

## C3 GROUP QUESTIONS

S2022-WEEK 9

3/27/22

### **Listen to, Learn about, and Love on one another**

- Recently, what have you heard or read in the news that has made you reflect on the end times?

### **Getting Started with a Warm-Up:**

- Please share with your group your thoughts about a situation you experienced that made you worry because of the possibility of harm to you and your family.

### **Getting Down to Business:**

The following questions are following this format: Scripture/Observation, Application, and Prayer (SOAP).

#### **1) Scripture/Observation:**

A) Read John 3:31-36 and Acts 17:30-31 (see passages and commentaries below). How could these passages from scripture motivate you to spread the Good News of the gospel to others?

“31 “He has come from above and is greater than anyone else. We are of the earth, and we speak of earthly things, but he has come from heaven and is greater than anyone else. 32 He testifies about what he has seen and heard, but how few believe what he tells them! 33 Anyone who accepts his testimony can affirm that God is true. 34 For he is sent by God. He speaks God’s words, for God gives him the Spirit without limit. 35 The Father loves his Son and has put everything into his hands. And anyone who believes in God’s Son has eternal life. 36 Anyone who doesn’t obey the Son will never experience eternal life but remains under God’s angry judgment.” (John 3:31-36 NLT)

With verse 31 there is a shift from narrative to a general comment by either the Baptist (as in the NIV), or, more likely, the Evangelist, since this section (vv. 31-36) summarizes the whole of chapter 3 by weaving

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together many of its major themes. In particular, the failure of the people to receive Jesus' testimony is again noted (vv. 32-33; cf. v. 11). One who receives Jesus' testimony is described as having certified that God is true, a thought that may recall verse 21. The next two verses (vv. 34-35) are particularly rich in allusions to previous themes: For the one whom God has sent (cf. 3:2, 16-17) speaks the words of God (cf. 3:11-12), for God gives the Spirit without limit (cf. 3:5-8). The Father loves the Son and has placed everything in his hands (cf. 3:27). The final verse summarizes the theme of judgment (v. 36; cf. 3:16-21). Indeed, this last verse combines the central motifs of the two meditational passages (3:16-21, 31-35). In 3:16-21 the issue is faith in Jesus himself (vv. 16, 18), which is represented in verse 36a: Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life. In 3:31-35 the issue is receiving Jesus' testimony (cf. 3:11-12), and this is reflected in the notion of obedience in verse 36. Thus, we are told who Jesus is and what it means to accept or reject him.

John's contrast between the one who comes from above and the one who is from the earth (v. 31) in the context refers to Jesus and John the Baptist. But by putting the contrast in these terms we are brought back to the story of Nicodemus. That is, this passage begins at the same point verse 13 does, but now Jesus' identity as the one from heaven is contrasted with the Baptist, who is of the earth. He bears witness to the things of God that have been revealed to him, but they are the things God is doing on earth. In contrast, Jesus speaks of heavenly things, that is, of the God of heaven who is behind this activity on earth (cf. v. 12).

Accordingly, to accept Jesus' testimony is to say something about God, namely, that God is truthful (v. 33). In other words, because Jesus has been sent by God, speaks God's words and has received the Spirit without limit (v. 34), to hear him is to hear God. Jesus thus fulfills the role of an agent: "He speaks the words of God and no more, but he does so with full authority. Behind this is the old Jewish axiom, that a man's envoy is like himself" (Schnackenburg 1980a:386; cf. m. Berakot 5:5; see note on 5:21). But Jesus is not just an envoy; he is the Son, and as such he is able to do more than simply proclaim a message from a distant God. As Son he receives not just a message but God's Spirit and, as we hear in the next verse, God's love: The Father loves the Son and has placed everything in his hands (v. 35). The chief characteristic of this true God, who is behind what Jesus is doing, is love. Behind God's love for the world

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and his giving of his Son (v. 16) is this love of the Father for the Son and the fact that he has placed (literally, "has given," *dedoken*) everything into his hands. In these two verses we have one of John's glimpses of the Holy Trinity—we see heaven opened, and heavenly things are revealed to us. The Son and the Spirit both come from heaven. The Father is the source, for both this Spirit and the Son's possession of all things are given by the Father. The Son has received the Spirit without limit, unlike any other envoy, and all things have been given into his hand; that is, he has supreme authority over all.

Thus, in Jesus we see the presence of God, by which he reveals the love of God and speaks with the authority of God. Given such a vision it naturally follows that believing in him brings eternal life and that rejecting him (*ho apeithon*, literally, "the one disobeying") means one remains under the wrath of God (v. 36; cf. 1 Jn 5:19). The divine prerogatives of life-giving and judgment are exercised by Jesus (see comment on 5:19-30), which means he plays roles of the utmost significance in the life of each person.

We have, then, a brief but profound glimpse into Jesus' identity and the heavenly reality of the relationship between the Father and the Son. We also are confronted with the high stakes in this game. In Jesus the presence of God has come into our midst: the visitation of God expected in the last days has come bringing eschatological blessing and danger. The wrath of God is here seen as the opposite of sharing in his life. Alienation from his life is the condition of all who have not been born from above. The enormous difference between what we take to be normal life and the life God offers us in his Son could not be more graphically expressed. There will be a future judgment (5:28-30), but it is already active now (5:22-23), so the believer is beyond the judgment (5:24-27). At this point John is concerned that we understand who Jesus is as well as the eschatological realities present in his ministry. Those who have experienced the reality of what this section describes—the gift of the Father, the supremacy of the Son and the eschatological reality of passing from death to life (cf. 5:24)—have received the good news. Later John will make the point that those who enter this reality are commissioned themselves to share it (20:21-22). (IVP New Testament Commentary Series, accessed 3/24/22,

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+3&version=NLT>)

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30 “God overlooked people’s ignorance about these things in earlier times, but now he commands everyone everywhere to repent of their sins and turn to him.  
31 For he has set a day for judging the world with justice by the man he has appointed, and he proved to everyone who this is by raising him from the dead.”  
(Acts 17:30-31 NLT)

### **Conclusion: A Call for Radical Personal Change (17:30-31)**

In "the times of ignorance"—all those past generations from the first human beings until Christ (except Noah's generation, Gen 6:5-8; 9:11-17)—God overlooked humankind's sin, especially false worship. He "overlooked" it not by excusing it or failing to notice it, but rather by not punishing it as it deserved (Rom 3:25; Acts 14:16). Now, however, God commands all people everywhere to repent. Each generation's problem is that their ignorant worship is culpable, rebellious, false worship. God's solution is not to receive more information but to make a radical turn from idolatry to the one true God (Acts 14:15; 26:20). Formerly humankind lived in a sinful ignorance that God in his mercy passed over. Now, after sin has been judged in Jesus' death and resurrection, comes the "day of salvation" in a gospel proclaimed in his name, calling for repentance and promising forgiveness. Today there is no room in God's economy, as Paul preaches it, for so-called B.C. Christians—persons saved without knowledge of Christ and his saving work (contrast Kraft 1979:231).

The call to repentance is urgent because the consequences for not repenting—a final judgment and eternal condemnation—are inescapable. The judgment is definite (he has set a day; Lk 17:24, 30; 21:34-36), universal (he will judge the world, or "whole inhabited world"; Acts 11:28; 17:6), fair (with justice; Ps 96:13) and personal (by the man he has appointed, Jesus; Jn 5:27; Acts 10:42). Though the Greek philosophers might envision a judgment on souls in the hereafter as part of a reincarnation scheme, they find a final judgment, as Paul declares it, incredible (Buchsel and Hertrich 1965:933-34).

The proof Paul offers to establish his argument is Jesus' resurrection. That event, itself established by many "undeniable proofs" (1:3), guarantees the reality of this future event and thus authenticates the urgency of the call to repentance. The resurrection is, then, the linchpin for both potential ways

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of applying the death and resurrection of the Christ to one's eternal destiny. It establishes both the warning of judgment and the promise of salvation blessings (2:32-33; 5:30-32; 10:40-42). (IVP New Testament Commentary Series, accessed 3/24/22,

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts+17%3A30-31&version=NLT>)

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B) Read 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 and 1 Corinthians 15:50-53 (see passages and commentaries below). How do these passages from scripture comfort you and give you hope regarding the future rapture of the church?

### The Hope of the Resurrection

13 And now, dear brothers and sisters, we want you to know what will happen to the believers who have died so you will not grieve like people who have no hope.

14 For since we believe that Jesus died and was raised to life again, we also believe that when Jesus returns, God will bring back with him the believers who have died.

15 We tell you this directly from the Lord: We who are still living when the Lord returns will not meet him ahead of those who have died. 16 For the Lord himself will come down from heaven with a commanding shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet call of God. First, the believers who have died will rise from their graves. 17 Then, together with them, we who are still alive and remain on the earth will be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Then we will be with the Lord forever. 18 So encourage each other with these words. (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 NLT)

### **1. The Dead in Christ (4:13-15)**

Paul does not want the Thessalonians to be anxious about the fate of the dead in Christ. Nor does he want them to grieve as those who do not know God, and are therefore without hope (see Eph 2:12).

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In fact, Christians, like all persons, do grieve over death. Grief is a normal and essential part of coping with death. But Christian grief is tempered by hope. For Christians, death is not the end.

Without doubt, the Thessalonians knew and believed that the dead in Christ would rise. The question seems to be whether they would share in his coming. Paul emphatically states that they shall suffer no disadvantage.

### **2. The Coming of the Lord (4:16-18)**

Using OT imagery, Paul describes the Parousia as a coming with authority and power, heralding the resurrection of the dead in Christ. After this, the dead in Christ will join the living and together join the Lord. Christians will share in the coming of Christ to earth. The stress is upon the eternal unity between Christ and his body, the church.

Paul is not contrasting the dead in Christ with those who are dead but not in Christ. He says nothing about the resurrection of the latter anywhere. There is therefore no support whatsoever in this passage for any idea of a “first resurrection.” As Bruce astutely observes, “It is precarious to draw inferences from Paul’s silence about his views on the nature and timing of the resurrection of those who are not in Christ” (p. 105). Equally slender is the biblical support for the doctrine of the “rapture.” Since the mid-nineteenth century, this single verse has been the cornerstone of the dispensationalist view of the Lord’s return.

The pastoral intent of the teaching is summed up in v.18. Bruce (p. 103) cites a pagan writer who ends a letter of condolence with the words, “So comfort one another.” No word of hope is included. Could one find a more poignant reminder of the contrast between the lostness and hopelessness of those outside of Christ and the hope of the Christian? (Asbury Bible Commentary, accessed 3/24/22, <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Thessalonians+4%3A13-18&version=NLT>)

50 What I am saying, dear brothers and sisters, is that our physical bodies cannot inherit the Kingdom of God. These dying bodies cannot inherit what will last forever.

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51 But let me reveal to you a wonderful secret. We will not all die, but we will all be transformed! 52 It will happen in a moment, in the blink of an eye, when the last trumpet is blown. For when the trumpet sounds, those who have died will be raised to live forever. And we who are living will also be transformed. 53 For our dying bodies must be transformed into bodies that will never die; our mortal bodies must be transformed into immortal bodies. (1 Corinthians 15:50-53 NLT)

### **3. The mode of the Resurrection (15:35-58)**

Having established the fact of the Resurrection in 15:12-34, Paul here discusses its mode, drawing upon botanical, zoological, and astronomical analogies (vv.35-41). He insists that the Resurrection is both spiritual and bodily (vv.42-44a), and he rehearses the Adam-Christ contrast (vv.44b-49; see vv.21-22) to bolster his arguments. But he finally concedes that the nature of the Resurrection existence remains an impenetrable mystery (vv.50-57). Paul concludes his discussion of the Resurrection from the dead with three exhortations (v.58; cf. vv.33-34).

Paul's hypothetical question, But someone may ask, anticipates a potential objection arising from the preceding discussion and prepares for the mutually clarifying questions, How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come? (v.35). The first asks, "By what means or power are dead people raised?" The second question makes it clear that his concern is with the mode, not the means of Resurrection existence. Paul obviously can conceive of no other Resurrection mode than some kind of bodily existence. To demonstrate the folly of anyone who would ask such questions (v.36), Paul appeals to analogies. Paul denies that resurrection involves the mere resuscitation of corpses (v.50), insisting rather that it involves a thorough transformation of the physical body into a spiritual body (v.44), the precise nature of which remains a mystery (v.51).

Normally the NT uses the word mystery (v.51) to identify revelations of what once were secrets, now disclosed by God to believers. But here the undisclosed circumstances of the Resurrection retain their mysterious character. The mystery does not seem to be a rational explanation for the Resurrection. It is instead information concerning the fate of living believers at the time of the Second Coming. They will experience a transformation as radical as the resurrection of those who died before

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Christ's return. It is not simply death, but flesh and blood that must be overcome, or transformed. Although the perishable cannot enter resurrection existence directly, when Christ returns, the dead will be raised imperishable and the living will be changed (v.52). When mortal existence gives way to immortality, God will eliminate death from human experience (vv.54-55).

The metamorphosis of the living and the resurrection of the dead will occur instantly and simultaneously when Christ returns (15:52; see Mt 24:31; 1Th 4:16-17; Rev 11:15). Just as trumpets announced the dawning of the new year in Israel's ancient festival cycle (see Lev 23:23-25; Nu 29:1-6), so they will announce the dawning of the new age. At the Second Coming God will raise the dead "never to die again" and change the dead into "what cannot die" (15:52-53 tev). It is apparently in this sense that we shall become like the Risen Christ (see 15:49; Ro 6:9; 8:11; 1Jn 3:2). (Asbury Bible Commentary, accessed 3/24/22, <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Corinthians+15%3A50-53&version=NLT>)

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C) Read Jesus' words in Matthew 24:36-44, particularly verse 36. As you think about the words of Jesus in this passage, how does the knowledge of this event motivate or influence you in your walk of faith?

36 "However, no one knows the day or hour when these things will happen, not even the angels in heaven or the Son himself. Only the Father knows. 37 "When the Son of Man returns, it will be like it was in Noah's day. 38 In those days before the flood, the people were enjoying banquets and parties and weddings right up to the time Noah entered his boat. 39 People didn't realize what was going to happen until the flood came and swept them all away. That is the way it will be when the Son of Man comes. 40 "Two men will be working together in the field; one will be taken, the other left. 41 Two women will be grinding flour at the mill; one will be taken, the other left. 42 "So you, too, must keep watch! For you don't know what day your Lord is coming. 43 Understand this: If a homeowner knew exactly when a burglar was coming, he would keep watch and not permit his house to be broken into. 44 You also must be ready all

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the time, for the Son of Man will come when least expected. (Matthew 24:36-44 NLT)

**V 36–44: SUDDENLY!** Jesus teaches that only God the Father knows the exact hour of His coming. This is an aspect of Christ's divine knowledge that He has chosen to lay aside in His humility to become our Saviour. But, just as the world ignored the righteous preaching of Noah and would not prepare to escape the judgement of the flood, so a failure to prepare in repentance and faith for Christ's second coming will lead to judgement then. Despite the warnings to repent and turn to God, and despite the prophecies of His coming, it will be upon them unexpectedly, suddenly, and too late. Christians, however, should confidently expect His coming and remain ready. (Bible Panorama commentary, accessed 3/24/22, <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+24&version=NLT>)

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D) Read 2 Peter 3:9. Based on the truth in this verse, why do you think God has delayed bringing His final judgment on humanity? (Hint: mercy, grace)

The Lord isn't really being slow about his promise, as some people think. No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent. (2 Peter 3:9 NLT)

**3:9 as some count slowness. See v. 4.**

**patient . . . all should reach repentance.** Peter's Christian readers must realize that the apparent delay of divine judgment is a sign of God's forbearance and mercy toward them, particularly toward the believers in their midst who have been confused and misled by the false teachers. The repentance in view, for the sake of which God delays judgment, is that of God's people rather than the world at large. God is not willing that any of His elect should perish (John 6:39).

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**3:4 the promise of his coming.** From the delay in Christ's return, the false teachers wrongly concluded that He would never return to judge them. Peter portrays their scoffing as ironic evidence that the last days are indeed present.

(ESV Reformation Study Bible, accessed 3/25/22,

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+peter+3&version=NLT>)

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### 2) Application:

- A) How can a study of end times prophecy be practical for our lives? (Hint: Blessing in reading and knowing, being reminded that our best life is coming, and God's plan for the end gives us hope rather than despair.)
  
- B) Is it possible to over emphasis end times prophecy? (Hint: Not living for today, rather being more concerned about the future.) What might be the result of an over emphasis? (Hint: Fearful of the future.)

**3) Prayer:** As you pray, ask the Lord to give you a balanced hunger for understanding future events. Ask Him as well to give you the proper motivation to use your knowledge of future events to motivate your actions toward the unbelievers around you today.