

## Introduction

- a) This is the third message in the series *Prophetic Perspective for 2022*. In the first message, dad talked about *Fear God and Nothing Else*. In last week's message, I talked about *Unshakeable in 2022*.
- b) Today, I will continue our theme of what the Spirit is saying to the church as we enter 2022 and talk about the end-time ministry of the apostle John.

## Message Summary

- a) As we approach the end of the age, the Spirit is emphasizing the ministry of the apostle John. Speaking of John, Jesus told Peter, "If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow Me!" (John 21:22). There are many opinions of what Jesus meant by this statement. But one thing He likely meant is the Spirit would emphasize John's ministry before the Lord's second coming.
- b) Before the Lord returns, the Spirit is highlighting John the apostle as a model for the end-time church. More specifically, the Spirit is emphasizing to the end-time church *John the beloved*, *John the intimate*, *John the lover*, and *John the revelator*. The Spirit wants us to see John and model our lives after him, cultivating these four dynamics in our lives in an ever-deeper way.
- c) In emphasizing *John the beloved*, the Spirit wants us to know God's personal love for us deeply, just like John, who referred to himself as the disciple whom Jesus loved.
- d) In emphasizing *John the intimate*, the Spirit wants us to know God experientially at a deep level, just like John, who leaned his head upon Jesus' chest and heard God's beating heart.
- e) In emphasizing *John the lover*, the Spirit wants us to love God and people, just like John, who devoted much of 1 John to this topic.
- f) In emphasizing *John the revelator*, the Spirit wants us to have deep insight and prophetic revelation of God's end-time plans and purposes, like John, who wrote the book of Revelation.
- g) The end-time church, who will come into the fullness of God's end-time plans and purposes, will be disciplined by John through his writings, especially John 14-17, 1 John, and the book of Revelation.

## John the Beloved

- a) John was so confident in Jesus' love for him, it reshaped his entire identity. *John the beloved* referred to himself as the "disciple whom Jesus loved" five times in his gospel (John 20:2; see also 13:23, 19:26, 21:7, 20).
- b) John was not defined by what he did or didn't do. John was not defined by earthly success, achieved by natural gifts, talents, resources, positions, or power. John was loved by God and this was all that mattered. Though Jesus loved all the disciples fervently, John really knew the Lord's love and he soaked himself in His love, until the love of God permeated John's entire being.
- c) *John the beloved*, the disciple whom Jesus loved, did not find his significance from doing power ministry with signs and wonders, being called an apostle, or from his ministry accomplishments. John was like King David, who discovered the river of God's pleasures and experienced God's overwhelming love for him in a deeply personal way. Living in and from God's love was far more precious to John than his apostolic ministry or building the kingdom.
- d) Jesus will give each individual, who comprises His bride, a unique wedding gift. This gift will be a white stone with a new name written on the stone. The only one who will know what is written on this stone will be Jesus and the one who receives it (Rev. 2:17). This will reflect our unique, individual relationship with Jesus. It will characterize who we are, how we lived our lives in the secret place with Jesus while on

earth, and perhaps how we will function in eternity. This points to the intimate, private, and intensely personal nature of our eternal relationship with Jesus, which begins now.

- e) John, out of his intimate relationship with Jesus, knew he was the beloved disciple, the one whom Jesus loved. John derived his success and identity from His relationship with Jesus and the love He experienced in this relationship. John had a unique and deeply personal relationship with Jesus, likely more intimate than any of the other apostles. And John's relationship with Jesus defined him, marked him, and established his identity.
- f) Mike Bickle likes to say, "I am loved by God and I love God; therefore, I am successful. This is what determines our personal worth."
- g) The Spirit wants to emphasize *John the beloved* to the end-time church as a model for each of us, so that we too might know Jesus' unique and deeply personal love for us.
- h) John was the one who recorded the deep expression of God's love for us. He wrote down Jesus' words which expressed God's love for His people. Namely, when Jesus said, "As the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you" and "that the world may know that You . . . loved them, even as You loved Me" (John 15:9; 17:23). John knew that Jesus loves us exactly like the Father loves Jesus and that the Father loves us exactly like the Father loves Jesus.
- i) John knew Jesus' personal love for him in a deep way. But do you? What does Jesus say about you? What is your unique name to Him? Do you know? Ask Him. Ask the Lord to reveal to you what He says about you. I don't mean the problems in your life. Or the things you are doing wrong. I mean the way He sees you in Him and what you personally mean to Him.
- j) Jesus loves to speak to our potential in Him. The Lord called Abraham the father of many nations while he was still in his barrenness. Jesus called Peter a rock, though he was still unstable. In the same way, the Lord sees who you can become because of the indwelling Spirit. He sees your potential through His eyes of faith and calls "those things which be not as though they were" (Rom. 4:17, KJV).
- k) Jesus knows who we can become because He knows who dwells within us. Jesus knows that we will become be a rock even though we're beset with weaknesses. Jesus knows that we will be a father of many nations even though we have no fruit.
- l) As one betrothed to Jesus Christ, ask the Lord to kiss you with the kisses of his mouth, for His love is better than wine (Song. 1:2). In doing this, please don't envision a bearded man kissing you on the lips. This is not what this means. Rather, just as a kiss in the natural expresses one's deeply personal love for another, the Lord wants you to know His deeply personal love for you. He wants you to experience the height, breadth, length, and depth of His love (Eph. 3:17-19). This prayer for Jesus to kiss you is the same prayer Paul prayed for the Ephesians, that they would know by experience the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge (Eph. 3:17-19).
- m) Jesus said, "Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you" (John 15:9). As the Father is the Lover and the Son is the Beloved in their relationship, Jesus is the Lover and we are the beloved in our relationship with Christ. If you don't grasp anything else, please know that Jesus loves you deeply, for you are His beloved, cherished, and betrothed bride.
- n) No matter your past or present, let this truth sink in: You are the beloved of Jesus Christ. You are the object of His affection. You are His cherished one.
- o) Your homework assignment is to get alone with the Lord and ask Him to reveal His deeply personal love for you. Ask Him to reveal to you the way He sees you in Him, what He calls you, and what's your unique name.

## John the Intimate

- a) Not only did John know and experience Jesus' love at a deep level, he was also the intimate one, who famously leaned His head on Jesus' chest (John 13:23,25; 21:20).
- b) John described himself in his gospel as "the disciple whom Jesus loved . . . the one who also had leaned back on His chest" (John 21:20, NASB20). Isn't this beautiful? John's entire identity and definition of success was established by experiencing God's personal love for him and experiencing deep intimacy with Him. I love this! And I want the same to be true with me. How about you?
- c) What defines success for you? How are you trying to find your identity?
- d) Most are trying to find their identity in how well they do something, what they possess, how much money they earn, who they know, or how much influence they have. Their identity is defined by their career, ministry, influence, salary, accomplishments, book sales, podcast downloads, YouTube views, Instagram likes, and Facebook shares. They base their identity in their external appearance, family, house, and friends. They feel good about themselves based upon who they know and who likes them.
- e) Few in the church today find their true identity in being loved by Christ and being intimate with Christ. This is one reason why the Spirit is emphasizing John as a model for us. John is a beautiful example of simple love and devotion to Jesus. John's boast was not in his apostolic ministry or in how well he built the kingdom. Rather, John boasted that he was the disciple whom Jesus loved and he was the one who leaned back on His chest. This is a boast the Lord loves, by the way.
- f) The Lord said through Jeremiah, "Let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me" (Jer. 9:24).
- g) *John the intimate* wrote about the indwelling Spirit, the abiding life, Jesus as the indwelling life by which we live, the fellowship with the Godhead we're called into, the anointing dwelling within us, the exhortation to return to our first love, and the call to dine with Jesus in intimate communion. The reason why John was permitted to write about these truths is because he practiced them.
- h) John recorded one of Jesus' greatest invitations for us to experience intimacy with Him, what many refer to as *the abiding life* (John 15:1-11). In this teaching, Jesus said He is the Vine and we are the branches. Through our spiritual union with Christ, where the Holy Spirit has been grafted to our born-again spirits, Christ's divine life is meant to flow like sap from our spirits to our souls and outward through our bodies to produce luscious, beautiful, and savory fruit.
- i) Just as sap is the life-blood of a tree or plant, carrying vital nutrients and minerals from the root or vine outward to the branches to produce leaves or fruit, the life-giving Spirit grafted to our spirits releases divine life to produce the fruit of Christ in us and through us.
- j) Jesus said, "Apart from Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). We can never produce the fruit of Christ in our strength. Human compassion, tranquility, happiness, and discipline are fragile substitutes for the Spirit's fruit of love, peace, joy, and self-control.
- k) "Not by might nor by power," the Lord prophesied through Zechariah, "But by My Spirit" (Zech. 4:6). Only the indwelling Spirit can release His life, like sap, to produce His fruit in us and through us.
- l) If we try to produce the fruit of Christ by working harder, trying harder, toiling, and sweating to be good and do good, we will eventually burn out. The branch does not make grapes; the sap does. No branch is able to bear fruit if not connected to the life-source of the vine. The branch lives by drawing life from the vine. This life is the sap flowing from the vine into the branches to produce fruit. As the sap flows from vine to branch, it does not change its nature—it's the same life-giving force, reproducing according to its nature.

- m) The branch, as it remains connected to the vine—not toiling, spinning, or striving but resting, relaxing, and abiding—draws out and relies upon the sap of divine life to produce the beautiful “fruit of the Spirit,” which is “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, [and] self-control” (Gal. 5:22-23, emphasis mine).
- n) Jesus, as the vine, is the life-source supplying the sap of His divine life to us, the branches, so fruit can be produced. The vine doesn’t produce fruit. The branches do, but only if they are connected to the vine. Otherwise, the branches are useless.
- o) As a branch, you are meant to live by drawing from the life-source of Christ, grafted to your human spirit through the Holy Spirit, to produce the fruit of His nature and likeness. As a branch, you are already connected to Christ the Vine through your union with the Spirit, enabling you to produce the fruit of the Spirit in an ever-increasing measure, until you have the fullness of the Spirit without any limitations.
- p) John was permitted to write about this abiding life because he lived it.
- q) The Spirit wants to emphasize *John the intimate* to the end-time church as a model for each of us, so that we too might abide in Jesus and organically produce His fruit.

## John the Lover

- a) Not only was John the beloved and the intimate; he was also the lover. Flowing out of John’s experience of Jesus’ love and his intimacy with Christ, John returned God’s love back to Him and he also loved others deeply with the love of Christ. Just as Jesus said, John abided in the love of Christ and produced fruit in abundance, characterized by Christ’s love.
- b) Jesus is the source of love, and we are the recipient and the responder to His love. “We love,” John wrote, “because He first loved us” (1 John 4:19).
- c) As Mike Bickle likes to say, “It takes God to love God.” Only to the degree that we have experienced the Lover’s burning heart of love, can we, as His beloved, return that love back to Him and to others.
- d) *John the lover* lived in the experiential love of Christ. Abiding continually in Christ’s love, John was empowered to love Christ in return, just as he had been loved.
- e) John recorded Jesus’ prayer to the Father, when He prayed, “I have made Your name known to them, and will make it known, so that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them” (John 17:26).
- f) Jesus yearns for a bride who loves Him in the same way the Father has loved Him since eternity past. This can only happen if we abide in the love of Jesus Christ and experience His love for us. As we experience God, who John said “is love,” we will love Him in return with His very own love.
- g) John recorded Jesus’ words about abiding in His love, when Jesus said, “Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love” (John 15:9). As John abided in God’s love for Him, He was empowered to love God in return and to love others.
- h) John also recorded Jesus’ new commandment to love one another, when Jesus said, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another” (John 13:34).
- i) The second commandment, to love one another, flows out of us experiencing what Jesus said— “even as I have loved you.” The more we experience Jesus’ love for us, the more we will be empowered to love others with the love of Christ.
- j) *John the lover* wrote often about loving others, making statements such as:

We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death. (1 John 3:14)

Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth. (1 John 3:18)

This is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as He commanded us. (1 John 3:23)

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. (1 John 4:7-8)

Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has seen God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us. (1 John 4:11-12)

- k) Jerome, the famous church father who died in 420 A.D., between the age of 73 to 78, wrote the following about John:

The blessed John the Evangelist lived in Ephesus until extreme old age. His disciples could barely carry him to church and he could not muster the voice to speak many words. During individual gatherings he usually said nothing but, "Little children, love one another." The disciples and brothers in attendance, annoyed because they always heard the same words, finally said, "Teacher, why do you always say this?" He replied with a line worthy of John: "Because it is the Lord's commandment and if it alone is kept, it is sufficient."<sup>1</sup>

- l) This entire life is a proving ground, testing us and shaping us to love God and others with the love of Christ. When we stand before the judgment seat of Christ, we will be evaluated on one main criteria—did we learn to love God and others from the overflow of God's love for God, God's love for us, and God's love for others. This is basically what John said in 1 John 4:16-17, writing, "We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. By this, love is perfected with us, so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment; because as He is, so also are we in this world."
- m) When we stand before the judgment seat of Christ, the Lord's eyes of fire will penetrate deep into our souls, evaluating whether or not we learned to love Him and others from the overflow of His love for us. Did we abide in His love and love with His love?
- n) John also wrote, "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love" (1 John 4:18). Not only does the fear of God replace all other fears, as I mentioned last week. But also, God's perfect love drives away all fear.
- o) As we experience God's love and abide in His love, every other fear and anxiety will be cast out. The powerful torrent of God's fiery love drives away every other fear. If we have fear or anxiety, it means we have not yet been perfected in God's love. This is especially important for the times in which we live.

## John the Revelator

- a) Because John knew God's love, lived in intimacy with Jesus, and loved God and others with the love of Christ, the Lord trusted John, perhaps more than any other, to reveal His end-time plans. John experienced the greatest revelation in history, while on the isle of Patmos. No other prophet or apostle experienced greater revelation than John.
- b) *John the revelator* saw Jesus Christ as He truly is—no longer a baby in the manger, the miracle-worker from Galilee, or the broken Man on the cross. No . . . John saw the resurrected, glorified, eternal Son of God and Son of Man, who is King of kings and Lord of lords. John was permitted to experience the Son of Man coming in His kingdom before He came in His kingdom.

- c) *John the revelator* saw the condition of the church, both in his day and at the end of the age. As a prophet, he received the word of the Lord to the church, especially to the end-time church. John was set apart as a messenger to prepare the bride and to exhort her to overcome.
- d) *John the revelator* also saw the day of the Lord, the coming of the antichrist, the end-time harvest, and Jesus returning in power and glory. He was permitted to see more than any other prophet or apostle in history and this was likely related to him being the beloved, intimate, and lover before he became the revelator, for John wrote the book of Revelation in 95 A.D., toward the end of his life.
- e) The Lord wants to entrust to the end-time church—to those who have experienced God’s love, abide in His love, walk intimately with Him, and love Him and others—with the revelation of Jesus Christ. This includes seeing the Lord as He truly is and understanding His end-time plan of making the bride ready. It also includes knowing His judgments toward those who reject the gospel, the coming antichrist kingdom, the return of Jesus Christ, His millennial reign, and the eternal ages.

## Study the Writings of John

- a) Because the Spirit wants to emphasize the ministry of John to the end-time church, it’s incumbent upon us to respond in an appropriate way. How? By studying the writings of John, listening with the ears of a disciple (Isa. 50:4).
- b) Here’s what we are going to do. In our home groups, after we finish reading 2 Corinthians in March, we will begin reading the writings of John. Namely John 14-17 and 1 John.
- c) The goal is not to just to read it, know it, and check it off our list. It’s to be disciplined by what John wrote to us, so that we can model our lives after him as a disciple, and get the truth he wrote deep into our hearts.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://christianity.stackexchange.com/questions/45306/what-is-the-origin-of-the-story-that-the-apostle-john-taught-only-love-one-anot>, referenced on 1/21/2022.