End Times*, p.]
- You...also to be ready, because the Son of Man is coming at *an hour when you do not think he will.*” (24:44)
- “This exhortation is very emphatic. The people of God must also be ready, because even *they do not know the time!* Therefore, *to say that we can know the week or the month, but not the day, is completely beside the point... Jesus is not concerned with whether or not his disciples, or us, know when he will return... He is concerned with what we are doing until he returns.*” [Rob Dalrymple, *cit.*, p.]

John’s Perspective on Jesus’ Coming, his Appearing

A. Jesus’ Coming (*parousia*) & Appearing (*phanerosis*) (1 Jn. 2:28)

- “There is ample evidence... that in the East at the time the word (*Parousia*) was the usual expression for the visit of a king or Emperor’ ...*Parousia* means literally ‘presence’, and the personal presence of one now absent, the visible appearing of one now unseen.” [John Stott, *1-3 John*, p. 121]

B. Seeing Jesus will be a Transformational Event (1 Jn. 3:2-3)

1. Already transformed as Children of God
2. Believers are a ‘work-in-progress’
3. “Already...& not yet” (1 Jn. 3:2)
4. Seeing God/Christ face-to-face requires transformation
5. Seeing Jesus *is* transformational – “we will be like him *because* we will see him as he is.”
 - “The reason Christians will be like God... [is] that *seeing God is transforming.*” –Duane Watson,
6. This hope is a motive for purification (1 Jn. 3:3)
 - “When he appears, *we will be like him* because we will see him as he is.” (1 John 3:2)

C. Becoming ‘like him’ does *Not* imply Identity with God/Christ

- “*We shall be like him*’ (3:2): But ‘like’ does not mean ‘identical to,’ and believers will never be (e.g.) omniscient or omnipotent as Christ is, since he is both God & man.” [ESV note]
- “True likeness will be obtained *but not identity with God or Christ.*” — Ben Witherington