



End Times in 1 John

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An Introduction

In the study of the Bible several initial thoughts might prove helpful. First, the Bible came to us from God. It is an inspired book. In fact, it is the only book ever written by God through human instrumentation. Second, the Bible tells a single *Story*. This *Story* has six broad “acts”: God, Creation, Rejection, Redemption, Re-Creation and Joy through Worship. Third, at the center of this *Story* is Jesus. He is God’s means of rescuing the fallen, reversing the curse and restoring everything back to its original design. Fourth, in reading the Bible different approaches can be employed. They are as follows.

1. Historical theology looks at theological thought within its historical **development**. It provides a snapshot of thought. It speaks to what people thought during a specific period within church history.
2. Biblical theology considers thought as presented by a **single book** of the Bible or by a **single author** such as the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts or the 13 Letters written by the Apostle Paul.
3. Systematic theology seeks to take all of the various categories touched on by the various books and **catalogue** common themes.
4. Finally, dogmatic theology gives **labels** to groupings and presuppositions made by Systematic theology such as Dispensational or Covenant Theology and Reformed and Arminian Theologies.

The short readings you are about to encounter focus on biblical theology within the author’s historical context. The Apostle John wrote the Gospel of John, the three Letters of

John and the Book of Revelation. These readings will only focus on his first Letter. Although this is the limitation of the study, it is not inconsistent with anything anyone would read elsewhere. What such a study does do is force us to wrestle with what Pastor John is saying and not read into the text something that is not being said by the Apostle. Each study has a thorough reading of the various passages. Although it might prove daunting initially, the return on this small investment is notable.

So enjoy. May the following readings drive you into the text and then through the text to Jesus. Truly, He is beautiful.

End Times in 1 John

“The term ‘eschatology’ derives from the Greek *eschatos*, meaning ‘last’ or ‘end.’ Traditionally, eschatology has been considered to concern the ‘last things,’ ‘the end of history.’ But a better definition is simply ‘the doctrine of *future* things,’ or ‘the doctrine of the *consummation* of all things,’ implying *new* beginnings and *new* creation.”¹

The study of End Times has significance only as it is rooted in and flowing from our study of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We must see our study of End Times as part of the one *Story* of God.

“Eschatological truth in John is basically Christological. For the most part it issues from Jesus' teaching and, to a large degree, focuses upon him. Whether the subject be death, heaven, judgment, eternal life, resurrection, or Christ's return, he is directly involved.”²

We would probably do better if we see the biblical *Story* as cyclical rather than linear. Eschatology is not an end, but a beginning. What once was will once more be. The Eschaton brings us back to the Garden with God.

In our study of Eschatology some of our readers have already jumped ahead to their presuppositions. Others have already drawn their lines and others have already dismissed what I am about to say simply because I do not fit into their preconceived conclusions as to what a biblical eschatology is supposed to look like. Basically there are four different views that Christians have taken concerning eschatology; Postmillennialism, Amillennialism, Historic Premillennialism,

and Dispensational premillennialism [Cf. Appendix 1]. Several elements shape how one understands each perspective. **First**, is there a literal 7 year Tribulation period? **Second**, is there a literal 1,000 year reign of Jesus on the earth? **Third**, is the Church and Israel the same or different? **Finally**, will the Church go through the Tribulation and will God pick up His dealings with the nation of Israel in the End?

Although this might be to the chagrin of some, just from this short synopsis we can conclude that Pastor John does not deal with any of this. Thus **to argue for any kind of eschatological sequence from 1 John is imposing on the text something not in the text**. Our attempt has been and will be to do biblical theology.

It is with this in mind we approach our current study.

- I. Pastor John believed Jesus Christ had already been manifested in the flesh (1 John 1:2; 4:2).

“and the life was manifested, and **we have seen** and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us” (1 John 1:2).

“By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that **Jesus Christ has come in the flesh** is from God” (1 John 4:2).

It is important to realize how Jesus has already come in the flesh.³ This is a cardinal statement of biblical faith. Nothing short of this can qualify as biblical truth. Without question the above two references are marking His incarnation. Although theology often refers to Christophany, this appearance is the incarnation.

As we will hopefully see, Jesus begins the next phase of God's redemptive *Story*.

- II. Pastor John believed the darkness was passing away and the true Light was already shining (1 John 2:7-11).

⁷“Beloved, I am not writing a new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning; the old commandment is the word which you have heard. ⁸ On the other hand, I am writing a new commandment to you, which is true in Him and in you, **because the darkness is passing away and the true Light is already shining.** ⁹ The one who says he is in the Light and yet hates his brother is in the darkness until now. ¹⁰ The one who loves his brother abides in the Light and there is no cause for stumbling in him. ¹¹ But the one who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes” (1 John 2:7-11).

There is something happening in the immediate that is reflecting the future. And although the promises are inaugurated, they are not yet fully realized.

“If eschatology is the doctrine of the final things (*eschaton* being the Greek word for ‘last’), then realized eschatology is the teaching that those final things have already happened. Realized eschatology replaces ‘the end is near’ with ‘the end is here,’ and [those who embrace a fully realized eschatology] argue that we should understand Jesus’ message that ‘the kingdom of God is at hand’ with an emphasis on the kingdom’s actual, absolute presence: ‘The kingdom of God is right here, at hand, at your fingertips, reach out and you’re touching it.’”⁴ In New Testament terms, “this Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will

come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven” (Acts 1:11).

John’s point is that Jesus’ incarnation, death and resurrection introduced a new age (true light) and so the old age is passing away (darkness).⁵

We have difficulty with this idea because nothing around us would suggest God is winning or that the true light is already shining, but this statement is true.

Right now in your present difficulty know this; the darkness is passing away even as the light is already shining. In fact, God’s victory over darkness and death has already been secured. This is what our next point openly states.

III. Pastor John believed in this manifestation, He took away sins and destroyed the works of the devil (1 John 3:5, 8).

“You know that He appeared in order **to take away sins**; and in Him there is no sin” (1 John 3:5).

“the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, **to destroy the works of the devil**” (1 John 3:8).

Notice the structure of both verses.

“To take away sins (hina tas hamartias arêi). **Purpose clause** with hina and first aorist active subjunctive of airô as in Joh 1:29.”⁶

“**Purpose clause** with hina and the first aorist active subjunctive of luô.”⁷

Both passages clearly state the reason or purpose as to why Jesus was incarnate. Without question this is referring to the work He accomplished in His incarnation. It is for this reason His people are described as having overcome the evil one (1 John 2:13, 14; 4:4; 5:4, 5). Although it might go without saying it is necessary to remember how Jesus did what only Jesus could do. Jesus did not come to make your life easier. Jesus came to address finally and fully the sin issue.

¹³ "I am writing to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because **you have overcome the evil one**. I have written to you, children, because you know the Father. ¹⁴ I have written to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and **you have overcome the evil one**" (1 John 2:13, 14).

"You are from God, little children, and **have overcome them**; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world" (1 John 4:4).

⁴ "For whatever is born of God **overcomes the world**; and **this is the victory that has overcome the world**--our faith. ⁵ **Who is the one who overcomes the world**, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?" (1 John 5:4, 5).

Friend, the victory God sought and promised over sin and death has been secured and provided with light and life.

- IV. Pastor John believed the first century church was in the last hour (1 John 2:18; 4:3).

“Children, **it is the last hour**; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have appeared; from this we know that it is the last hour” (1 John 2:18).

“and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now **it is already in the world**” (1 John 4:3).

“The Elder begins with the bold assertion that *this is the last hour*. **In the New Testament only here do we find this formulation** (*eschate hora*). Some similar phrases, however, are found elsewhere in the New Testament. **‘The last days’ refer to the days in which God’s plan of salvation for the world is brought to fruition** (Acts 2:17; Joel 2:28; Mic 4:1). From this perspective it can be said that ‘the end’ has come (compare 1 Cor 10:11). But the ‘end’ is not a fleeting moment. It is rather a period that marks a new stage in God's dealings with the world.”⁸

“The final conclusion of these ‘last days’, the final act of history, is the “day” of the Lord, which is alluded to even within John (5:24-28; 6:39-40; 11:2). Other references within the Gospel of John emphasize the believer’s experience of eternal life in the present (John 5:24; 6:47; 10:10). Therefore within the Gospel of John there is a tension between what has already been realized and what is still to come, between the ‘now’ and the ‘not yet.’ **If we assume that a similar outlook exists in 1 John, then the statement in 2:18 that the “last hour” has arrived is a proclamation that the final stage of history has been reached in the interval between the first and Second Advent of Christ.** The author sees in the departure of the adversaries and in the promulgation of their false Christology the foreshadowing of the ultimate end of history marked by the coming of the Antichrist. The

end-time has already begun, and will continue until Christ returns.”⁹

Friends, if Pastor John believed the last days were upon them, then surely we must believe that like them we are in the last days. Just as they were, so also are we. The emphasis is not on the end being near, but God’s redemptive plan has come to fruition. **The Seed Promise is fulfilled and the Blood Picture is completed.** Now is the acceptable time; now is the day of salvation. Today you must believe.

- V. Pastor John believed anyone that did not confess Jesus was an antichrist (1 John 2:18, 22; 4:3).

“Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, **even now many antichrists have appeared**; from this we know that it is the last hour” (1 John 2:18).

“Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? **This is the antichrist**, the one who denies the Father and the Son” (1 John 2:22).

¹ “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world . . . ³ and **every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the spirit of the antichrist**, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world. ⁴ You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world. ⁵ They are from the world; therefore they speak as from the world, and the world listens to them” (1 John 4:1, 3-5).

Although the quotes are lengthy, please take the time to cull from the work of others.

“The word ‘antichrist’ appears in just three passages in the Bible (in the New Testament letters known as 1 John and 2 John); it does not appear at all in the Book of Revelation. Nevertheless, the idea of an Antichrist is central to the apocalyptic world view that sees human history as a struggle between God and Satan for the fate of mankind. According to most Christian prophesies of the End Time, the Antichrist will act as Satan's chief agent on earth during this period. The Antichrist -- a sort of evil twin of Jesus in many ways -- will forge a one-world government through promises of peace. But when Jesus returns, he will expose the Antichrist as an impostor, defeat him in the battle of Armageddon, and reign with the Christian martyrs for a thousand years on earth.”¹⁰

“The opponents have already been identified as *antichrists* (v. 18). They are now identified as *liars*. Their false teaching involves a denial that *Jesus* is the *Christ*. As the next verse explains, a denial of the Son, Jesus, also involves a denial of the Father.”¹¹

Although it is a lengthy quote, the following observation the author makes concerning the nature of the antichrist message in the context of the 1st century church is astute.

“John refers to these secessionists as *antichrists*. This term is found in the New Testament only in the Johannine epistles (1 Jn 2:18, 22; 4:3; 2 Jn 7). It may well have been coined by the Johannine community or perhaps by the Elder himself. The antichrist opposes Christ, but not so much by open aggression and hostility as with deceit and falsehood. The antichrist usurps the rightful role of the Messiah, the Christ, and deceives his followers (Houlden 1973:77; Marshall 1978:150; Smalley 1984:99; Stott 1988:109). The antichrist is,

in short, a counterfeit Christ. Apparently the community is familiar with the expectation that such a figure will appear and that this appearance will mark the 'last days.' What is distinctive here is that the term is used in the plural, and so in a way this differs from the expectation of the readers. Evidently not merely one figure embodying great evil, but *many* individuals who manifest that ultimate error have appeared on the scene (see Mk 13:22; Mt 24:3, 5, 11; compare Rev 16:13; 19:20; 20:10; 2 Thess 2:1-12). The *antichrists* of 1 John are those who deceive others through false teaching about the person of Christ and the nature of the Christian life (2:22-23; 4:2). There are genuine theological disagreements between these false teachers and the author, and he will soon deal with the issues. But it is not only disagreement about formulations of doctrine that stimulates John to write. It is impossible not to sense his distress and anger over the actual departure of these people as well. The breaking of fellowship is in itself judged quite severely, and seems to have taken a greater toll on the church than have the actual reasons for it (Barker 1981:324). This sin is as bad as, if not worse than, the actual doctrinal error, because in leaving the fellowship these secessionists have disregarded the cardinal and foundational command of Jesus to 'love each other.' In fact, the author's ultimate judgment on the heretics is due as much to their secession as to their doctrinal aberrations (Houlden 1973:78). We see here the community's commitment to unity, as they believed Jesus taught, commanded and died for (Jn 10:16; 11:52; 17:21). We also sense their horror of professed disciples who fall away and deny the Lord, such as Judas (Jn 6:66-71; 13:18-30) and, very nearly, Peter (Jn 13:36-38). It is probably difficult for Christians today who are accustomed to a church with a multitude of denominations to take seriously the problem of schism or defection. But too often new congregations and

denominations are formed as the result of disagreements or disputes, with at least one faction convinced that it alone understands and correctly interprets the will of God in matters of doctrine and polity. And the urge to reform the church thus becomes the practice of splitting the church. Although the sixteenth-century Reformers may be invoked as exemplars of the crusade for truth and the purity of the church, seldom is it remembered that they strove also to preserve the unity of the church by working toward agreements with each other and with the Roman Catholic Church. Although their efforts often failed, like John they cherished the unity of the church and deplored its divisions. In this light, we do well to remember the words of the Gospel of John, where Jesus said, 'I have other sheep that are not of this flock [sheep pen]. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd' (10:16). Because the work of Jesus unites us, we must take care lest our own work divides us from others who name the name of Christ. At the least, our efforts to live in fellowship and work side by side with other Christians will prevent us from thinking that we alone comprise the one true flock for which the Good Shepherd laid down his life."¹²

Friend, I could not and cannot say it better. For Pastor John, the idea that the antichrist is already present was a genuine reality. Not only were there those who rejected Jesus as the Christ, but also found His body repugnant. Although there is perhaps a larger individualized embodiment of this antichrist, we cannot deny this presence is already among us as it was with Pastor John.

- VI. Pastor John believed his world was under the power of the evil one (1 John 5:19).

¹⁵ “**Do not love the world** nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶ For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. ¹⁷ The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever” (1 John 2:15-17).

“Do not be surprised, brethren, **if the world hates you**” (1 John 3:13).

“We know that we are of God, and that **the whole world lies in the power of the evil one**” (1 John 5:19).

There is a tendency to see our time as becoming increasingly wicked, but I am not convinced we are any better or worse than the time of Noah’s flood (Gen. 6-9). There is a tendency to think our country was far more moral in the 1960’s than now. Yet we must not be delusional. The entire world lies under the power of the evil one. You can put lipstick on a pig, but it will still be a pig. No matter how many advances we make as a nation or world, it will always lie under the power of the evil one **until** Jesus comes back.

VII. Pastor John believed Jesus Christ will appear again and humanity as a whole will appear before Him (1 John 2:28).

Pastor John uses the word “appear” seven times in this Letter. Several of the occurrences speak of His first coming (1 John 1:2; 3:5, 8; 4:9).

“and the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us” (1 John 1:2).

“You know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin” (1 John 3:5).

“the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil” (1 John 3:8).

By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him” (1 John 4:9).

Yet there is another appearance, another coming spoken of in 1 John 2:28 and 3:2.

“And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall **appear**, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming” (1 John 2:28).

“Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet **appear** what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall **appear**, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is” (1 John 3:2).

“A clear reference to the second coming of Christ which may be at any time.”¹³ This appearance is imminent and these verses are also implying that one can either be ashamed or not ashamed. When Jesus comes His people will be fully transformed and thus they will have no shame at His appearance. For those who do not know Him, there will be nothing but shame and fearful reservation. This idea is noted in 1 John 4:17.

“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” (1 John 4:17).

Pastor John is not attempting to draw sharp lines. His brush strokes are broad. Jesus is coming again and will you be ready by confessing Him as your Savior?

VIII. Pastor John believed the arrival of Jesus Christ will cause instantaneous transformation in His people (1 John 3:2).

This is an incredible truth that I soak in. "The transforming power of this vision of Christ (1Co 13:12) is the consummation of the glorious process begun at the new birth (2 Co 3:18)."14

When Jesus appears I believe we will forever lose our old nature. It is at this time the presence of sin will be forever purged from our experience. I believe the Bema Seat Judgment is where we see for the first time all God chose to do in us and through us to those around us. The Bema Seat is a time of great rejoicing and celebration. The Bema Seat is a throne of grace where mercy is obtained and help is found in our time of need (Heb. 4:16) for those that confess Jesus as their Savior. I believe in that day there will be a great unveiling and we will be dumbstruck at the magnitude of God's gracious dealings in us and through us to those around us.

There will be no shame or fear in that day.

IX. Pastor John believed this instantaneous transformation is a hope which impacts and affects how His people currently live (1 John 3:3).

Think about this text and how we often approach the coming of Jesus. If Pastor John says we will not have shame

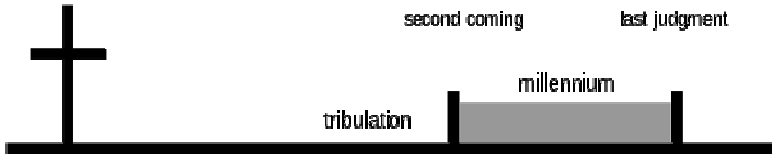
or fear at His coming and if the text tells us we will be like Him because we will see Him as He is, then what is motivating me to purify myself if not fear and shame? Friend, it is an incredible concept, but love is the reason why I live a pure life. If Jesus loves me without condition and accepts me without requirement and forgives me without limit and favors me without merit and serves me without reward, then my only response to such action is love. And if I love Him, purity is the only proper response. Yet let us not deceive ourselves. There is no purity [i.e. ceremonial cleanliness] apart from Jesus. He makes us pure and He is our purity. The gospel impact is so life shattering as to make me pure. I practice righteousness by continuing in the confession.

It is only as we realize who He is and what He has done that we live in the victory over sin and death that is already ours.

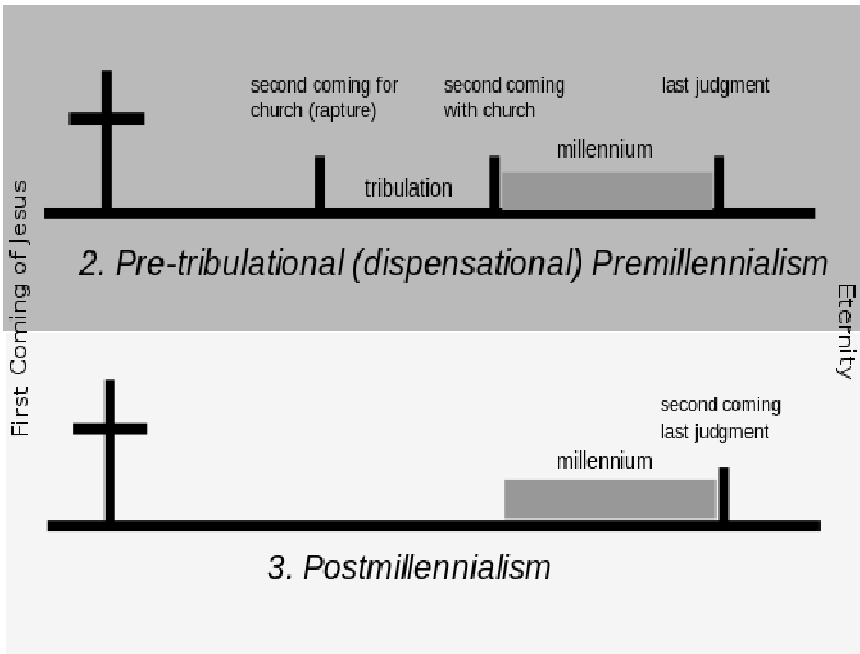
Pastor John's eschatology is powerful. There is the Christ and in opposition to Him is the evil one. The world is a part of this open rebellion against God. Jesus took on human form and nature for the purpose of destroying the works of the devil. **Just as Jesus won so also we win.** He is coming again and when He does humanity shall stand before Him and give an accounting of whether or not they agreed with God's record concerning themselves and His Son.

APPENDIX 1

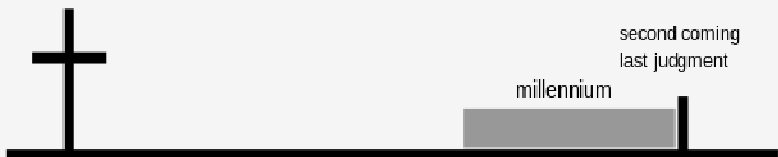
Comparison of Christian millennial teachings



1. Post-tributational Premillennialism



2. Pre-tributational (dispensational) Premillennialism



3. Postmillennialism



4. Amillennialism

ENDNOTES

¹ http://web.campbell.edu/faculty/vandergriffk/intro_theology_eschatology.html

² http://faculty.gordon.edu/hu/bi/ted_hildebrandt/ntesources/ntarticles/ctr-nt/cook-johnseschatology-ctr.pdf

³ "The predicate participle describes Jesus as already come in the flesh (his actual humanity, not a phantom body as the Docetic Gnostics held)." A.T. Robertson's *NT Word Pictures* on 1 John 4:2.

⁴ <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/scriptorium/2009/04/c-h-dodd-and-realized-eschatology/>

⁵ "The reference to *the darkness...passing away and the true light...already shining* is an allusion to John 1:5, 1:9, and 8:12. Because the author sees the victory of *light over darkness* as something already begun, he is writing Jesus' commandment to love one another to the readers as a reminder to (1) hold fast to what they have already heard (see 1 John 2:7) and (2) not be influenced by the teaching of the opponents." <https://net.bible.org/#!/bible/1+John+2> "Is passing away (paragetai). Present middle indicative of paragō, old verb, to lead by, to go by (intransitive), as in Mt 20:30. Night does pass by even if slowly. **See this verb in verse 1Jo 2:17 of the world passing by like a procession.** True (alêthinon). Genuine, reliable, no false flicker. Already shineth (êdê phainei). Linear present active, **"is already shining" and the darkness is already passing by. Dawn is here.**" A.T. Robertson's *NT Word Pictures* on 1 John 4:8.

⁶ A.T. Robertson's *NT Word Pictures* on 1 John 3:5. "The ἵνα (Jina) clause gives the purpose of Jesus' self-revelation as he manifested himself to the disciples and to the world during his earthly life and ministry: It was 'to take away sins.'" <https://net.bible.org/#!/bible/1+John+3>

⁷ A.T. Robertson's *NT Word Pictures* on 1 John 3:8.

⁸ <http://www.biblegateway.com/resources/commentaries/IVP-NT/1John/Warnings-Against-Antichrists>

⁹ <https://bible.org/seriespage/exegetical-commentary-1-john-218-27>

¹⁰ <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/apocalypse/antichrist/quiz.html>

¹¹ <https://bible.org/seriespage/exegetical-commentary-1-john-218-27>

¹² <http://www.biblegateway.com/resources/commentaries/IVP-NT/1John/Warnings-Against-Antichrists>

¹³ *A.T. Robertson's NT Word Pictures on 1 John 2:28.*

¹⁴ *A.T. Robertson's NT Word Pictures on 1 John 3:2.*

Studies in 1 John

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Son and Holy Spirit. We must see our study of End Times as part of the one *Story* of God. Eschatology is not an end, but a beginning. What once was will once more be. The Eschaton brings us back to the Garden with God.

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