

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, 7-26-15 AM NOTES
"THE IMPACT OF THE IMMINENCE OF CHRIST'S RETURN"
1 JOHN 2:28-3:3
7 in Series, "Absolute Assurance"

Immanent – existing within or inherent in something
Eminent – superior in position, fame, or achievement
Imminent – something that could happen at any time

I. Those Who Believe His Coming is Imminent Abide in Him (2:28-29)

John 15:4 (NKJV) "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me."

1 Thessalonians 5:17 (NKJV) "pray without ceasing".

1 John 1:1 (NKJV) "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life."

2 Corinthians 5:10 (NKJV) "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things *done* in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad."

1 Corinthians 3:11-14 (NKJV) "11 For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12 Now if anyone builds on this foundation *with* gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, 13 each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. 14 If anyone's work which he has built on *it* endures, he will receive a reward."

A. Abiding in Him Erases Shame at His Coming (2:28)

Ephesians 1:6 (NKJV) "to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved."

2 Corinthians 5:9 (NASB) "Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him."

1 Corinthians 3:15 (NKJV) "If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire."

B. Abiding in Him Evidences Our Salvation (2:29)

Philippians 3:9 (NKJV) "and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which *is* from the law, but that which *is* through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith."

Philippians 1:11 (NKJV) "being filled with the fruits of righteousness which *are* by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God."

II. Those Who Believe His Coming is Imminent Rejoice That They Are Children of God (3:1)

"What peculiar, out of this world kind of love the Father has bestowed on us." – Warren Weirsbe Paraphrase 1 John 3:1a

John 1:12 (NKJV) "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name."

Romans 8:17 (ESV) "and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ..."

1 Corinthians 2:14 (NKJV) “But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned.”

“The Christian believes that in Christ he has died, yet he is more alive than before and he fully expects to live forever. He walks on earth while seated in heaven and though born on earth he finds that after his conversion he is not at home here. Like the nighthawk which in the air is the essence of grace and beauty but on the ground is awkward and ugly, so the Christian appears at his best in the heavenly places but does not fit well into the ways of the very society into which he was born. The Christian soon learns that if he would be victorious as a son of heaven among men on earth he must not follow the common pattern of mankind, but rather the contrary. That he may be safe, he puts himself in jeopardy; he loses his life to save it and is in danger of losing it if he attempts to preserve it. He goes down to get up. If he refuses to go down he is already down, but when he starts down he is on his way up. He is strongest when he is weakest and weakest when he is strong. Though poor he has the power to make others rich, but when he becomes rich his ability to enrich others vanishes. He has most after he has given most away and has least when he possesses most. He may be and often is highest when he feels lowest and most sinless when he is most conscious of sin. He is wisest when he knows that he knows not and knows least when he has acquired the greatest amount of knowledge. He sometimes does most by doing nothing and goes furthest when standing still. In heaviness he manages to rejoice and keeps his heart glad even in sorrow... In God’s presence he feels overwhelmed and undone, yet there is nowhere he would rather be than in that presence. He knows that he has been cleansed from sin, yet he is painfully conscious that in his flesh dwells no good thing. He loves supremely One whom he has never seen, and though himself poor and lowly he talks familiarly with one who is King of all kings and Lord of all lords... He feels that he is in his own right altogether less than nothing, yet he believes without question that he is the apple of God’s eye and that for him the Eternal Son became flesh and died on the cross of shame... Incredible Christian!”
- A. W. Tozer

John 15:18-19 (NKJV) “¹⁸If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before *it hated* you. ¹⁹If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.”

III. Those Who Believe His Coming is Imminent Anticipate Being Changed into His Likeness (3:2)

Philippians 3:20-21 (HCSB) “²⁰but our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. ²¹He will transform the body of our humble condition into the likeness of His glorious body, by the power that enables Him to subject everything to Himself.”

Romans 8:29 (NKJV) “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.”

John 17:24 (NKJV) “Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.”

IV. Those Who Believe His Coming is Imminent Are Committed to Purity (3:3)

Titus 2:13 (NKJV) “looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.”

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There are actually 3 words pronounced “imminent” with three different meanings – immanent (existing within or inherent in something), eminent (superior in position, fame, or achievement), and imminent (something that could happen at any time). The word that describes Christ’s return is that last word – “imminence”. It does not mean that it will happen soon; it means that it could happen soon. Christ could come to “catch up” His church, His bride before I finish this message. Many Christians give that truth lip service, but it makes no impact on their lives. Today, we are going to see the impact it should make on every life.

Remember that the chapter and verse breaks in the Scripture are not inspired – only the text is inspired. The chapter and verse breaks are helpful, but many Bible scholars believe that 2:28-29 belongs with chapter 3. The particle translated “now” in verse 28 introduces a new section and indicates a paragraph break. Let’s look at the impact that the imminence of Christ’s return should have on the lives of Christians.

I. Those Who Believe His Coming is Imminent Abide in Him (2:28-29)

The Apostle John wrote much about the concept of “abiding”. The word “abide”, “abides” or “abiding” is used in the Gospel of John and 1st, 2nd, and 3rd John 42 times! The word “abide” means to remain, to stay, to dwell in, or to continue in. To abide in Christ is to keep an intimate connection to Christ, to live in constant conscious dependence on Him, and to constantly be available to Him. To abide in Christ is to be desperate for His supply because I realize that without Him I can do nothing. I am abiding in Christ when I see every demand on me as being a demand on Christ in me and I look in faith to Him to supply that demand out of His fullness. To make the concept of “abiding” more easily understood, let me give you some very practical illustrations of what it looks like. Sometimes when I am counseling someone about a problem they are facing, I am looking them in the eye, but I am praying without my lips moving, “Lord, give me wisdom to discern the root problem; give me wisdom on the counsel to give.” That is abiding in Jesus. “Lord, this confrontation is hard and it likely won’t be taken well, but here I go, trusting you to give me the words to say. Help me to remember that I only have to please an audience of One”. That is abiding in Jesus. “Lord, this message is hard. I can’t understand this passage myself; how can I preach it to others? Give me insight.” That is abiding in Jesus. “Lord, I am so tired, but this task needs to be done; I am trusting you to give me the strength to complete it.” That is abiding in Jesus. “Lord, as I get ready to preach, I am trusting you to give me the words to say that will be an instrument you will use to change lives.” “Lord, bring fruit this morning. Only you can produce fruit. I cannot manufacture it. I am abiding in you and I long to see the fruit you spoke of in **John 15:4 (NKJV)** ‘Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.’” That is abiding in Jesus!

Abiding in Jesus looks a lot like **1 Thessalonians 5:17 (NKJV)** “pray without ceasing”. It is to live all of life, face every challenge, attempting the impossible, seeking God’s will, staying available to Him, and trusting Him for the power and wisdom to do what you’ve been called to do. All too often we treat our Lord like a special tool. We keep him on the shelf until we run into something we think that we cannot handle ourselves. Oh how that ought to shame us if that describes us. To abide in Him is to be constantly bringing Him in on every thought, every dilemma, every problem, every blessing, and every situation. To repeat what I said earlier. To abide in Christ is to live in constant conscious dependence on Him, and to constantly be available to Him.

The focus of 1 John 1 was the truth about the person of Christ in His first coming. John talks about Him in chapter one as the authentic Christ who came to earth in a real body. He did not cease being deity, but he was fully man. **1 John 1:1 (NKJV)** “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life”. The focus shifts in 1 John 2:28 to the second coming of Christ, His return. The phrase, “when He appears” refers to His second coming.

The topic of the second coming of Christ scares people to death. Many Bible teachers just choose to not deal with it. But how do you ignore a topic that is mentioned 318 times in the New Testament? Certainly,

different views of the second coming are not a test of fellowship. The fundamental truth is that Jesus Christ is going to one day return to this earth literally and bodily as the King of kings and the Lord of lords. But having said that, the details are not unimportant.

One detail of His second coming that is important is the judgment that Christians will face after Christ returns. Perhaps you are thinking, “But I thought that on the cross Jesus was judged for our sins”. He was, and when He said, “It is finished”, He meant that for those who receive Him, the debt is paid in full; God’s wrath is satisfied; Jesus took our judgment for sin. Notice the key phrase, “judgment for sin”. There is a judgment that Christians will go through that is called, “the Judgment Seat of Christ.” At this judgment, it is not our sins that are judged; it is our works that are tested to determine reward. **2 Corinthians 5:10 (NKJV)** is written to believers and it says “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things *done* in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.” This judgment seat of Christ is described in **1 Corinthians 3:11-14 (NKJV)** “¹¹ For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. ¹² Now if anyone builds on this foundation *with* gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, ¹³ each one's work will become clear; for the Day [the day we stand before the judgment seat of Christ] will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. ¹⁴ If anyone's work which he has built on *it* endures, he will receive a reward.” The Outcome at the Christian’s judgment is determined by whether or not we have lived abiding in Jesus as a pattern of life. Notice the two outcomes at the judgment seat of Christ and how abiding is the key to which outcome we will experience.

A. Abiding in Him Erases Shame at His Coming (2:28)

Notice that when Christians stand before the Lord at the Judgment seat of Christ there are two categories of response. For some, this standing before the judgment seat of Christ will be done with confidence. The word translated “confidence” means fearless and being without anxiety. It is translated “boldness” in the HCSB. This is the response of a life lived abiding in Christ and walking with Him through all the challenges and blessings of life. At the judgment seat of Christ, “the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is” (1 Corinthians 3:13). Do you ever remember in school having a test that you studied well for and you knew that you knew the material and you had confidence and calm as you were handed the test? I’m not sure I ever had one of those kinds of tests! That is the picture of confidence referred to in verse 28.

But notice that there is a second category of response at the judgment seat of Christ. The last part of **1 John 2:28b (NKJV)** “...not be ashamed before Him at His coming.” Some are going to have confidence, fearlessness, and boldness and face the testing fires of the Lord without shame; but some are going to be ashamed at His coming and our standing before the judgment seat of Christ. Notice that they are not condemned; they are ashamed. Listen carefully. All who have been born again are accepted by the Father because they are in Christ. They are accepted not by their works but by Christ’s work. **Ephesians 1:6 (NKJV)** “to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved.” While all true Christians are accepted, they are not all pleasing to the Lord. If the pattern of a person’s life is disobedience, they are not saved. They don’t even appear at the judgment seat of Christ; they will appear with all who have not been born into God’s family before the Great White Throne of Judgment. Those who will be ashamed at his coming will be those who tried to live the Christian life in their own strength and failed to abide constantly in Christ. Some are ashamed because they were constantly dabbling in the world, and regularly experiencing the Father’s discipline. It is those who have been slow to grow in the Lord – stubborn children. It is those who have not obeyed **2 Corinthians 5:9 (NASB)** “Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him.” Now at the judgment, it is too late to please Him by building on the foundation we have in Christ with gold, silver, and precious stones. Listen to the sad description of these who will be ashamed at His presence. **1 Corinthians 3:15 (NKJV)** “If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.” What shame to stand before the Savior with nail scars in His hands and feet, a scar where the sword pierced His side and there is your whole life in a pile of ashes – oh what shame. Abiding

in Him erases our shame. Abiding in Him determines whether our experience at the judgment seat of Christ will be rejoicing or regretful.

B. Abiding in Him Evidences Our Salvation (2:29)

The word “righteous” or “righteousness” as it is used in the New Testament seems complicated at first, but really it is not. To be righteous is to have right standing with God. That right standing cannot be earned. Salvation, we are told in Ephesians 2:8, is not of works lest we should boast. God will not share His glory with another. The Scriptures teach that salvation is a gift of God and since righteousness is very much a part of salvation, righteousness is a gift. **Philippians 3:9 (NKJV)** “and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which *is* from the law, but that which *is* through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith”. That righteousness which is from God is Christ’s righteousness put on our account (2 Corinthians 5:21). Those who have had Christ’s righteousness imputed to their account, as they abide in Christ will manifest the fruits of righteousness. **Philippians 1:11 (NKJV)** “being filled with the fruits of righteousness which *are* by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.” Christian living is summarized in the phrase “practices righteousness”. “Practices” speaks of the pattern of one’s life. Those who abide in Jesus give evidence of salvation as they practice righteousness.

II. Those Who Believe His Coming is Imminent Rejoice That They Are Children of God (3:1)

This is an absolutely amazing verse. Let’s look at it more closely. The word translated “behold” is a stronger word than what comes out in the English. It is a word of astonishment. It is a command. It means, “Stop!” “Look!” John is saying, “I am about to share with you one of the most amazing fantastic facts that you have ever heard.” The thing that he is going to share is the amazing love that the Father has for those who are His children, those who abide in Him. That phrase, “what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us” is literally, “What love from a foreign country”. In other words, the love that God has for His children is a foreign love to anything human. Warren Weirsbe paraphrased it this way: “What peculiar, out of this world kind of love the Father has bestowed on us.”

Notice what this love accomplishes. We can now be called “the children of God!” This other worldly love of God has given us a brand new identity. We are called “the children of God.” We are told in **John 1:12 (NKJV)** “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name”. We are talking about more than just being called His children. We read in **Romans 8:17 (ESV)** “and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ...” This glorious truth of 1 John 3:1 is not just flowery language or a hypothetical concept; it is literal. The older manuscripts add a phrase here, “and such we are”. John is saying, “I am not just using spiritual sounding language; this is now who you literally are! You are, in Christ, literally children of the most high God and heirs of God together with Jesus Christ.” That is way better than being an heir of Bill Gates or Steve Jobs, or Warren Buffet. That amazing identity that is ours in Christ affects every area of our lives.

But notice that not everyone is excited about your new identity. The last part of verse 1 tells us that the world system doesn’t celebrate your new identity in Christ. The world doesn’t “get it”. **1 Corinthians 2:14 (NKJV)** “But the natural man [the person without Christ] does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned.” Because the world doesn’t get it, we find ourselves going through this world as what Hebrews 11:13 calls “strangers and pilgrims”. Don’t be shocked when the world doesn’t “get it” about your joy and excitement about being a child of God. The world doesn’t understand anything that the Bible says about who we are and how we are to walk. I love a quote from A. W. Tozer as to truths about a child of God that makes no sense to the world. This quote comes from Tozer’s book, *The Incredible Christian*.

“The Christian believes that in Christ he has died, yet he is more alive than before and he fully expects to live forever. He walks on earth while seated in heaven and though born on earth he finds that after his conversion he is not at home here. Like the nighthawk which in the air is the essence of grace and beauty but on the ground is awkward and ugly, so the Christian appears at his best in the heavenly places but does not fit well into the ways of the very society into which he was born. The Christian soon learns that

if he would be victorious as a son of heaven among men on earth he must not follow the common pattern of mankind, but rather the contrary. That he may be safe he puts himself in jeopardy; he loses his life to save it and is in danger of losing it if he attempts to preserve it. He goes down to get up. If he refuses to go down he is already down, but when he starts down he is on his way up. He is strongest when he is weakest and weakest when he is strong. Though poor he has the power to make others rich, but when he becomes rich his ability to enrich others vanishes. He has most after he has given most away and has least when he possesses most. He may be and often is highest when he feels lowest and most sinless when he is most conscious of sin. He is wisest when he knows that he knows not and knows least when he has acquired the greatest amount of knowledge. He sometimes does most by doing nothing and goes furthest when standing still. In heaviness he manages to rejoice and keeps his heart glad even in sorrow... In God's presence he feels overwhelmed and undone, yet there is nowhere he would rather be than in that presence. He knows that he has been cleansed from sin, yet he is painfully conscious that in his flesh dwells no good thing. He loves supremely One whom he has never seen, and though himself poor and lowly he talks familiarly with one who is King of all kings and Lord of all lords... He feels that he is in his own right altogether less than nothing, yet he believes without question that he is the apple of God's eye and that for him the Eternal Son became flesh and died on the cross of shame... Incredible Christian!" [A. W. Tozer, compiled by Warren Weirsbe, *The Best of A. W. Tozer*, page 98-99].

Jesus said to His disciples what is still true of His disciples today in **John 15:18-19 (NKJV)** “¹⁸ If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before *it hated* you. ¹⁹ If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.”

III. Those Who Believe His Coming is Imminent Anticipate Being Changed into His Likeness (3:2)

Heaven is so attractive for believers because not only will we see Him in heaven, we will become like Him. Now, we are fully His children, but then we will be rid of all that drags us down – the flesh, the devil, and the world system that is constantly trying to conform us to its values. The Bible says in **Philippians 3:20-21 (HCSB)** “²⁰ but our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. ²¹ He will transform the body of our humble condition into the likeness of His glorious body, by the power that enables Him to subject everything to Himself.”

John is continuing the theme of 1 John 2:28 – the return of the Lord. When He appears, those who are God's children will be made like Him. For a child of God, that truth is predestined! **Romans 8:29 (NKJV)** “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.” When Jesus Christ returns, we will see His prayer answered that He prayed in **John 17:24 (NKJV)** “Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.”

IV. Those Who Believe His Coming is Imminent Are Committed to Purity (3:3)

Verse 1 tells us what we are – children of God. Verse 2 tells us what we shall be – like Him. Verse 3 tells us what we should be – pure as He is pure. John talks about “this hope”. He is speaking of the hope of Christ's return. **Titus 2:13 (NKJV)** uses the same term to describe the return of Christ, “looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ”. When we see the word “hope” in the New Testament, it does not mean what we take hope to mean in everyday English. In our everyday use of this word, it is a synonym for “wish”. That is NOT what hope means in the Scriptures. Hope related to what has been promised and will come to pass, but it is still in the future. Christ's return is not a wish; it is a promise. He IS coming again. His coming is imminent. That means that it could happen at any time. Our response is that we deal quickly with sin. I don't want Christ to come and I have evil thoughts on my mind, God's tithe in my bank account, and unforgiveness in my heart. There ought to be an increased sensitivity to sin as we look for His return. Sin becomes especially heinous to us. Unbelievers sin against God's law but children of God sin against God's love.

CONCLUSION

If Jesus Christ should return today, are you ready? Even if you have absolute assurance of salvation, would you be ashamed at His coming. His coming is imminent. Let's get ready.