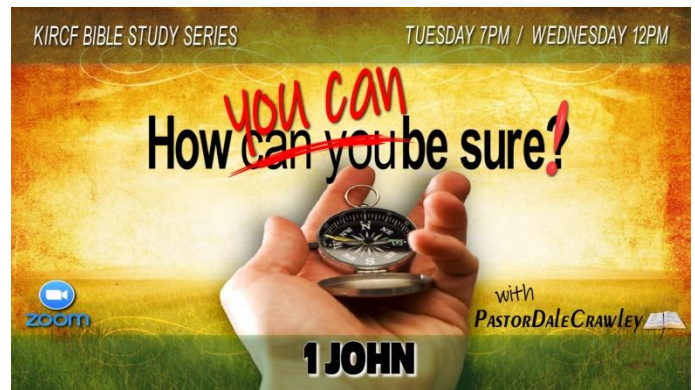


1 John Chapter Four: Part 1 "THE JESUS TEST"



John concluded chapter 3 teaching us that the Spirit's presence is not only spiritual and mystical, but it is also practical. That is, that the Believers' conduct verifies His presence.

Believers living in Christ as He lives in them -- shows **JULY 13-14, 2021**
itself in Christians who keep these three essential commands: (1) believe in Christ, (2) love the brothers and sisters, and (3) live morally upright lives.

In this 4th chapter the Apostle John expands his teaching regarding truth and genuine relationships and gives us "*litmus test*" to use to distinguish truth from false teaching. In principle, I like to call it "**THE JESUS TEST**"... to be used for discerning biblical truth from demonic deception. This doctrinal test is outlined in this opening paragraph.

"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. ² By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; 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." -- 1 John 4:1-3 (NASU)

Here John makes an emphasis ... *that those who have the Spirit of God "confess" that Jesus, God's Son, has come in bodily form.* In other words, they acknowledge the full reality of the Incarnation. False prophets who deny these basic truths are antichrists.

- Therefore, in analyzing the wide spectrum of teachers and books on spirituality available to us today, the test should be: What do they teach about the person of Jesus Christ?

The test believers are to use is given in 4:2-3. **The responsibility for testing the spirits rests not merely on scholars or church leaders but on every Christian.**

"Do not believe every spirit" means ... that believers should not believe everything they hear just because someone says it is a message from God ... they should test the message to see if it is truly from the Lord!

One way is to check to see if it matches God's Word, the Bible. Other tests include the teachers' commitment to the body of believers (2:19), their lifestyles (3:23-24), and the fruit of their ministries (4:6). The most important test of all, however, is what they believe about Christ (4:2). Do they teach that Jesus is fully God and fully man? The

first-century world was filled with many false prophets who were claiming to speak for God. The believers needed to apply these tests in order to discern truth from error.

Most of the eyewitnesses to Jesus' ministry had died by the time John composed this letter. Some of the second- or third-generation Christians had begun to have doubts about what they had been taught about Jesus. **John answered these false teachers as an eyewitness to Jesus' life on earth.** He had seen Jesus, had spoken with Him, and had touched Him -- John knew that Jesus was more than a mere spirit. In the very first sentence of this letter, John established that Jesus had been alive before the world began ... and also that He had lived as a man among men and women. In other words, Jesus was both divine and human.

Through the centuries, many heretics have denied that Jesus was both God and man. In John's day, people had trouble believing Jesus was human; today more people have problems thinking He is God. **But Jesus' divine-human nature is the pivotal issue of Christianity.** Before you accept what religious teachers say about any topic ... listen carefully to what they believe about Jesus. To deny either His divinity or His humanity is to make Him less than Christ, the Savior.

² **By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God;** The test for discovering whether or not a certain prophet belonged to God was a test of his or her doctrinal beliefs about the person of Jesus Christ (2:22; 1 Corinthians 12:3). "Every spirit" refers to the spirit of the person speaking. This "spirit" could be the Holy Spirit, or it could be demonic. The only way to tell would be to apply the following test: To know that a prophet has the Spirit of God and is from God, discover if he or she confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh. There are two parts to this truth:

1. **Jesus is God's Christ.** A true teacher of God believes that Jesus of Nazareth as revealed in the Gospels is the Messiah of God, God's only and unique incarnation of Himself.
2. **Jesus came in a human body.** A true teacher must also teach that Jesus became a man. He did not merely "appear" to be a man; He actually became a man with a human body. God the Son is forever fully God and fully man, though in immortal, incorruptible flesh. A prophet who denies Jesus' full and true humanity proves that he or she is not "from God."

Think about it: If Jesus Christ was not and is not the God-man depicted in the New Testament ... then it follows that all of Scripture is suspect, and our sins are not, in fact, forgiven. Believers have a responsibility to call into question any church or teaching that rejects a historic, orthodox belief about the person of Jesus Christ!

OLD TESTAMENT TESTS FOR FALSE PROPHETS

In the Old Testament, various signs or works pointed to a true or false prophet. Many of these can also be applied today.

1. Does the prophet use fortune-telling?

Divination was expressly forbidden by God (Deuteronomy 18:9-14). No true teacher or prophet would use fortune-telling or have any dealings with spirits of the dead (Jeremiah 14:14; Ezekiel 12:24; Micah 3:7).

2. Have the prophet's short-term prophecies been fulfilled?

Deuteronomy 18:22 used this as a test. Do predictions come to pass?

3. Is the prophet marked by a desire to say only what pleases people?

Many false prophets told people what they wanted to hear. A true prophet serves God, not people (Jeremiah 8:11; 14:13; 23:17; Ezekiel 13:10; Micah 3:5).

4. Does the prophet draw people away from God?

Many teachers draw people to themselves or to the system or organization they have built (Deuteronomy 13:1-3).

5. Does the prophet's prophecy confirm the Bible's main teaching?

If prophecy is inconsistent with or contradictory to Scripture, it is not to be believed.

6. What is the prophet's moral character?

False prophets were charged with lying (Jeremiah 8:10; 14:14), drunkenness (Isaiah 28:7), and immorality (Jeremiah 23:14).

7. Do other Spirit-led people discern authenticity in this prophet?

Discernment by others who are led of the Spirit is a key test (1 Kings 22:7). The New Testament speaks of this a great deal (John 10:4-15; 1 Corinthians 2:14; 14:29,32; 1 John 4:1).

THREE TESTS FOR BELIEVERS

Throughout this letter, John has been describing how to determine the true believers. The false teachers had done a good job of confusing the believers, so John went back to the basics and described three tests for discerning true believers. Like a braided cord, these three "tests" are interwoven, each dependent upon the other; none existing alone in the life of a true believer.

True Believers...

1. Obey God's commands in his Word.
2. Love God and other believers; have lifestyles characterized by love.
3. Believe in the truth of the gospel message that Jesus Christ is Lord!