

Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, July 17, 2024 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study



THAT YOU MAY KNOW – A STUDY OF 1,2 & 3 JOHN *Are You Ready for His Coming?* *1 John 2:28-29*

We are going to be in verses 28-29 of 1 John, chapter 2 this evening, but I want us to back up and be reminded of what John is saying here... so look with me if you would beginning in verse 15 and we will read on down to the end of the chapter (1 John 2:15-29)...

¹⁵ Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶ For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. ¹⁷ And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever. ¹⁸ Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour. ¹⁹ They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us. ²⁰ But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things. ²¹ I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and that no lie is of the truth. ²² Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son. ²³ Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either; he who acknowledges the Son has the Father also. ²⁴ Therefore let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father. ²⁵ And this is the promise that He has promised us—eternal life. ²⁶ These things I have written to you concerning those who try to deceive you. ²⁷ But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him. ²⁸ And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed

before Him at His coming. ²⁹ If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone who practices righteousness is born of Him.” – 1 John 2:15-29 (NKJV)

Focus verses (vv.28-29)...

“²⁸ And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming. ²⁹ If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone who practices righteousness is born of Him.” -1 John 2:28-29 (NKJV)

BACKGROUND AND SETTING FOR 1ST, 2ND, & 3RD JOHN:

(1) **AUTHOR = The Apostle John** – If you will notice, the letter of 1 John bears no inscription (name, autograph, signature). It doesn't give us a name of an individual in the actual letter itself. For that reason 1 John is often called an “anonymous letter,” but 2 and 3 John do carry an inscription. They are written by someone called “the Elder,” a reference to one of Jesus' closest disciples/apostles who was a part of Jesus inner circle, John. The moniker “Elder” does indicate that John is advanced in years when these letter were written. The language and style of all three letters are identical to each other as well as to John's Gospel, so the traditional view and the most commonly held view is that all three were written by the “disciple whom Jesus loved” (John 21:20-24). There is no reason to doubt this and early church leaders titled these three little book by John's name.

John actually wrote 5 books in the New Testament... not just these three.

5 Books Written by the Beloved Disciple:

1. **The Gospel of John**
2. **First John**
3. **Second John**
4. **Third John**
5. **The Book of the Revelation**

And this I think is significant... all of his books were written later in life and after all the other books in the Bible were recorded.

Here are some facts we know about John:

- **He was the son of Zebedee and Salome (Mt. 4:21; 27:55-56; Mk. 15:40-41)**
- **He and his brother James were fishermen with their father (Mk. 1:19-20)**
- **He and James were called Boanerges or Sons of thunder by Christ because of their fiery behavior at times (Mk. 3:17; cp. Lk. 9:53-54)**
- **He was one of the 3 most intimate disciples of the Lord (Mt. 17:1ff; 26:37)**
- **He was a close associate of Simon Peter... the first ones to arrive at the tomb (Jn. 20:2-8), they suffered imprisonment together after healing a lame man (Acts 3 & 4),**

and they traveled together to Samaria after the gospel was preached (Acts 8:14-17) not to mention that they were the disciples closest to Jesus

- **He was one of the pillars (prime leaders) of the church in Jerusalem (Gal. 2:9)**
- **From external and extra-biblical sources (history/tradition), like Polycarp, Papias (*pappy-us*), and Justin Martyr (early church fathers) we are told the following about John from his writings – These early church fathers often quoted John and used his writings**
- **Polycarp and Papias were identified as pupils of John - They have writings dated as early as the 2nd century**
- **John was eventually banished to the isle of Patmos by the Roman emperor Domitian, from where he received the visions and wrote The Revelation (cp. Rev. 1:9)**
- **He returned to Ephesus to live out the rest of his life, from where he wrote these three epistles as well as the gospel that bears his name - Archeological remains bear his name in ruins of churches and shrines**
- **John outlived all the other apostles**
- **The book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ was written by John probably close to the same time he wrote these small epistles which bear his name.**
- **Remember the book of the Revelation was written about the vision that John saw while banished to the Greek island of Patmos on the Aegean sea.**
- **Tradition says that this was after John had been sentenced to death by martyrdom.**
- **We know little about John's later life and death from the Bible**
- **The most insightful bit of information comes from John 21 when the risen Christ was talking to Peter about Peter's death - After Jesus told Peter that he would not live long Peter asked about John's death. Jesus replied that if John lived until Christ's return, that was not Peter's concern. This was not a promise that John would live until the Lord returned, but it does seem to indicate that the Lord knew John would live a long time (John 21:19-23)**
- **Tradition holds that John was sentenced to death in a boiling vat of oil, yet he emerged unharmed from the experience**
- **Again tradition tells us that John lived into old age perhaps dying sometime after AD 98... He is thought to have died in Ephesus – But in fact the mystery and unknowns concerning John's death and what happened to him are not known and are varied...**

God Questions? How Did the Apostle John Die?

We know that the apostle John was exiled for his faith late in life (Revelation 1:9). The Bible does not give us details on how the apostle John died, but tradition gives us a few theories.

The most plausible theory of John's death states that John was arrested in Ephesus and faced martyrdom when his enemies threw him in a huge basin of boiling oil. However, according to the tradition, John was miraculously delivered from death. The authorities then sentenced

John to slave labor in the mines of Patmos. On this island in the southern part of the Aegean Sea, John had a vision of Jesus Christ and wrote the prophetic book of Revelation. The apostle John was later freed, possibly due to old age, and he returned to Ephesus, in what is now Turkey. He died as an old man sometime after AD 98, the only apostle to die peacefully.

Another theory concerning John's death is associated with a second-century bishop named Papias of Hierapolis. According to one commentary on Papias's writings, John was killed by a group of Jewish men. However, many historians believe Papias was misquoted or misread and doubt the credibility of this theory.

There is also a legend that says John did not die but rather ascended straight to heaven like Enoch and Elijah. There is no biblical evidence to lend validity to this story.

Ultimately, it is not essential to know how the apostle John died. What is important is the fact that he was not ashamed of Christ (see Luke 9:26) and was willing to die for his faith. A man will not die for something he knows to be a lie. John knew the truth that Jesus had been resurrected, and he was willing to die rather than to renounce his faith in his Savior.

(2) DATE = A.D. 90-95 - As with most books in the Bible, we cannot know for certain when and from where these epistles were penned. As to a date, it is commonly believed to have been written close to the end of the 1st century, with a fairly wide possible time frame... somewhere between 90-95 A.D. Again, we don't know the exact time or order of the books having been written, but here are some possible dates for John's writings...

Dates for John's Biblical Writings:

- 1. The Gospel of John = AD 80 to 98**
- 2. First, Second and Third John = AD 90 to 95**
- 3. The Book of the Revelation = AD 94 to 98**

Of course we know God inspired the Bible and that it was written with His leading, but this may explain why the book of John seems so applicable to the readers of today. Think of this... John had more time to think about what questions were raised in the 50 or more years after the resurrection of Christ. He knew what doubts had been raised and how to answer the questions before we knew to ask them.

(3) PLACE OF WRITING = Ephesus – Again, as with most books in the Bible, we cannot know with certainty when and from where these small letters of John were written. Some guesses are better than others, but are still just that guesses. It is believed by most Biblical scholars that John wrote these letters from Ephesus, the place believed to be where he died. It is usually accepted that John wrote them late in his life. Supporters of this point to 2 John 1 and 3 John 1. In both verses, the author calls himself “the elder.” In the original text, there is a definite article before “elder.” Thus, the reference is probably to an older man rather than to one who serves as an overseer in a local church. Also, 1 John

2:1,12,28; 3:7,18; 5:21; and 3 John 4 all reference John's readers as his "little children." Such a fatherly concern points to John as an older man.

- (4) **RECIPIENTS = 3 different audiences** - The Epistles of John were written to various audiences. They were all written after John was an old man living in Ephesus.

3 Recipients of John's Letter:

1. **Letter 1 = The Ephesian church (and/or surrounding churches)** - The first epistle was not addressed to anyone in particular, but was written more as a sermon
2. **Letter 2 = Elect lady** - The second was written to an unnamed "elect lady."
3. **Letter 3 = Gaius** - The third to a man name Gaius. There are three men who bear that name to whom the letter could have been written. There was a Gaius in Macedonia (Acts 19: 29), Corinth (Rom. 16:23), and Derbe (Acts 20:4).

- (5) **PURPOSE = Multiple purposes** - In terms of a positive stated purpose, John actually gives us reasons why he wrote these epistles:

3 Stated Positive Purposes for These Letters:

1. **That your (our) joy may be made complete = 1 John 1:4**
2. **That you may not sin = 1 John 2:1**
3. **That you may know that you have eternal life = 1 John 5:13**

²⁸ And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming. ²⁹ If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone who practices righteousness is born of Him." -1 John 2:28-29 (NKJV)

Application Questions

1. *Is it wrong to be too dogmatic on your view of prophecy? On what prophetic issues do all orthodox views agree?*
2. *Do you agree that believers may feel momentary shame at the Lord's coming? If not, why not?*
3. *How can we know the balance between the active and passive aspects of abiding in Christ?*
4. *Some Christians argue that the simple answer of abiding in Christ does not work for difficult, deep-seated problems. Agree/disagree? Why?*

Periods of catastrophe, anxiety, world upheaval... even natural disaster, such as an over politicized pandemic, wars, earthquakes and other natural disasters, national crisis (like an attempted assassination on a popular presidential candidate) have historically led some people to anticipate that the destruction of the world as we know it – the "end times" – is near or at hand. This thinking often has a religious component that draws on sacred scripture. In

Christianity, for example, these beliefs include expectations that Jesus will return to Earth after or amid a time of great turmoil.

According to recent polls by Pew Research Center, in the United States...

- **39% of American adults (Christians, non-Christians and otherwise) say they believe “we are living in the end times”**
- **While 58% of American adults say they do not believe we are living in the end times**

Christians are divided on this question...

- **47% of Christians say we are living in the end times**
- **Meanwhile, 49% of Christians say we are not living in the end times**
- **This is interesting... adults in Southern states (48%) are more likely to say we are living in the end times than those living in the Midwest (37%), Northeast (34%) or West (31%)... What do you think that means?**
- **Americans without college degrees are more likely than college graduates to believe humanity is approaching its end, as are Americans with lower income levels when compared with those with higher incomes... What is that about?**
- **And then there is this... (I threw this one in there just because politics is so at the fore front right now... as if we need anything else to argue about) Republicans and Republican-leaning independents are more likely than Democrats and Democratic leaners to express this belief that we are living in the end times**

Views about Jesus’ return to Earth

The survey also explored Americans’ views about a core tenet of Christianity: the belief that Jesus will eventually return to Earth, in what is often called the “second coming.”

- **When asked if Jesus “will return to Earth someday,” more than half of all U.S. adults (55%), including three-quarters of Christians, say this will happen**
- **Roughly four-in-ten Americans either do not believe Jesus will return to Earth (25%) or say they do not believe in Jesus (16%)**

Respondents who said they believe Jesus will return to Earth were also asked how certain they are that this will happen *during their lifetime*.

- **One-in-ten (10%) Americans say they believe the second coming of Jesus will definitely or probably occur during their lifetime.**
- **27% are not sure if Jesus will return in their lifetime.**
- **19% say the return of Jesus will definitely or probably not occur during their lifetime.**

Those statistics are interesting. I share them with you just to make a point... we are obsessed with the end times and Bible prophecy...

There is an interesting article that recently appear in a Christian publication (The Christian Post) written by a pastor entitled...

“Obsession With Bible Prophecy: The Devil Loves It” *by Yvonne Nachtigal*

Christians of all stripes and persuasions believe in the return of Christ, nuances of prophetic interpretation notwithstanding. Furthermore, personal interpretations of prophecy are NOT fundamental to our salvation or our service to God. One will find faithful and unfaithful believers at every point along the prophecy spectrum.

That said, after more than four decades of pastoring, it is my firm conviction that the obsession with Bible prophecy demonstrated by a host of professing Christians today is one of our country’s BIGGEST problems. On the whole, obsession with prophecy either takes those obsessed completely out of the freedom fight or it actually puts them on the side of those who are trying to usurp our liberties.

For some (especially those who believe in a “pre-tribulation Rapture”), prophecy has mostly turned them into indifferent, apathetic facilitators of tyranny. They say things like “This is all predicted in the Bible, so there’s nothing we can do about it” or “Jesus is coming soon, and I won’t be around to see it, so I’m not worrying about it” or “Since this is all part of prophecy, we should not even try to resist, because to resist is to interfere with God” and similar nonsensical, asinine statements.

Others see all kinds of self-interpreted “signs” proving whatever they WANT to believe in order to convince people that their prophetic predilections are superior to everyone else’s for the purpose of exalting their own hyperinflated, super-spiritual egos. In other words, these particular folks are living in their own self-created fantasy world that renders them absolutely worthless—or even detrimental—to the freedom fight.

Still others are so jaded in their prophetic infatuation with the modern state of Israel that they interpret everything through the dark lenses of misguided obfuscation to the point that they are unable to see events clearly and accurately, which makes them prone to the manipulations of Neocons and other enemies of freedom.

People have been interpreting Bible prophecy to suit their own fancies for over 2,000 years. The fact is, no one knows exactly how and when the events surrounding Christ’s return will take place. NO ONE. I don’t care how “smart” and “knowledgeable” they think they are on the subject. THEY DON’T KNOW.

But in the meantime, their inflated opinions of their own brilliance mostly serve to make them totally indifferent to the loss of liberty or even actively supportive of the forces that are trying to usurp our God-given liberties. Either way, freedom loses.

The first question the disciples asked our Lord after His resurrection from the dead concerned prophecy: *“When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?”* (Acts 1:6)

Look carefully at Christ’s response to them: *“It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.”* (Acts 1:7) Did you get that?

“IT IS NOT FOR YOU TO KNOW.”

Students of the scriptures have been studying “end time” prophecies since the completion of the canon of Scripture. And the interpretations have been, and still are, as varied as the people proffering them.

We could assemble the most brilliant apologists in the world for the various interpretations of Bible prophecy and let them present the reasons for their interpretations and each of them would be able to present a very coherent and convincing scriptural case for their position. And the fact is, the best any of them would be doing would be making a studied, educated GUESS at how it all MIGHT happen.

Come on! Get real, folks! Some of the smartest men of history have been making educated guesses regarding the return of Christ since the Apostle John finished writing the Book of The Revelation. Date setters have come and gone—along with the dates they set—for 2,000 years. And the educated guessers of today are no smarter than they were then.

Jesus wasn’t kidding around when He told the disciples (and us), *“IT IS NOT FOR YOU TO KNOW.”* The one thing that He did want us to know is that it is our duty to *“Occupy till I come.”* (Luke 19:13) Therefore, until Christ comes (whenever that is), we are to “occupy” or “take care of business.”

Regardless of one’s private interpretation of prophecy, our duty as Christians is the same: we are to take care of business. We are to tend to our family business, our vocational business, our spiritual business, our community business, our national business, etc. Until He comes, we have a divine mandate to “take care of business.”

Premillennial. Postmillennial. Amillennial. Pre-tribulation. Mid-tribulation. Post-tribulation. Complete Rapture. Partial Rapture. No Rapture. Dispensationalist. Preterist. When it comes to our duty to “take care of business,” IT DOESN’T MATTER. We all have the same duty.

Unfortunately, the preoccupation and obsession with Bible prophecy has diverted people’s attention away from the business at hand. So many, many Christians have become so heavenly minded that they are no earthly good. And pastors and preachers are mostly to

blame. They spiritualize everything to the point that they have rendered the scriptures of NO practical relevance whatsoever.

Talk to the average Christian about his or her duty to their country, and they immediately zone out into a trance and start regurgitating hackneyed clichés about how “God is in control” and we are not supposed to be concerned about it because it’s not a “spiritual” issue or how they are going to be “raptured” to heaven and escape all of the bad stuff, etc. Furthermore, to the average pastor, duty to country amounts to nothing more than some nonsensical drivel about mindless submission to government. It seems to most pastors (well, American pastors anyway) government is GOD. Romans 13 is the only Scripture they know to cite—and they grossly misinterpret it to boot. To most pastors, the stories of Daniel, the three Hebrew children, the judges of Israel, David and Saul, Christ and the Pharisees, the early church and the Judaizers, etc., are of NO practical consequence to life today.

The sky is falling! In the old story, a type of parable, Henny Penny is a chicken and not a very intelligent one. An acorn falls on her head, and she concludes the sky must be falling, leading to hysteria.

Speaking of the end times carries a certain amount of tension. The Bible speaks of the end of this world and a transition into the New Heaven and New Earth, a redemptive story where the end times and corruption of this world is first exposed in a destructive, dramatic fashion before the next world is fully realized.

Passages like Matthew 24 and the book of Revelation read like a fantasy or science fiction novel with epic visions of creatures and beasts. These dramatic scenes of what we refer to as the "last days" or "end times" have led to erroneous declarations from pastors or supposed prophets about the end drawing nigh within the near future. Those dates have all passed, and we can be skeptical of ideas about the end times.

Jesus tells us we won't know the day or the hour the world will end. At the same time, he gives us specific signs the end is coming soon. In the Olivet Discourse of Matthew 24, he lists several end times events and calls these birth pangs like a woman in labor with a child. Painful. Intense. Yet a promise of new life at the end.

Many today look at the world around us, see the headlines, and wonder if we are living in the end times. One way or another, we're getting closer, but we should carefully explore the words of Jesus and how events today might fit his teaching. Let's look at seven events that will be signs of the end times and last days of earth.

7 Events That Will Be Signs of the End Times:

- (1) **Natural Disasters** - In Matthew 24:7-8, Jesus speaks of earthquakes, famines, and pestilences as signs preceding His return. Throughout history, natural disasters have been interpreted by many Christians as indicators of the nearing end times, signaling God's judgment and the fulfillment of biblical prophecy. In recent times, the frequency and intensity of natural disasters have led some to perceive them as confirmation of biblical end-time prophecies. For example, the increasing occurrence of devastating hurricanes, wildfires, earthquakes, and tsunamis in various parts of the world has prompted discussions about their significance in relation to biblical eschatology. Hurricane Katrina, which struck the United States in 2005, causing widespread destruction and loss of life, was viewed by some as a sign of God's judgment, although that is difficult to know for sure. Similarly, the 2011 earthquake and tsunami in Japan, which resulted in thousands of deaths and widespread devastation, raised questions about the role of natural disasters in biblical prophecy. In 2024, several significant earthquakes have occurred globally, sparking discussions among some groups who believe these events are signs of the end times. Notable earthquakes this year include a 7.5 magnitude quake in Japan which caused significant damage and loss of life, and a 7.4 magnitude quake offshore of Hualien, Taiwan. Furthermore, the ongoing climate crisis and its associated impacts, such as rising sea levels and extreme weather events, have heightened concerns about the relevance of biblical end-time prophecies. Many Christians interpret these environmental crises as signs of the earth "groaning" in anticipation of the return of Christ, as described in Romans 8:22. As natural disasters continue to occur with increasing frequency and severity, discussions about their significance in relation to biblical prophecy are likely to persist.
- (2) **War and Conflicts** - Jesus speaks of "wars and rumors of wars" in Matthew 24:6-7 as indicators of the nearing end. Throughout history, these violent and tumultuous times have been viewed by many Christians as connected to biblical prophecies. Signaling a period of tribulation and unrest preceding the return of Christ. In modern times, the prevalence of wars and conflicts around the world has heightened concerns about their significance in relation to biblical end-time prophecies. Within the past century, the world has seen two world wars, and World War II was an actual planet-wide conflict with frightening weapons like nuclear arms. Examples of recent conflicts, such as the ongoing civil war in Syria, the conflict between Israel and Palestine, and the rise of terrorist groups like ISIS, have fueled discussions about their role in fulfilling biblical prophecy. The current Israeli-Palestinian conflict, characterized by decades of violence and political strife, has been viewed by many as a fulfillment of biblical prophecies regarding the restoration of Israel and the Middle East conflict preceding the return of Christ. Furthermore, the rise of terrorism and extremist ideologies, exemplified by groups like ISIS, Al-Qaeda, and Boko Haram, has led to widespread fear and uncertainty, prompting discussions about their role in biblical end-time scenarios.
- (3) **Famine and Disease** - In Matthew 24:7, Jesus speaks of "famines and pestilences" as indicators of the coming end. Throughout the previous centuries, famine and disease

outbreaks have been discussed by many Christians as the fulfillment of biblical prophecy. In modern times, the prevalence of famine and disease outbreaks around the world has heightened concerns about their significance in relation to biblical end-time prophecies. Examples of recent famines, such as the food crises in Yemen, South Sudan, and parts of Africa, have led to widespread starvation and humanitarian emergencies, prompting discussions about their role in fulfilling biblical prophecy. The world has seen a number of recent serious disease outbreaks. From the HIV/AIDS virus in the 80s, SARS in 2002, H1N1 in 2009, and Ebola in 2014-2016, millions have died from these far-reaching diseases. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, caused by the novel coronavirus, has also been viewed by many as a sign of the end times. The pandemic has resulted in millions of deaths worldwide, overwhelmed healthcare systems, and disrupted economies and societies on a global scale. The rapid spread of the virus and its devastating impact have led some to interpret it as a fulfillment of biblical prophecies regarding pestilences and plagues preceding the return of Christ. Moreover, the emergence of new infectious diseases, antibiotic-resistant pathogens, and other public health threats has raised concerns about the potential for future pandemics and their role in biblical end-time scenarios.

- (4) **Moral Decay** - The apostle Paul, in 2 Timothy 3:1-5, mentions moral decay as a sign of the coming end, where people will be “lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God.” Christians throughout history have paid attention to periods of moral decline and spiritual apostasy as potential signs preceding the return of Christ. Today, examples of moral decay can be observed in various aspects of society, including the breakdown of traditional family structures, including high divorce rates, single-parent households, and declining marriage rates, reflecting a departure from biblical principles of marriage and family. Our culture has also experienced increasingly permissive attitudes towards sexuality, pornography, substance abuse, and other forms of immorality indicating a shift away from biblical morality and values. The growing influence of secularism and relativism has led to a rejection of absolute truth and moral absolutes, resulting in moral relativism and the acceptance of diverse lifestyles and beliefs. Disrespect for authority, erosion of trust in institutions, and increasing polarization and division within society contribute to moral decay and societal unrest. As moral decay continues to manifest in various aspects of society, discussions about its role in eschatological narratives are likely to persist.
- (5) **False Prophets** - Back in Matthew 24, Jesus warns of false prophets who will arise during the last days and deceive many. Throughout Scripture, false prophets are depicted as individuals who claim to speak on behalf of God but propagate deceitful teachings and lead people astray from the truth. In modern times, false prophets continue to exist, disseminating misleading teachings and exploiting people’s spiritual vulnerabilities for personal gain. Examples of false prophets and deceptive religious movements can be observed in various contexts. Some self-proclaimed Christian leaders promote a

distorted version of the gospel that emphasizes material wealth and financial prosperity as signs of God's favor. They often manipulate scripture to promote the idea that faithfulness to God leads to material success, exploiting vulnerable believers and perpetuating a message contrary to biblical teachings on humility, sacrifice, and stewardship. Numerous cults and fringe religious movements have emerged throughout history, led by charismatic leaders who claim divine authority and offer exclusive access to spiritual truth. These groups often use manipulation, coercion, and isolation to control their followers and maintain power, leading to psychological and emotional harm. These have increased in the past century. Various new age and spiritualist movements promote syncretic beliefs and practices that blend elements of different religious traditions with esoteric teachings and mystical experiences. While some may offer insights into spirituality and personal growth, others promote deceptive ideologies and false claims of spiritual enlightenment.

- (6) **Persecution of Believers** - Jesus cautions in Matthew 24:9-10 that during the last days, believers will be persecuted and hated because of their faith. Throughout the Bible, persecution is depicted as a hallmark of discipleship and a fulfillment of Jesus' words that "in this world you will have trouble" (John 16:33). Persecution of Christians continues to occur around the world. In fact, there have been more martyrs to Christianity in the past century than in the previous 1800 years combined. Examples of persecution of Christians include the following. In countries where religious extremism holds sway, such as parts of the Middle East, Africa, and Asia, Christians are often targeted for their faith. They face violence, discrimination, and oppression at the hands of extremist groups who seek to eradicate Christianity from their territories. In some countries with authoritarian regimes, Christians are persecuted by the state for their religious beliefs. They may face imprisonment, torture, or even death for practicing their faith or engaging in evangelism. In areas of conflict or civil unrest, Christians are often targeted by armed groups or factions seeking to advance their political or ideological agendas. They may be subjected to attacks, bombings, or forced displacement, resulting in loss of life, property, and livelihoods. In societies where Christianity is viewed as a threat to cultural or national identity, Christians may face social discrimination, harassment, or exclusion from certain sectors of society. They may be denied access to education, employment opportunities, or public services because of their faith.
- (7) **False Christs** - Finally, as the return of the Messiah nears, the Devil will bring more counterfeit versions. In Matthew 24:24, Jesus cautions that during the end times, many false messiahs will arise and deceive crowds of followers. False christs are individuals who claim to be the Messiah or Savior but propagate deceitful teachings and lead people away from the true faith. False christs continue to emerge and seem to be occurring more in the past century. Jim Jones founded the Peoples Temple and styled himself as a messianic figure, claiming to be the reincarnation of Jesus, Buddha, and Lenin. He led his followers to establish Jonestown, where over 900 members died in a mass murder-suicide in 1978. Leader of the Branch Davidians, David Koresh, claimed to be the final prophet and the "Lamb of God" mentioned in the Book of Revelation. He and many

of his followers died in a standoff with law enforcement in Waco, Texas, in 1993. Sun Myung Moon founded the Unification Church, also known as the Moonies. Moon claimed to be the second coming of Christ and taught his followers to view him as the messiah. He gained a large following and built a religious empire. Co-founder of the Heaven's Gate cult, Marshall Applewhite, preached that he and his followers were extraterrestrial beings sent to Earth to guide humanity to the “next level” of existence. He claimed to be the “present representative” of Jesus Christ and led his followers in a mass suicide in 1997, believing they would be transported to a spaceship trailing the Hale-Bopp comet.

Now there are two important things to remember when you're curious about distinguishing signs of the end times and trying to discern if this is truly a sign or just another indication of the world we living in...

2 Things to Remember in Discerning End Times Events:

- (1) These are modern examples of the signs Jesus and the apostles spoke about; however, to some degree, these signs appear in every generation -** They reveal the sin and corruption of humanity and the systems of this world, making the verses in Matthew 24 and Revelation relevant to every generation.
- (2) While some signs are more intense today than ever before (world wars as an example), our modern communication and media might give us the perception things happen more than in generations past -** We must be careful to both watch for the signs as Jesus said but also to be careful not to jump to conclusions.

Regarding the end times, the core teaching by Jesus and the writers of the New Testament points us to constant readiness. Even when we recognize the signs in the modern day, the end will come as a surprise. We must keep our lamps full of oil and lights lit, waiting for the coming of Jesus and the coming redemption of all things.

The second coming of Jesus Christ in power and glory is the biggest next event that will take place in this world. It will be the most amazing event ever to shake the entire world.

Listen to how Jesus described it (Luke 21:25-28), ²⁵ *“And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; ²⁶ men’s hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. ²⁷ Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. ²⁸ Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near.”*

The question is, “Are you ready for the big event?” You may think, “I’ve trusted in Jesus Christ as my Savior, so I’m ready.” In one sense, that is true. But the Bible teaches that even

as believers, we should be prepared for His return. Jesus concluded His Olivet Discourse with these warnings to the disciples (Mark 13:33-37), *“³³ Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is. ³⁴ It is like a man going to a far country, who left his house and gave authority to his servants, and to each his work, and commanded the doorkeeper to watch. ³⁵ Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming—in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning—³⁶ lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. ³⁷ And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!”*

The apostle John heard Jesus speak those words. John has warned us that we are in the last hour, with many deceivers trying to lead us astray from the truth. With this danger in mind, he has given us three tests by which we can detect such false teachers, and also test our own faith:

3 Tests to Detect False Teachers:

- (1) The moral test of obedience to Jesus Christ (1 John 2:3-6)**
- (2) The relational test of love for the brethren (1 John 2:7-11)**
- (3) The doctrinal test of believing the truth about Jesus Christ (1 John 2:18-27)**

Now John begins a second application of the tests: (1) the moral test (2:28-3:10); (2) the relational test (3:11-18); then, as in the first cycle (2:12-17), he interrupts the tests at this point to insert a word about assurance (3:19-24); finally, (3) the doctrinal test (4:1-6).

In our text (2:28-29), John tells us how to be ready for the big event of all history...

To be ready for Christ's coming, abide in Him as little children.

John makes three simple, but important, points:

Three 3 Simple Points Concerning Christ's Coming:

- (1) Jesus Christ is coming again – *It's not a “if” He comes. He will... He is coming! It's not a matter of “if”... it's “when” and it could be anytime.***
- (2) When Christ comes, some will be ready, and some will not – *Not everyone will be ready... not everyone will be saved***
- (3) To be ready for Christ's coming, you must abide in Him – *What does that mean?***

JESUS CHRIST IS COMING AGAIN (1 John 2:28)

“²⁸ And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.” -1 John 2:28

The word in **verse 28, “When He appears”** in Greek is literally, **“if He appears.”** But the uncertainty is *not* about the *fact* of His coming, but rather about the *time* of it.

➤ The *fact* that He is coming again bodily is either true or the Bible is false.

- But we do not know *when* He will return.
- James Boice writes (*The Epistles of John* [Zondervan], p. 96) that in the New Testament, "... one verse in twenty-five deals with the Lord's return. It is mentioned 318 times in the 260 chapters of the New Testament. It is mentioned in every one of the New Testament books, with the exception of Galatians, which deals with a particular doctrinal problem, and the very short books such as 2 and 3 John and Philemon."
- Jesus repeatedly mentioned His own return. On the night before His crucifixion, He promised the anxious disciples (John 14:1-3), *"Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also."*
- When the disciples watched the risen Jesus ascend bodily into heaven, two angels appeared and said (Acts 1:11), *"Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven."* He will come bodily.

Believers disagree a lot about the details of prophecy, such as the millennium and the rapture. There are obviously good reasons for each view or else everyone who holds to the authority of the Bible would agree. But there is one thing every true believer, no matter what his prophetic views, holds as absolutely true: Jesus Christ is coming back bodily as the conquering Judge and King.

WHEN CHRIST COMES, SOME WILL BE READY, BUT OTHERS WILL NOT BE READY

"²⁸ And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming. ²⁹ If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone who practices righteousness is born of Him." -1 John 2:28-29 (NKJV)

John indicates that there are two possibilities when Jesus Christ comes...

2 Possibilities When Christ Returns:

- (1) You will have confidence**
- (2) You will have shame**

Notice it again in verse 28, *"²⁸ And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming."* But, is John referring to believers who will be ashamed at the Lord's coming, or to the heretics and those who have followed them in their denial of the deity of Jesus Christ?

It seems to me that the *primary* reference in the context is to the heretics and their followers. For a while, they professed to know Jesus Christ, but they turned away, showing that their faith was not genuine, saving faith (2:19). They have denied Him His rightful place as the

Sovereign Lord and have turned, instead, to foolish speculations that puff them up with pride in their supposed knowledge. Because by their denial of Christ, they were ashamed of Him, when He comes He will be ashamed of them (Mark 8:38). They will shrink back in fear and shame when they see Him in His glory (Matt. 22:11-13; Rev. 6:15-17).

But, there may be a secondary sense, momentary in duration, in which even true believers could be ashamed when He comes. Some have worked for Christ out of selfish, prideful motives. They will be saved, but as through fire when their works are burned up (1 Cor. 3:12-15). Surely, they must feel a sense of shame over their sin, even though they quickly will be transformed into Christ's image and enter heaven in their perfect resurrection bodies (1 John 3:2; 1 Cor. 15:50-53). Even we who have conscientiously served Christ are painfully aware of our many shortcomings and failures. We may have a brief moment of shame or regret when we see Him and think, "If only I had done more for Him!"

But, for those who abide in Christ, the dominant mood will be confidence when He comes. The Greek word means, "courage, confidence, boldness, fearlessness, especially in the presence of persons of high rank" (*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, Bauer, Arndt, & Gingrich [University of Chicago Press], second ed., p. 630). The word used for "coming" (2:28) was used of the visit of a king or emperor. If you've ever had to go before a high-ranking official, you've probably felt a bit nervous. Even John, when he saw Jesus in His glory, "fell at His feet like a dead man" (Rev. 1:17). But here John says, "we may have confidence ... at His coming." How can this be? John gives a simple answer:

TO BE READY FOR CHRIST'S COMING, YOU MUST ABIDE IN HIM AS A LITTLE CHILD

Notice our passage again verses 28-29, *"²⁸ And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming. ²⁹ If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone who practices righteousness is born of Him."* The 2 fold command is simple...

The 2 Fold Command for Christ Coming: (in order to be ready)

(1) **Abide in Him** - "*Abide*" is one of John's favorite words. He uses it more than all other New Testament writers combined—24 times in 1 John. In the Upper Room, Jesus used it 11 times (in John 15:4-16). It is used both of God's abiding in us and our abiding in Him (see 2:27; 3:24; 4:15). There is a sense in which every true believer abides (remains) in Christ, but the fact that we are commanded to abide in Him implies persistent and purposeful action on our part (Robert Law, *The Tests of Life* [Baker], pp. 199-200). Note five things about what it means to abide in Him:

5 Things About What it Means to Abide in Christ;

1. **To abide in Him, you must be in Him** - Believers are never commanded to be *in Christ*, because that is a fact, but we are commanded to *abide in Him*. When you trust

in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, you are placed in Him. Paul uses this phrase often to describe our permanent position of identification with Christ and all of the blessings that He bestows on us by His grace (Eph. 1:3). This position of being in Christ comes to us through the new birth, when we are born into God's family. If you wonder how you can know if you've been born again, look for signs of new life. Have you truly trusted and are you now trusting in Jesus Christ alone for salvation? Have you repented and are you now repenting of your sins? Do you love God and the things of God? These and many more are signs that you have been born again. If you have been born again, you are in Christ.

2. **To abide in Him is both passive and active at the same time** - There is a popular teaching that if you are abiding, you are not striving or exerting any effort. You are simply resting in all that Jesus is for you, as the branch abides passively in the vine. That's half of the truth, but not all of it (for a more complete discussion of this see James Rosscup, *Abiding in Christ* [Zondervan], pp. 146-170). There is the passive sense in which we rest or trust in Christ as our life and strength. We will accomplish nothing of value for God unless we abide in Christ in that sense (John 15:5). But at the same time, we are commanded to abide in Him, which implies that we must be active. The active side involves the three tests: obeying His commands (1 John 2:6; 3:24), loving the brethren (2:10; 4:16), and holding tenaciously to the truth of the gospel (2:24; 4:15).
3. **To abide in Him means to live righteously** - Verse 29 (in context) explains how not to be ashamed at Christ's coming, namely, to live righteously (it also anticipates the theme of 3:4-10). When John says, "If you know that He is righteous," "if" has the sense of "since." "He" could refer to Jesus Christ the righteous (2:2), who is the subject of verse 28. But since the Bible normally talks about the Father as the one who begets us as His children, the "He" and "Him" of verse 28 probably look ahead to the Father (3:1). Note also that His righteousness (2:29) is perfectly compatible with His great love (3:1). We fall into error if we do not hold to both. Don't mistake the point of verse 29. It is *not* saying that righteous behavior is the cause or condition of the new birth, but just the opposite. The verb is literally, "has been born of Him" (Greek perfect tense). The meaning is that a righteous life is *evidence* of the new birth. Like begets like. A child will be like his parents, because he shares their nature. Because God is righteous, those truly born of Him will be righteous in the overall pattern of their lives. When we are born of Him, He grants to us "everything pertaining to life and godliness" (2 Pet. 1:3; see, also, Eph. 4:24). That new life in us produces godliness, or righteous living (1 John 3:9). Living righteously is a lifelong process of growth in obedience to God's Word. It does not happen instantly or without setbacks and struggles. But if you are born again, you will be learning to judge every thought, motive, and attitude by God's Word. You will seek to please the Lord, beginning on the thought level (Matt. 5:27-30; Mark 7:20-23). The fruit of the Holy Spirit will be growing in your character (Gal. 5:22-23). You will be disciplining yourself for the purpose of godliness (1 Tim. 4:7). Of course, all of this is done in dependence on the

Holy Spirit, but you must be involved actively in the process (Phil. 2:12-13; Gal. 5:16).

4. **To abide in Him means to hold firmly to the truth of the Word, especially to the truth of the gospel** - We focused on this last week (2:24, “what you heard from the beginning”), and so I only mention it in passing. In a day when there are many pressures to compromise the gospel in order to display love and unity, we must stand firm. If you do not hold tenaciously to the truth, you are not abiding in Christ, who is the truth.
5. **To abide in Him means to be at home with Him and to be an alien to this world** - We looked at this in 2:15-17, where John draws the line between love for the world and love for the Father. In contrast to this fleeting world, the one who does the will of God *abides* forever. If you are more comfortable watching TV or godless movies and hanging out with worldly people to join them in their vain entertainment than you are spending time with the Lord and His people, then you are not abiding in Him. If you have secret areas of your life where you block God out, you are not abiding in Him. To abide in Him means that you are at home with Him and He is at home with you. You feel increasingly like an alien or foreigner to this evil world: “For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him” (3:1). Much more could be said, but notice, also, how John again addresses his flock as “little children.” The implication is...

- (2) **Abide in Him as His little child** - We live in a day when pastors are told that they lack the professional expertise to help people with their “deep” problems. In seminary, you are told that you need to refer these difficult cases to the trained professionals. The not-so-subtle implication is that the Bible does not have answers for the tough problems that people face. For solutions there, we have to turn to worldly psychology. I recognize that if there are biochemical imbalances or if drugs are involved, things get complicated to sort out. I also realize that some problems are not easy to overcome. Yet at the same time, the gospel is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes and the Holy Spirit in the believer is quite capable of producing His fruit, which describes an emotionally and relationally whole person. If the promises of God’s Word do not apply to the difficult problems of life, then they really aren’t much good. John’s words, “little children, abide in Him,” suggest at least four simple truths...

4 Simple Truths His Children Who Abide in Him:

1. **As little children, do not over-complicate the Christian life** - “Little children” implies that abiding in Christ is simple, not something that you need a graduate degree to understand or practice. In fact, Jesus said (Matt. 18:3), “unless you are converted and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.” I have seen a bumper sticker that reads, “Simplify.” That’s not bad advice in all areas of life, but it is especially appropriate for your walk with the Lord. Ask yourself these basic questions:

- Do I spend consistent, regular time alone with the Lord in the Word?
- Am I trusting God by drawing near in prayer to His throne of grace in all of my trials?
- Do I memorize and meditate on God's Word, applying it to my life?
- Am I faithful as a steward of all that God has entrusted to me, maintaining integrity and putting off greed?
- Am I growing in holiness, developing the fruit of the Spirit by walking in the Spirit?
- Am I judging, confessing, and forsaking sin, beginning on the thought level?
- Am I working at maintaining and deepening the relationships with those in my life, especially in my immediate family? This includes truthful, loving communication; listening; kindness; patience; forgiveness; and, humility.

This isn't rocket science! It is basic Christian living and those who have applied these things have endured terrible suffering and even martyrdom with God's joy. Invariably, when people have serious personal or family problems, they are failing at these and other basics of the Christian life.

2. **As little children, depend on your Father for everything** - Little children depend on their parents for everything. Their parents must protect them and provide for them. They would not survive for a day if their parents abandoned them to the elements. If you are abiding in the Father as a little child, you depend on Him for provision, life, and power. You take every need to Him in prayer and draw near to Him as your loving, caring Father. When trials come into your life, you must actively draw near to the Lord and depend on Him as you have never had to do at other times. If you do not *actively* do this, you will become angry and bitter at God and drift away from Him. This is why Peter writes to suffering believers (1 Pet. 5:7-11), "Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you. Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world. After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you. To Him be dominion forever and ever. Amen."
3. **As little children, do not think more highly of yourself than you ought to** - You must humble yourself as a child (Matt. 18:4). Children are not strong in themselves, but only in their protector. They run to their parents for refuge. You are weak, but your heavenly Father is strong. It is only when we're aware of our own weakness that we rely on Him for our strength (2 Cor. 12:9-10). We can see an example of this in our text, in the little word "we" (2:28). In the flow of the sentence, you would expect, "you," not "we." But John includes himself with these little children. Even though he was an aged apostle, even though he had been with the Lord, he recognized his need to abide in Him as a little child.

- 4. As little children, revel in the Father's great love for you** - This is implicit in the relationship between a father and his children. Every father loves his children with a special love. John will state this explicitly in 3:1-2, and we need to wait until our study of those verses to comment more. But for now, note that if you know and revel in the Father's great love, abiding in Him will not be a difficult chore, but a great delight.

CONCLUSION

So, are you ready for the biggest, most amazing event in world history—the return of Jesus Christ? The answer to that question depends on your answer to another question: Are you abiding in Him as a little child?

If not, why not begin today? Get alone with the Lord and your Bible. Confess all known sin to Him. Mourn over your coldness toward the Father's love and toward the Lord Jesus, who gave Himself for you on the cross. Accept His gracious forgiveness. Go over the questions that I mentioned earlier and prioritize where you need to begin. Change your daily schedule so that you can begin to implement these basics of abiding in Christ. As you do, you will grow in confidence as you anticipate His coming.

7 Ways to Prepare for Christ's Return:

- (1) Live in the light of His first coming** - Do you want to be prepared for Jesus' second coming? Then live like His first coming mattered. Jesus spoke parables about His return. In Luke 19:11-27, He told about a nobleman who traveled to a far country to become king. This nobleman called ten of his servants, gave them each a mina (coin), and told them: "engage in my business until I come back" (v. 13). After an unspecified duration of time, the nobleman returned as king and summoned his servants to give an account of their faithfulness. The first two servants had been productive with what was entrusted to them. But another servant had done nothing. He simply wrapped his mina in a cloth and hid it. His mistake was that he didn't act on what he professed to believe. He professed something about his master but didn't live by his profession, and lost his reward (vv. 21-23). Those who profess Christ as Lord and live according to their profession will receive great reward when Jesus returns.
- (2) Be discerning** - Twice in Mark 13 Jesus warned His disciples not to be led astray by false claim: "Watch out that no one deceives you... false prophets will arise and will perform signs and wonders to lead astray, if possible, the elect" (vv. 5-6,21-22). Paul warned, "Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him... Don't let anyone deceive you in any way" (2 Thess. 2:1-3). The warning of Scripture is consistent: use discernment in listening to those who claim to have all the details of the end times figured out, and ignore those who resort to date setting end time events.
- (3) Accept the uncertainties** - "Now concerning that day or hour no one knows—neither the angels in heaven nor the Son—but only the Father. Watch! Be alert! For you don't know when the time is coming" (Mark 13:32-33). If Jesus was content not to know the

day or hour, then let's stop speculating about it. Be content with "no one knows ... only the Father."

- (4) **Don't lose hope** - Paul reminded Titus that Jesus' first coming brought salvation and it instructs us how to live "sensible, righteous, and godly" lives in this present age. It is our "blessed hope"—the expectation of Jesus' return—that compels us to do so (Titus 2:11-13).
- (5) **Encourage one another** - The promise that "the Lord will descend from heaven with a shout" in 1 Thessalonians 4:16 is followed by a command: "Therefore encourage one another with these words" (1 Thess. 4:18). Again, the affirmation that "the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night" (1 Thess. 5:2) is followed by the exhortation: "Therefore encourage one another and build each other up" (v. 11). Scripture's teachings about the second coming are not given to satisfy our personal fascination with future events but that the body of Christ might encourage one another with the promises.
- (6) **Live as if today is the day** - If we're not careful, the delay in Jesus' return will lead us to complacency. Living in the expectation that He could return today compels us to live every day for what really matters—for eternity.
- (7) **Keep on doing the work Jesus left us to do** - Jesus warned of troubling events as we near the end of the age, including persecution of believers (Mark 13:7-9). Then He added that nothing—not even persecution—should distract us from the one necessary thing: preach to the gospel to all nations (v. 10).

Before ascending into heaven, Jesus gave the church its marching orders: "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8). The very next verses report that the disciples just stood there looking up into the sky. Two angels appeared and spoke the words the church today needs to hear: *Why are you standing there gazing into heaven? Jesus is coming back—so get busy!* (vv. 9-11).