

## STUDY ON THE BOOK OF FIRST JOHN

### BORN OF GOD!

Read 1 John 2:28-3:6

#### **Introduction**

Becoming a child of God is seen as a great sign of love from God the Father. John specifically mentions that believers are not only "called children of God;" believers truly are God's children. This theme closely connects with the words of John 1:12: "But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God." God's children are those who both receive Jesus as Lord and believe in His name as the risen Messiah.

John highlights this concept using the Greek term *ideate*, meaning, "look at this!" The idea that God would love us enough to make us His children is just one of the amazing aspects of the gospel.

John then notes why unbelievers do not "know" believers: Unbelievers do not know Christ. As used by John, the concept of "knowing" involves more than just information. It refers to a sense of intimacy, fellowship, and connection. The unbelieving world does not have a relationship with Christ. Therefore, they have no relationship with His children. God's children are to become increasingly like the Father, regardless of whether others recognize us.

#### **The Children of God**

*"And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming. If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone who practices righteousness is born of Him."* (vv28-29)

The early church -- even as late as First John -- had a keen anticipation of Christ's return, which would usher in the end of the age and the final judgment. Considering this judgment, says John, we need to live righteous lives so that we'll be ready to meet him. John employs a pair of antonyms -- confidence vs. ashamed -- to introduce the topic of the need for righteous living. If we don't abide in Him, we will be afraid and ashamed when we appear before Him.

John uses two words in his letters to speak about Christ's Second Coming:

"Appears" is *phaneroō*, which is found four times in this lesson -- here and in 3:2, 5 and 8. It means, "to cause to become visible, reveal, expose publicly." Christ will suddenly become visible, "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet" (1 Corinthians 15:52). As suddenly as a flash of lightning (Matthew 24:27) he will come.

"Coming" is *parousia*, "coming, advent." This was "the official term for a visit of a person of high rank, especially of kings and emperors visiting a province."

If we are skating along the thin edge of sin, we'll want to hide at his coming. In Revelation, those who oppose Christ will cry out to the mountains and the rocks:

*"Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"* (Revelation 6:16-17)

John points to Jesus' own righteousness as our example to emulate as we prepare for his coming. This lesson is about right living vs. lawlessness. In verse 29 John uses a pair of related words -- "righteous"

and "righteousness." "Righteous" is dikaios, "pertaining to being in accordance with high standards of rectitude, upright, just, fair."

### **Born of God**

*“Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore, the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.”*  
(vv1-3)

Having just mentioned being born of Him, John speaks in amazement about this manner of love that makes us children of God. He wants us to behold it — that is, look at it and study it intently. It is of great benefit to the Christian to take a good, intense look at the love of God bestowed on us.

He has bestowed on us speaks many things. First, it speaks of the measure of God’s love to us; it could more literally be translated lavished on us. Secondly, it speaks of the manner of God’s giving of love; bestowed has the idea of a one-sided giving, instead of a return for something earned.

What is it that makes us slow to believe the love of God? Sometimes it is pride, which demands to prove itself worthy of the love of God before it will receive it. Sometimes it is unbelief, which cannot trust the love of God when it sees the hurt and pain of life. And sometimes it just takes time for a person to come to a fuller understanding of the greatness of God’s love.

The greatness of this love is shown in that by it, we are called children of God. As God looked down on lost humanity, He might have merely had a charitable compassion, a pity on our plight, both in this life and in eternity. With a mere pity, He might have set forth a plan of salvation where man could be saved from hell. But God went far beyond that, to call us the children of God.

Who calls us the children of God?

- The Father does (*“I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the LORD Almighty,”* 2 Corinthians 6:18).
- The Son does (*He is not ashamed to call them brethren, Hebrews 2:11*).
- The Spirit does (*The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, Romans 8:16*).

There is a sense in which this is a totally “unnecessary” blessing that God gives during salvation, and a demonstration of His true and deep love for us. We can picture someone helping or saving someone, but not going so far as to make them a part of the family — but this is what God has done for us. If we are truly children of God, then it should show in our likeness to our Father and in our love for our “siblings.”

Ultimately, we should expect the world to treat us as it treated Him — rejecting Jesus and crucifying Jesus. While it is true that Jesus loved sinners and they, recognizing that love, flocked to Him, we must also remember that it was the world that cried out crucify Him!

### **The Destiny of God’s Children**

Our present standing is plain. We can know, and have an assurance, that we are indeed among the children of God according to verse 2. Though our present standing is plain, our future destiny is clouded. We don’t know in the kind of detail we would like to know what we will become in the world beyond. In this sense, we can’t even imagine what we will be like in glory.

We are not left completely in the dark about our future state. When Jesus is revealed to us, either by His coming for us or our coming to Him, we shall be like Him. The Bible speaks of God's great plan for our lives like this: *For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren (Romans 8:29)*. God's ultimate goal in our lives is to make us like Jesus, and here, John speaks of the fulfilment of that purpose.

This reminds us that even though we grow into the image of Jesus now, we still have a long way to go. None of us will be finished until we see Jesus, and only then truly we shall be like Him. Perhaps this is the greatest glory of heaven: not to be personally glorified, but to be in the unhindered, unrestricted, presence of our Lord.

What will we see when we see Jesus? Revelation 1:13-16 describes a vision of Jesus in heaven: *He was dressed in a long robe with a golden [breastplate]; His head and His hair were white as snow-white wool, His eyes blazed like fire, and His feet shone as the finest bronze glows in the furnace. His voice had the sound of a great waterfall, and I saw that in His right hand He held seven stars. A sharp two-edged sword came out of His mouth, and His face was ablaze like the sun at its height.* (J.B. Phillips translation) This isn't the same Jesus who walked this earth, looking like a normal man.

### **Can We Really Purify Ourselves?**

*“And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.” (v3)*

Can we really purify ourselves? Isn't all of God's work accomplished by grace? Yes, it is grace, but that's a cop-out, a way of avoiding responsibility to clean up your act. You must cooperate! The Bible makes it clear that we ourselves can and must repent and turn from our sins (Matthew 3:2; 4:17; Luke 13:3, 5; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 8:22; 17:30; 26:20). James calls on us to purify ourselves.

*“Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.” (James 4:8)*

When we know our end is to be more like Jesus, it makes us want to be more like Jesus right now. Having the anticipation of being with Jesus, of the soon coming of Jesus Christ, can have a marvellous purifying effect in our lives. It makes us want to be ready, to be serving Him now, to be pleasing Him now.

### **Sin Is Lawlessness**

*“Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness.” (v4)*

John defines sin at its most basic root. It is a disregard for the law of God, which is inherently a disregard for the law Maker, God Himself. We often fail in the battle against sin because we won't call it for what it is: lawlessness, an offense against the Great Law Maker, God. Instead, we say things like “If I've done anything wrong...” or “Mistakes were made...” and so forth. Call it for what it is: sin and lawlessness. The first step towards holy living is to recognize the true nature and wickedness of sin.

### **He Takes Away Our Sin**

*“And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin.” (v5)*

John here defined the mission of Jesus Christ at its most basic root — to take away our sins. The angel Gabriel promised Joseph regarding the ministry of Jesus: *“you shall call His name JESUS, for He shall save His people from their sin” (Matthew 1:21)*.

- Jesus takes away our sin in the sense of taking the penalty of our sin. This is immediately accomplished when one comes by faith to Jesus.

- Jesus takes away our sin in the sense of taking the power of sin away. This is an ongoing work in the lives of those who walk after Jesus.
- Jesus takes away our sin in the sense of taking the presence of sin away. This is a work that will be completed when we pass into eternity and are glorified with Jesus.

### **Abiding in sin or abiding in God.**

*“Whoever abides in Him does not sin. Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him.” (v6)*

Since sin is lawlessness, a disregard for God (1 John 3:4), and since Jesus came to take away our sins (1 John 3:5), and since in Jesus there is no sin (1 John 3:5), then to abide in Him means to not sin. It is very important to understand what the Bible means — and what it does not mean — when it says does not sin. According to the verb tense John uses, does not sin means does not live a lifestyle of habitual sin. John has already told us in 1 John 1:8 If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. In 1 John 1:8, the grammar indicates John is speaking about occasional acts of sin. The grammar of 1 John 3:6 indicates that John is speaking of a settled, continued lifestyle of sin. John is not teaching here the possibility of sinless perfection.

To live a lifestyle of habitual sin is to demonstrate that you have not seen Him (in a present sense of the ultimate “seeing Him mentioned in 1 John 3:2), and that you have not known Him. There are some people so great and so wonderful that seeing them or knowing them will change your life forever. Jesus is that kind of person.