



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

WHEN JESUS CHRIST APPEARS! - 1 JOHN 3:2 COLORADO APRIL 16, 2019

Dan File, P.O. Box 1088, Lake City, CO 81235-1088/303-345-8830 / filefamily@centurytel.net

John emphasizes the reality of the believers' status in 1 John 3:1. We are children of God the Father Himself! Only by His grace! This is no empty hope or wish, but a certainty. God has indeed loved us and made us His children. It is almost impossible to have any sense of what it means to be a child of God. "And such we are" John emphasizes. A fact that is not by nature or entitlement, but only by God's grace!

This is an immense privilege. God Himself has chosen us to be His family. John 1:12-13 describes that we are children born not of natural descent into God's family, nor of any human decision, but we are born of God. As an outcome of God's love lavished on us, we are children of God. And as God's children, we not only have our sins forgiven, but we are adopted into God's family, His own family! And we have the right to call Him Father, our Father! (Hebrews 2:12) and His Heaven our home! (1 Peter 1:4)

I. WHEN JESUS CHRIST APPEARS! - 1 JOHN 3:2

"See how great a love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the children of God; and such we are. For this reason, the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. (2) Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is." 1 John 3:1-2

John invites all true believers to wonder and contemplate not only that we are called children of God now in the present (1 John 3:1), but to be encouraged by God's transforming love yet to come in the future (1 John 3:2).

A. "BELOVED, NOW WE ARE CHILDREN OF GOD..." - 1 JOHN 3:2A

As we saw in the previous verse, any who possess saving faith in Christ Jesus, are children of God. (Romans 8:14-18) And John continues to include himself in that group. John uses an expression of time, "now" to emphasize what we are right now! This marks the present amazing spiritual identity that we have right now as believers. And then John will point us to what we shall be when Jesus Christ returns.

B. "AND IT HAS NOT APPEARED AS YET WHAT WE SHALL BE..." - 1 JOHN 3:2B

John then points us to what we shall be like in the future, our inheritance by virtue of being in the family of God as His children. It is clear John does not know exactly what that will be like as he says, "and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be". This is hidden from us. What we will be like remains a mystery with God. We do not know what kind of visible display our

future will bring. By using "what", John stresses the quality of that which God has in store! This is veiled from our sight now.¹

It is of this that Paul writes in Romans 8:16-25 and further in Philippians 3:20-21, "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior the Lord Jesus Christ; Who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself." (See also Psalm 73:24, Romans 9:23, 1 Corinthians 15:42-49, Colossians 3:4, 2 Timothy 2:10)

C. "WE KNOW THAT WHEN HE APPEARS..." - 1 JOHN 3:2C

In this phrase John gives us another time frame when this transformation will take place. John begins by assuring us that this hope is not a vague uncertainty for John says, "We know". God's ultimate purpose is to make believers like Jesus Christ and this verse confirms our ultimate glorification. In heaven, we will see Jesus Christ and we will become like Him!²

We have an undisclosed future ahead. We know God's work in us and with us is not yet complete. (Philippians 1:6) But the best is yet to come.

"know" Greek "oidmen" a well assured recognition, declaration of certainty.

John is making a declaration of the Christian faith. John is absolutely assured of what? - "when He appears". John is absolutely certain that Christ will appear, will return. John has already discussed Christ's second coming in previous verses. Jesus Christ will return and John has an attitude of expectancy. But God leaves the date of this event undisclosed. We are waiting for a future undated event. We are certain that Christ will return, but uncertain of when.

So John will give us a sequence of events that begin with this phrase, "when He appears". The first event is that Jesus Christ will appear! Acts 1:11 speaks of what we wait for! This is the personal return of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! The second event is that "we shall see Him." And the third glorious event is then, "we shall be like Him".

D. "WE SHALL BE LIKE HIM" - 1 JOHN 3:2D

God has promised to bring about an incredible transformation as Romans 8:28 reveals, "to be conformed to the image of his Son." And that transformation will make the redeemed in Christ

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1 JOHN 3:2 – WHEN JESUS CHRIST APPEARS!

perfectly holy and righteous...*like Him*. John is saying that we know, we are certain that when Jesus Christ appears, returns, “*we will be like Him*”!³

God’s ultimate purpose is to conform us to “*the image of His Son*.” At this point, we can only dimly understand what it will mean for us to be “*like Him*.” The indwelling Holy Spirit is at work in the lives of all believers, inwardly transforming us day by day to be like Christ. That is why John, and all of Scripture for that matter, stresses the ambition of pursuing holiness. We will not fully realize our pursuit until Jesus Christ returns. Philippians 1:6 says, “*For I am confident of this very thing, that He Who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus*.” When Christ returns, our yearning for Christlikeness will be fully realized as John says with certainty, “*we shall be like Him*.”

E. “BECAUSE WE SHALL SEE HIM JUST AS HE IS.” - 1 JOHN 3:2E

Our future face-to-face encounter with Jesus Christ will complete our transformation into His likeness. 1 Corinthians 13:12 speaks of where we will no longer see Christ dimly, but we shall see Him face to face! We shall see Christ as He is now in heaven.

We shall see Christ as He is, and this is something John himself has not yet seen. John is not talking about seeing Christ as in His days of earthly ministry, nor seeing Him with the eyes of faith now, but seeing Him in His heavenly glory. And John is saying that seeing Jesus will be enough to make us pure like Him. (1 Corinthians 13:12, 2 Corinthians 3:18)⁴ Thus, we are fit for heaven eternally!

God has promised at the end of the age that His Son will return to this earth. When Christ returns and we see Him as He is, glorious in perfection, God will transform us to His likeness, the goal of our salvation.⁵ John seems to suggest in the mere sight of the glorified Christ, that will purge all

believers of sin and conform them at last to His own perfect image! This verse celebrates the eternal purpose of God concerning His children. His plan will ultimately be accomplished!⁶

Revelation 22:4 talks about in the end, when we will see Jesus. We will see “*His face*”. When we see Christ, we will be transformed and have glorified resurrected bodies, clean character and satisfied souls! This is God’s transforming love. Our Christian hope is assured of a future realization because of Who promised it, Jesus Christ! What a glorious future we have as Christians.

Since all this is a certainty, how should that affect how we as believers live today? How must this affect how we live as leaders in our state and in our country? Remember John has already written about abstaining from the world, which is opposed to Christ and having as our ambition to please Christ so we will not be ashamed at His coming. May the words of this hymn be forever in our hearts and lived out in our lives...not just on our lips.

*Take my life and let it be;
Consecrated Lord to Thee.
Take my hands and let them move
At the impulse of Thy love.
At the impulse of Thy love.*

*Take my love, my God, I pour
At Thy feet it’s treasure store.
Take myself, and I will be
Ever only, all for Thee
Ever only, all for Thee.*

¹ Hiebert, D. Edmond, *The Epistles of John: An Expository Commentary*. Bob Jones University Press: Greenville, SC, 1991. Pg. 137.

² Hiebert, D. Edmond, *The Epistles of John: An Expository Commentary*. Bob Jones University Press: Greenville, SC, 1991. Pg. 137.

³ MacArthur, John, *MacArthur Commentary Series on 1-3 John*. Moody Press: Chicago, IL, 2007. Pg. 117.

⁴ Kruse, Collin G., *The Pillar New Testament Commentary: The Letters of John*. William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company: Grand Rapids, MI, 2000. Pg. 116.

⁵ Hamilton, Ian, *Let’s Study the Letters of John*. The Banner of Truth Trust: Edinburgh, UK, 2008. Pg. 35.

⁶ Boice, James Montgomery, *An Expository Commentary: The Epistles of John*. Baker Books: Grand Rapids, MI, 1979. Pg.81.