



MESSAGE

STUDY GUIDE

GROUP MATERIAL

SONGS

## Examining the text & our hearts:

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

<sup>18</sup> Children, it is the last hour. And as you have heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come...<sup>26</sup> I have written these things to you concerning those who are trying to deceive you. <sup>27</sup> As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you don't need anyone to teach you. Instead, his anointing teaches you about all things and is true and is not a lie; just as it has taught you, remain in him.

<sup>28</sup> So now, little children, remain in him so that *when he appears* we may have confidence and not be ashamed before him *at his coming*.<sup>29</sup> If you know that he is righteous, you know this as well:

Everyone who does what is right has been born of him. <sup>3</sup><sup>1</sup> See what great love the Father has given us that we should be called God's children —and we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it didn't know him. <sup>2</sup> Dear friends, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet been revealed. We know that *when he appears*, we will be like him because we will see him as he is.

<sup>3</sup> And everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself just as he is pure. (1 John 2:18, 26-3:3 CSB)

**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. With John there is a clear dichotomy between the coming of the Antichrist and the appearance of Christ. In contrast, many Christians today remain preoccupied with Antichrist, 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 return, 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.

- "Now [John] turns to the future and *the coming, not of the antichrist, but of Christ himself.*" — Eugene Boring
- "The Bible does not tell us to wait for Antichrist, but to wait for the Lord." — Watchman Nee
- The Bible "does not... allow drawing of charts & schedules to plot the sequence of events." — Klyne Snodgrass
- "Can we know the time of Jesus' return? ...No... The time of Christ's return is unknown. No one will be able to discern the time." — Rob Dalrymple
- "Jesus is not concerned with whether or not his disciples... *know when he will return...* He is concerned with *what we are doing until he returns.*" — Rob Dalrymple
- "Saved people will *forever be like Jesus* in His glorified humanity (1 Jn. 3:2) ... However, ... *saved people will never become God*; they will always be his human personal creatures." — Floyd Barackman

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

a. John's 'realized eschatology' – the Future is Now! Yet there's still 'future eschatology'

- John's Gospel "is well known for its... 'realized eschatology', i.e., its assertion that *future [end-time] events* such as resurrection, judgment, & eternal life *are already present for those who believe.* The *same pattern appears* in 1 Jn. 2:28; 3:14; 5:12, & *in the claim that the antichrist & the 'last hour' are already present.* However, we also find the orientation towards Christ's *future* coming & the last judgment that are common elsewhere in early Christianity (1 Jn. 2:28-3:3; 4:17-18). Yet *even these passages emphasize the present* condition of the believers as children of God who are like Jesus..." [David Rensberger, *1, 2, 3 John*, p. 42]

b. John's Future Eschatology

- "1 John contains [elements] of futuristic eschatology [future end-time events]. Two texts speak unambiguously about the Parousia [Christ's 2nd coming] and *are set in an [end-time] context signaled by 1 John 2:18* ... 'Little children it is the last hour!' This assertion is confirmed by the appearance of schismatics, styled by John as 'antichrists' ... The *two texts speaking about the Parousia* focus on the significance of this event for believers. [1.] In 1 John 2:28 believers who continue to abide in Christ... will have no occasion for shame; they will confidently stand before Christ at his Parousia... [2.] The second text, 1 John 3:2-3... also manifest futuristic eschatology: 'But we know that *when he appears*, we will be like him because we will see him as he is.'<sup>3</sup> And everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself just as he is pure'... John does not... speak of a rapture, but he does imply a transformation into the likeness of Jesus." [Larry R. Helyer, *Witness of Jesus, Paul & John*, p. 351]
- "The *most important text in [John's] epistles which... mention[s] of the Parousia [Coming] of Jesus Christ is 1 Jn. 2:28.* Remarkably, this is the *only instance in [John's] letters where the term Parousia ['coming'] is used...* 2:28 is somewhat unusual in that no explicit mention is made of Jesus Christ himself... Nevertheless, there's little serious doubt that the Parousia of Jesus Christ is in mind... since the verse begins with a reference to 'remaining in him,' the verb used 7 times in 2:18-29 ... Several other passages also hint at the importance of the future revelation of Jesus Christ... 1 John 3:2-3... alludes to the future appearance of Jesus Christ and the fact that ...faithful believers shall be like him." [Ralph P. Martin (ed.) *Dictionary of the Later NT...*, p. ]

c. Two Aspects of Christ's coming –secret rapture, public arrival

- ❖ Some Bible teachers distinguish two aspects of Christ's 2nd Coming:

a. Secret coming to rapture his believers (Luke 12:39-40; 1 Thess. 4:16-17)

- <sup>39</sup> If the homeowner knew what hour *the thief* was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into.
- <sup>40</sup> You also *be ready*, because the Son of Man is *coming at an hour you do not expect.*" (Luke 12:39-40)
- "The Lord himself will descend from heaven... & the *dead in Christ will rise first.* <sup>17</sup> Then we who are still alive, who are left, *will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air*, & so we will always be with the Lord." (1 Thess. 4:16-17)

b. Public arrival to the earth to reign (e.g. Acts 1:11; Mt. 16:27; Rev. 1:7)

- “Men of Galilee... This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, *will come in the same way that you have seen him going into heaven.*” (Acts 1:11)
- “The Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father...” (Mt. 16:27)
- “Look, he is coming with the clouds, & every eye will see him, even those who pierced And all the tribes of the earth will mourn over him. So it is to be. Amen.” (Rev. 1:7)

## 2. John’s Simplicity vs. Complex End-time Schemes

a. 1 John: Waiting for Jesus’ Appearance

- John’s clear dichotomy between Antichrist’s coming (2:18) and Christ’s appearing (2:28; 3:2)
- In 1 Jn. 2:28-3:3 “*no preceding signs are mentioned. John... simply states, ‘When he appears...’ ... This coming [event] is clearly a time of hope & encouragement. Believers ‘will be like him,’ and ‘will see Him just as He is’ ...* [Mark Hitchcock, Ed Hindson, *Can We Still Believe in the Rapture?* p. 134]
- “More Scriptures suggest that the [NT] writers & recipients did anticipate an imminent return of the Lord (e.g. ... 1 Jn. 2:28-3:3). It is difficult to get around the conclusion that the *early church did anticipate the Lord’s return at any moment...*” [Paul Benware, *Understanding End Times Prophecy*, p. ]

b. Jesus’ Exhortation – ‘Be like people waiting for their master to return’ (Lk 12:36)

- “Be ready for service & have your lamps lit. <sup>36</sup> You are to be like people waiting for their master to return from the wedding banquet so that when he comes & knocks, they can open the door for him at once. <sup>37</sup> Blessed will be those servants the master finds alert when he comes... <sup>38</sup> If he comes in the middle of the night, or even near dawn, & finds them alert, blessed are those servants... <sup>40</sup> You also *be ready*, because the Son of Man is *coming at an hour you do not expect.*” (Luke 12:35-40) **Note:** “*be like people waiting...*” is imperative, a command.
- “Unlike other passages in the NT about the return of Christ, which include... telltale signs, *here Jesus’ teaching ignores the clues [signs] leading up to his impending arrival. Jesus did not want his followers to figure out exactly when he was going to return.* Instead, he pointed out that even when we try to predict what will happen, the event will catch everyone by surprise... In every generation, people have tried to predict the moment of Christ’s return — and have been consistently wrong. Rather than being drawn into current debates, *our task is to obey Christ*, knowing God is working out his plan in history. Jesus will return & everyone will be held accountable.” [David R. Veerman, *Life Application Study Bible Devotional*, p. ]

c. John’s Community’s Mistake regarding signs of Jesus’ Coming (Jn. 21:22-23)

- Jesus told Peter “*If I want him [Beloved Disciple] to remain until I come... what is that to you [Peter]? ... You, follow me.*” <sup>23</sup> So *this rumor spread* to the brothers & sisters that *this disciple would not die.* Yet Jesus did not tell him that he would not die, but, “*If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you?*” (John 21:22-23)
- “John’s gospel corrects the mistaken impression that the beloved disciple would live until Christ’s coming (John 21:22–23).” – Craig Koester
- Q: Did this experience – mistakenly linking earthly events (the Beloved Disciple’s long life) with Jesus’ return – affect the attitude of John’s community towards other signs & portents related to Jesus’ return?

d. Waiting for Paul’s ‘Man of Lawlessness’ – John Piper

- “The day [of the Lord] will not come unless the apostasy [‘rebellion’] comes first & the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. He opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he sits in God’s temple, proclaiming that he himself is God.” (2 Thess. 2:3-4)
- “Does the NT teach that Jesus may come at any moment? The apostle Paul shows us quite explicitly that it is right to discern what events must precede the Lord’s coming... [Paul says] “Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed” (2 Thess. 2:3). Paul’s answer... to the question, ‘*What events are yet to happen before Christ comes?*’ is twofold: (1) *the rebellion must come*, & (2) *the man of lawlessness must be revealed. These 2 events are still to come*, as I write in... 2021. Paul does not treat these 2 events as so ambiguous that they cannot be discerned when they come. The appearance of the man of lawlessness will be globally sensational & brief: ‘[He] opposes & exalts himself against every so-called god or object

of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God... Then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will kill with the breath of his mouth & bring to nothing by the appearance of his coming.' (2 Thess. 2:4, 8) ... 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 5 to 6 years. And it may be closer.*" [John Piper, *What Must Happen before Jesus Returns?* org, Jan. 29, 2023]

- **Note:** John Piper rejects the notion that 'Jesus can come at any moment.' The 'flip side' of his statement that "no one has biblical warrant for being sure Jesus is more than... 5 or 6 years [away]" is that we do have biblical warrant for saying that *Jesus is (at least) a few years away!* In John Piper's view, two events – 'the rebellion' & 'the man of lawlessness' – must transpire first. A time period, "*like five to six years,*" is required for their fulfillment, before Christ can return.

#### e. 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." — Lee
- "We can even figure out the day of the rapture of the majority of the saints." — Lee
- "W.Lee says, "We are still awaiting and expecting the coming of [Daniel's] 70th week, the last week, which will be one of the strong signs of the Lord's coming back... The 7-year covenant by Antichrist with...Israel will be another sign of the Lord's coming back for the rapture...This is why *we are awaiting and expecting the last week of [Daniel's] 70 weeks...to come.*" [W. Lee, *The Apostles' Teaching*, Chapter 8, Section 2]
- In Lee's scheme Daniel's 70th week must begin prior to Christ's return; until then rapture cannot occur.
- This means the secret rapture is not imminent (in the technical sense). Instead of awaiting Christ's return, W. Lee concedes, "*we are awaiting and expecting the last week of the 70 weeks...to come.*"
- Again W. Lee writes, "Before the consummation of this age, Antichrist will...make a 7-year covenant with...Israel, & that will be the beginning of [Daniel's] last week. Thus, if anyone should say, 'Behold, here is the Christ!' or, 'There is the Christ!' we will not be deceived (Mt. 24:23)." [W. Lee, *Up-to-Date Presentation of the God-Ordained Way & the Signs Concerning the Coming of Christ*, (1990) Chap. 6, Sect. #3, p. 59]
- **Note:** Lee declares, "We will not be deceived" by claims that Christ is 'here' or 'there,' because (in W. Lee's end-time scheme of multiple raptures) Christ cannot rapture any believers until the mid-point of the final 7 years. Hence the "overcomers' rapture" is projected at least 42 months (1,260 days) into the future. Plus, the post-tribulation "rapture of the majority of believers" is at least 7 years away. Due to the time needed to fulfill these preceding signs, in W. Lee's view Christ's return is not imminent; Christ cannot return at any moment.

#### f. 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
- "Christians must avoid any fascination with & speculation about the end. The nature of *the [Bible]* documents *does not encourage or allow drawing of charts & schedules to plot the sequence of events.* Any attempt to do so... [fails based] on the NT evidence itself, & *that is not the purpose of the [End-time] teaching.* Its purpose was to give warning ...hope, & to teach people how to live in the present... *We should be impatient with those who assert that they know the time & draw [end-time] charts.*" [Klyne Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, p. 504]

### 3. Doctrine of Imminence – Jesus could come at any moment!

#### a. Meaning of Imminence – the 'any moment return' of Christ

- "The view held in the Christian church from the earliest times that the return of Christ & the end of the world *may happen at any time.* While the end may not be 'immediate,' it is always imminent." [Donald K. McKim, *Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms* (2nd ed.) p. 159]
- "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 hanging overhead, is constantly ready to befall or overtake a person, 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.* If something else *must* take place before an event can happen, that event is not immanent. The necessity of something else taking place first destroys the concept of immanency. (Stowers)" [Paul Benware, *Understanding End Times Prophecy*, p. ]

- “The word ‘imminent’ simply means that Christ could translate [take, remove] His Church to heaven *without the necessity of the fulfillment of any intervening prophetic events*. In other words, ‘imminency’ meant that His coming for the Church was an impending event that could happen without warning at any time following the birth of the Church on the day of Pentecost.” [Grant R. Jeffrey, *Apocalypse*, 100]
- “The NT picture of our Lord’s return emphasizes [several] aspects of the time of his coming...:
  - a. *Future*: The entire emphasis of the NT points to a future return of Christ. He promised ‘If I go away & prepare a place for you, *I will come again...*’ (Jn. 14:3) ‘This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, *will come in the same way* that you have seen him going into heaven.’ (Acts 1:11). The apostles taught the certainty of his return (Phil. 3:20; Titus 2:13; 1 Jn. 3:2-3).
  - b. *Imminent*: The return of Jesus Christ is always described as potentially imminent or ‘at hand’ (Rev. 1:3; [‘the time is near’] 22:10 [‘Look, I am coming soon!’ (Rev. 22:7, 10, 22)]. Every generation of believers is warned to be ready for his coming, as Luke 12:40 states: ‘You also be ready, because *the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.*’ Believers are constantly urged to look for the coming of the Lord (Phil. 3:20; Heb. 9:28; Titus 2:13; 1 Thess. 5:6). [Thomas Ice, T.J. Demy, *The Return*, pp. 98-9]
- “Imminent” (adj.) normally implies the... following truths concerning our Lord’s coming:”
  - a. “No one knows the time of Christ’s return, *He may come at any moment & it’s possible... he[’ll] come today.*”
  - b. “*The rapture is sign-less [not necessarily preceded by specific signs]*, and it will be unannounced & largely unexpected. *It is next on the revealed program of God* and it is so presented in Scripture that every generation may enjoy the hope, challenge, & other blessings of His appearing. We are all exhorted to *watch*, but no one knows the day or the hour when [Christ] the Bridegroom will come (Mt. 25:13).”
  - c. “*No clearly prophesied event must transpire prior to the rapture, for this might [imply a specific] date the time of his coming.* If the return of Christ for the church is ‘imminent’ ...it will take place before the coming period of Tribulation, with its clearly predicted signs & judgments... *We do not look for the invasion of the Holy Land by Russia or some... northern confederation [‘Gog & Magog’], or the revelation of Antichrist & his godless ambitions, or the predicted battle of Armageddon* with its vast destruction. We look for the coming of Christ from heaven to take His own [people]... The Bible calls this our ‘blessed hope’ (Titus 2:13).” [Thomas Ice, T.J. Demy, *Return*, pp. 108-9]
- “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.) *Dictionary of Biblical Prophecy & End Times*, p. 412]
- “You do not lack any spiritual gift as you *eagerly wait for the revelation* of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Cor. 1:7)
- “Our citizenship is in heaven, & we *eagerly wait for a Savior from there*, the Lord Jesus Christ.” (Phil. 3:20)
- “We wait for theblessedhope, the appearing of the glory of our great God & Savior, Jesus Christ.” (Titus 2:13)

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

- Miss Margaret E. Barber (1866–1929), Watchman Nee’s mentor, is an example of daily watching for the Lord’s imminent return. Watchman Nee recounts “One year I spent the last day [Dec. 31, 1925], New Year’s , with her. She prayed, ‘Lord, if You want to come now, there is still time this year; You do not have to wait until next year’.” W. Nee also recalled, “she said to me, ‘The Lord is coming...perhaps we will see Him around the corner.’ ...Day by day...she waited eagerly for the Lord to return.” Miss Barber expected the Lord’s imminent return at any moment. [W. Nee, *Collected Works*, Vol. 60, Chapter 28, Section 1.]
- **Note:** 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]

#### 4. 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. ]

- o “The following Scriptures underscore the utter unpredictability of Jesus’ return:”
- o “Now concerning that *day & hour no one knows*—neither the angels of heaven nor the Son—except the Father alone.” (Mt. 24:36)
- o “Therefore, be alert, since *you don’t know what day* [=time] *your Lord is coming*.” (Mt. 24:42)
- o “You...also to be ready, because the Son of Man is coming at *an hour you do not expect*.” (Mt. 24:44)
- o You...also to be ready, because the Son of Man is coming at *an hour when you do not think he will*.” (24:44 RD)
- o “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, *Understanding the NT &...End Times*, p.]
- o “...If the homeowner had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. You also be ready, because the Son of Man is coming at *an hour you do not expect [him to]*.” (Lk. 12:39-40)

#### 5. John’s Perspective on Jesus’ Coming, his Appearing

- o “When [John] spoke about... ‘the last hour’ (2:18) there followed warnings about... the antichrist... Now the writer turns to the future and *the coming, not of the antichrist, but of Christ himself*.” –E. Boring, F. Craddock

##### a. Jesus’ Coming (*parousia*) & Appearing (*phanerosis*) (2:28)

- “So now, little children, remain in him so that when he appears we may have confidence and not be ashamed before him at his coming.” (1 Jn. 2:28)
- “What do the writings of Paul & John actually teach concerning the 2nd Coming of Christ? What do they say that is the same? What do they say differently? .... [We] look exegetically at the term *Parousia*... Paul... used the term *Parousia* 13 times with significance ...He used it 4x in reference to the visiting or coming of various personalities to the church in Corinth... & Philippi. In all these passages the audience expected *the presence in person of the one who was coming*. Likewise, Paul used the term to refer to *the actual presence of Christ* in his 2nd Coming (1 Thess. 2:19 [etc.]). The primary meaning ...is being alongside like a companion & *the actual presence of Christ*.” [Roger E. Shepherd, *Paise God, We Won*, p. 141]
- “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*, 121]
- “...John only used the term *Parousia* one time in reference to the coming of Christ. He wrote: ‘little children, remain in him so that when he appears (*phanerosis*), we may have confidence & not be ashamed before him at his coming (*parousia*)’ (1 Jn. 2:28) ... In the context of 1 Jn.2:28-3:3 [John] is discussing the future appearing of Christ in the Second Coming. The admonition is to remain in Christ with boldness at the coming of the Redeemer.” [Roger E. Shepherd, *Paise God, We Won*, p. 141]
- 2:28 “Those who abide in the truth about Christ as taught by John will be confident & not ashamed at Christ’s return.” [C. Marvin Pate, *Writings of John*, ]

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

- “Dear friends, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet been revealed. We know that when he appears, we will be like him because we will see him as he is.” (1 John 3:2 CSB)

##### a. Already transformed as Children of God

- “Painter states... that what is clear is that *a transformation has already taken place in believers* – ‘we are children of God now’ (1 Jn. 3:1–2) – but the *Parousia* is going to *bring more change*. According to Michaelis, future vision will be completely different from seeing now. This mystery is a lived experience of its own. *Believers are going to be like Jesus*, which will enable them to see him ‘just as he is,’ (1 Jn 3:2). This emphasizes the fullness of this vision.” [Dirk G. Van der Merwe, “*Early Christian spirituality of ‘seeing the divine’ in 1 John*,” HTS Theological Studies, Vol. 71(1) (2015) p. 4]

##### b. Believers are a ‘work-in-progress’

- “This relationship between Christ & the believer is not yet fully apparent... Only after the [Parousia] will these realities be disclosed. Only then will the children of God conform to the likeness of the Son of God (Rom 8:29). This implies that God has begun his redemptive work in believers, but that it will only reach full fruition when the ‘not yet’ has been ‘fulfilled’.” [Dirk G. Van der Merwe, *cit.*, p. 9]
  - “In 1 Jn. 3:2 the author exhorts the audience to realize that *they are works in progress*. They are already God’s children, but it does not yet appear what they will be. What he is prepared to say about their final future is: ‘We will be like him when we see him.’ ... This implies that full perfection is not possible ... before Christ’s return. Only when he returns will the *full & final transformation* happen, which will eternally leave his imprint on believers. ... In the meantime, the believer must be striving to be ever more like Christ in life & behavior... To see Christ as he is implies seeing him in his glory, not just as he was during the ministry or through the eyes of faith, but as he is now in glory.” [Ben Witherington, *Letters & Homilies*, Vol. 1, pp. 496-7]
- c. “Already... & not yet” (1 Jn. 3:2)
- “Even though believers are *already* ‘God’s children,’ it remains [true] that ‘what we will be has *not yet* been revealed’ (1 Jn. 3:2a) ... [But,] a fulfillment... is promised: ‘What we do know is that when he appears, we will be like him because we will see him as he is’ (3:2b).” [A. Kelly, F.J. Moloney, *Experiencing God in... John*, p. 394]
- d. Seeing God/Christ face-to-face requires transformation
- “Seeing God face-to-face is the great [End-time] prospect. It is the substance of the Christian hope (1 Cor. 13:12 [‘Now we see only a reflection as in a mirror, *but then face to face*. Now I know in part, but then I’ll know fully, as I’m fully known’]; 1 Jn. 3:1-3). But *to do so requires* nothing less than *the ontological transformation of the believer*.” [Graham A. Cole, *He Who Gives life*, p. 46]
- e. 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,
  - 1 Jn. 3:2 “establishes a *relationship between seeing & transformation*. Not only is there transformation through purity, but *vision makes you like God*. It is because we will see Him that we will be like Him... To prepare for the divine vision, one purifies oneself to see the pure God; when the vision occurs one transforms, becoming like God. The use of ‘for’ [‘because’] suggests that the *transformation occurs through vision; one becomes like God by seeing God*.” [Jared C. Calaway, *Christian Moses*, pp. 74-75]
  - “The 2nd eschatological event is that at Jesus’ [parousia] all genuine believers will be revealed as... ‘*being like him (Jesus)*’ (3:2). The *idea of a transformation* that will happen is present and creates a spirituality of expectation... This phrase [‘*being like him (Jesus)*’] *implies spiritual unity rather than complete identity*... The relationship between Jesus Christ & the believer, which is here denoted as an intimate ‘likeness’... is already operational & experiential on earth.” [Dirk G. Van der Merwe, *cit.*, p. 8]
  - “The third eschatological event, ‘because we shall see him as he really is’ (3:2), refers to a specific moment when the believer will see ‘him’ (the divine) as he really is... From this verse it is clear that *the manifestation of Jesus at his Parousia will cause a transformation ... of the believers* who lived pure lives...; it will result in them being like Jesus... This *transformation into the likeness of Jesus* will be evoked in & by the transforming moment when ‘we shall see him as He is’.” [Dirk G. Van der Merwe, *Cit.*, p. 9]
  - “Exactly how seeing Christ is the cause of the transformation is left unspecified. But surely, *when he returns, the full glimpse of his identity*, of which humanity can now see only a feeble glimpse, *will transform* every desire, every motivation, every impulse.” [Karen Jobes, *1, 2, 3 John*, p. ]
- f. This hope is a motive for purification (1 Jn. 3:3)
- “And everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself just as he [‘that one’ –Jesus] is pure.” (1 Jn. 3:3)
  - “The purpose... is that *the children of God must prepare themselves in advance for this Parousia*. Therefore, ... the elder exhorts his adherents to ‘prepare’ themselves for the Parousia & the day of judgement, so that they may have confidence & not be put to shame before him at his coming, & also to become like him, for they will see him as he is. The 3 exhortations are... *abide in Christ* (2:28); *purify yourselves* just as Jesus is pure (3:3); & *live through love* just as Jesus did.” [Dirk G. Van der Merwe, *cit.*, p. 8]
- c. Becoming ‘like him’ does *Not* imply Identity with God/Christ
- “When he appears, *we will be like him* because we will see him as he is.” (1 John 3:2)
  - This phrase [‘*being like him (Jesus)*’] *implies spiritual unity rather than complete identity*... *Nowhere does the Bible state that believers shall be equal to Christ*. Rather, it communicates that believers shall be conformed to the likeness of the Son of God.” [Dirk G. Van der Merwe, *cit.*, p. 9]
  - “The term used by the church fathers... [for] the process of *becoming ‘like God’ is ‘divinization’ or ‘deification,’ theosis* in Greek... There are... *much misunderstanding & some suspicion of the idea of theosis*....” [Robert L. Wilken, “*Biblical Humanism*,” R. Lints (ed.) *Personal Identity in Theol. Perspective* 23-24]

- “‘We shall be like him’ (3:2); But ‘like’ does not mean ‘identical to,’ ...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
- “*Saved people will forever be like Jesus in His glorified humanity (1 Jn. 3:2). Observe, however, that saved people will never become God; they will always be his human personal creatures.*” [Floyd H. Barackman, *Practical Christian Theology*, 256]