

Confessing Jesus

4:1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit [teacher, prophet], but test [prove] the spirits [teachers, prophets] to see whether they are from God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

1. Once again God addresses his readers as “beloved.” (1 Jn. 2:7; 3:2; 3:21).

a. The Greek for “beloved” is “agapetos” [a ga pay tos’].

b. See 1 Jn. 4:7, 11.

2. John warns us “Do not believe every spirit.”

a. Teaching is an activity of the human spirit which is the thinking part of man. (1 Cor. 2:11).

1CO 2:11 For who among men knows the thoughts of a man **except the spirit of the man**, which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God.

b. A “spirit” can refer to an inspired teacher or a false teacher.

1) 1 John 4:1 shows this.

2) This is also apparent from 2 Thessalonians 2:2.

2TH 2:2 that you may not be quickly shaken from your composure or be **disturbed either by a spirit** or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. “spirit” is used here of a false teacher.

3. One of the spiritual gifts was the gift of prophecy.” (1 Cor. 12:8-10).

1CO 12:8 For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit; 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, 10 and to another the effecting of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues.

1CO 14:1 Pursue love, yet desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy. 2 For one who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men, but to God; for no one understands, but in his spirit he speaks mysteries. 3 But one who prophesies speaks to men for edification and exhortation and consolation. 4 One who speaks in a tongue edifies himself; but one who prophesies edifies the church. 5 Now I wish that you all spoke in tongues, but even more that you would prophesy; and greater is one who prophesies than one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, so that the church may receive edifying.

4. Read 1 Cor. 14:24-29; Acts 11:27; 13:1; 21:9, 10; Rev. 10:7; 16:6; 22:9.

5. False teachers are under the influence of Satan and evil spirits. See 1 Tim. 4:1.

1TI 4:1 But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons,

a. This verse does not mean that false teachers are controlled by Satan and demons in some miraculous way. There is no evidence of this.

b. Most often false teaching is motivated by power, prestige, and greed and comes from those who yield to the non-miraculous temptations of Satan.

c. This is not a forced action by Satan, but it is Satan appearing to our fleshly desires. (1 Jn. 2:15).

6. True teachers are under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

a. In the first century many teachers, not all, were inspired by the Holy Spirit.

b. Today men are not inspired by the Holy Spirit, but are influenced and motivated and directed by the indwelling of God's words in their hearts.

c. Teachers are "filled" with the Holy Spirit by allowing the words of Jesus to richly dwell in their hearts. (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16).

7. Christians must not be gullible, but must "test the spirits" [teachers, prophets, etc]. (1 Jn. 4:1; 1 Thess. 5:21).

8. The "many false prophets" correspond [but not limited to] to the "many antichrists." (1 Jn. 2:18).

1JO 2:18 Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have arisen; from this we know that it is the last hour.

9. We are commanded to test "the spirits" to determine if they are of God.

a. **It is evident that all who claim to teach God's word are not true.**

MAT 7:15 "Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in **sheep's clothing**, but inwardly are ravenous wolves.

MAT 24:4 And Jesus answered and said to them, "See to it that no one misleads you.

MAT 24:5 "For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will mislead many.

ACT 20:28 "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. 29 "I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; 30 and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them.

b. It is evident that we must do the detecting by God's word (Acts 17:11), for a false teacher will not tell you he is false.

1) No one ever says, "I am a false teacher." The person may not know he is false or may be concealing it for his/her evil purposes.

- 2) In fact, he or she may denounce false teachers.
- 3) Very often those who speak the loudest against false teachers are false teachers.
- 4) One who warns against false teachers may be a false teacher.
- 5) We must examine the scriptures to see if what is taught is of God. (Acts 17:11).

10. It is evident that it **makes a difference what we believe.**

- a. Why did John, Jesus, Paul and others warn against false teachers if it makes no difference what we believe?
- b. The New Testament abounds in exhortations and warnings to avoid false teaching and to follow the truth. (Matt. 7:15; 24:11; Gal. 1:3, 8-10; Jn. 8:32; 1 Tim. 1:3; 2 Pet. 2:1).
- c. Christians are exhorted to follow “sound doctrine,” that is, doctrine that is healthy, correct, profitable.

1TI 4:6 In pointing out these things to the brethren, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, **constantly nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine** which you have been following.

1TI 6:3 If anyone advocates a different doctrine, and does not agree with sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and **with the doctrine conforming to godliness,**

2TI 4:3 For the time will come when they will not endure **sound doctrine**; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires;

TIT 1:9 holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, that he may be able both to exhort in **sound doctrine** and to refute those who contradict.

TIT 2:1 But as for you, speak the things which are fitting for **sound doctrine.**

4:2 **By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit [prophet, teacher] that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God;**

1. “Jesus is the Christ” [the Messiah, the Anointed One] is the fundamental confession of Christianity. (Matt. 16:16; Mk. 8:29; Jn. 20:31; Acts 2:36).
2. Part of the confession that “Jesus is the Christ” is an acknowledgment that He came in the flesh.
3. The spirits (prophets) who confess the humanity of Christ (not humanity only) are “from God” and are under the influence of the Holy Spirit.
 - a. This is not the only test manifesting one “is from God.”
 - b. It is a positive way of stating what is affirmed in 1 John 4:3.
4. The gnostics denied that Christ came in the flesh. Introduction notes: See docetic and Cerinthus gnostics.
 - a. They believed that flesh was evil and therefore Jesus could not have been flesh.
 - b. They contended He only appeared to be flesh.

- c. Denial of the humanity of Christ nullifies the atonement of Jesus and denies His bodily resurrection which is a pledge of our resurrection. (Rom. 8:11; 1 Cor. 15:1-23). See Notes 1 Jn. 2:22.
5. A like test is proposed by Paul for confessing the deity of Jesus Christ in 1 Corinthians 12:3 and for the incarnation and resurrection of Jesus in Romans 10:6-10.

1 Corinthians 12:3

1CO 12:3 Therefore I make known to you, that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus is accursed"; and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.

- **The idea is no one can sincerely say “Jesus is Lord” except by the Holy Spirit.**
- The Lord pointed out that calling Him “Lord” demands obedience. (Lk. 6:46).
- The Spirit would never curse Jesus nor influence anyone to do so.

Romans 10:6-10.

ROM 10:6 But the righteousness based on faith speaks thus, "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?' (that is, to bring Christ down), 7 or 'Who will descend into the abyss [the grave]?' (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). " 8 But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart"-- that is, the word of faith which we are preaching, 9 that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved; 10 for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.

- **Confessing “Jesus as Lord” must come from the heart and includes faith in the fact “that God raised Him from the dead.”**
- Jesus taught it also included obedience. (Lk. 6:46).

4:3 and every spirit [teacher, prophet] that does not confess Jesus is not from God; and 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. The “antichrist” is now “already in the world.” See 1 Jn. 2:18; 2 Jn.7.

1JO 2:18 Children, it is the last hour [time of crisis]; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have arisen; from this we know that it is the last hour. [This is not the end of the world, but a time of great crisis. The church would be greatly harmed and destroyed if this doctrine persisted.]

2JO 1:7 For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist.

2. The “antichrist” by denying the humanity of Christ manifested he was not from God.

3. **No one from God would deny the humanity of Christ.**

- a. To deny the humanity of Christ is to deny the virgin birth, that Jesus was baptized, that He was tempted

and suffered like us, that He died on the cross, that He shed His blood for us, that He was raised from the tomb.

- b. See notes 1 Jn. 2:22; 4:2.
- c. The humanity of Christ is foundational to Christianity.
- d. Christianity stands or falls with it.

Listening To The Truth

4:4 You are from God, little children, and have overcome them [the false prophets]; because greater [mightier] is He [God, Holy Spirit] who is in you than he [Satan] who is in the world. 1 Jn. 2:13, 14; 5:3, 4.

1. The devil is very powerful, but God is more powerful.
 - a. John 12:31; 14:30; 2 Cor. 4:4; 1 Pet. 5:8.
 - b. Our God is Almighty. (Gen. 17:1).
 - c. He is omnipotent. (Matt. 19:26).
 - d. The devil is not omnipotent. He is a powerful fallen angel. (Rev. 9:11).

REV 9:11 They have as king over them, **the angel of the abyss**; his name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in the Greek he has the name Apollyon.

2. It is urgent that we depend on our mighty God to overcome temptation. (Psa. 46:1; Matt. 6:13; 1 Cor. 10:13; Jas. 4:7,8).
3. The victory was won by the power of the Holy Spirit. (Eph. 3:16, 17).
4. Those who follow “he who is in the world” (the devil) are doomed for defeat. (Matt. 25:41, 46; Rev. 21:8).

4:5 They [false teachers] are from the world; therefore they speak {as} from the world, and the world listens to them.

1. The world is eager to hear its own worldly teachers who tickle its ears.

2TI 4:3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires;

2TI 4:4 and will turn away their ears from the truth, and will turn aside to myths.

2. The world does not recognize those from God. (1 Jn. 3:2; Jn. 15:18, 19).
3. It hates us. (1 Jn. 3:13).

“Spirit of truth and the spirit of error”

4:6 We [apostles, teachers, and followers] are from God; he who knows God listens to us; he who is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit [Spirit] of truth and the spirit of error.

1. “We” refers to those who follow and taught truth including the apostles.
2. The words “spirit of truth” occurs in John 15:26 and have reference to the Holy Spirit.
 - a. It is possible it should be capitalized here and has reference to the Holy Spirit.
 - b. The “spirit [Spirit] of truth” is “the Spirit of God” in 1 John 4:2.

“Let Us Love One Another”

4:7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.

- In context John is addressing Christians, and is giving evidence of their genuineness.
- He is not discussing how one becomes a child of God. (Jn. 3:1-5; Gal. 3:26,27).

1. John has already discussed love. (1 Jn. 2:7-11; 3:10; 16-18).
2. John gives a number of ways we can know if we or another is from God.
 - a. 1 John 1:7,9
 - b. 1 John 2:3-5, 9-10, 15, 23, 29.
 - c. 1 John 3:3,4,6,8,9,14,15,24.
 - d. 1 John 4:12.

4:8 The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

1. “God is love” (1 Jn. 4:8).
 - a. John does not say that love is God, but only “God is love.”
 - b. All He does is motivated by love. (Jn. 3:16; 1 Jn. 4:10).
 - c. God is a God who cares. (1 Pet. 5:7).

Note: John gives 4 reasons for our loving (1) Love is of God - 4:7 (2) he who loves is born of God - 4:7 (3) he who loves knows God - 4:8 (4) Love exhibits, reveals the nature of God - 4:8.

2. “God is light.” (1 Jn. 1:5). See 1 Jn. 1:6.
3. “God is Spirit.” (Jn. 4:24; Psa. 139:7-10).
4. “God is faithful.” (1 Cor. 10:13).

4:9 By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten [unique, one of a kind] Son into the world so that we might live through Him.

1. God “manifested” His great love for us by giving “His only begotten Son” “so that we might live through Him.” (1 Jn. 3:14).
2. Jesus was born of the virgin Mary. (Matt. 1:18-25; Lk. 1:26-35), but the word “only begotten” do not refer primarily or exclusively to the virgin birth, but it has a broader meaning.
3. The words “only begotten” come from the Greek “monogenes” [mo no ge nace’] that literally means “only, single, one of a kind., one and only or unique.”
 - a. This word was used to refer to Isaac who was the unique son of Abraham, but not literally his only son. (Heb. 11:17). Abraham had eight sons - one son by Sarah, six sons by Keturah (Gen. 25:1, 2), and one son by Hagar. (Gen. 16:15).
 - b. This word was used to refer to the “one and only” son of the widow at Nain. (Lk. 7:12). See Lk. 8:42; 9:38.
 - c. Jesus is the unique Son of God - eternal, Deity, all authority, exalted as King at the right hand of God. **See notes below under point 6 of this section.**
4. All of us, as believers, are “sons of God” or children of God.”
5. Angels are called “sons of God.” (Job 1:6).
6. Jesus is God’s unique Son, not man or angels. (Jn. 1:14, 18, 3:16, 18, 3:16). See Matt. 16:16, 17.
 - a. Jesus is eternal. (1 Jn. 1:2).
 - b. Jesus was with God “in the beginning.” (Jn. 1:2).
 - c. God created all things through Jesus. (Jn. 1:3; Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:2).
 - d. Jesus is Deity. (Jn. 1:1; 14:9; Col. 2:9; Phil. 2:5-9; Heb. 1:8).
 - e. He was born of a virgin. (Matt. 1:18-25; Lk. 1:34,35).
 - f. Jesus is exactly like God. (Jn. 10:30; Col. 1:15; Phil. 2:3-5).
 - g. Jesus has “all authority.” (Matt. 28:18; Jn. 17:2).
 - i. He is “exalted at the right hand of God.” (Acts 2:33).
 - j. Jesus was sinless. (Heb. 4:15; 1 Pet. 2:22; Jn. 8:46).
7. **No angel or no man has even one of these unique qualities.**
 - a. These characteristics are uniquely belong to Christ.
 - b. No man or angel can ever begin to compare to Jesus.

4:10 **In this is love, not that we [first] loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son {to be} the propitiation [atoning sacrifice] for our sins.** See 1 Jn. 4:19

1. The word “propitiation” means “atoning sacrifice.” Gr. “hilasmos” [hee la smos’]
2. Jesus is “the propitiation” [atoning sacrifice] for all who accept Him. (1 Jn. 2:2).
 - a. Jesus is the only way to heaven. (John 3:36; 5:24; 14:6).
 - b. This fact is also confirmed by Acts 4:12.

ACT 4:12 "And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved."

3. Jesus did not love us because we are so lovable or deserving of salvation, but “He loved us when we were sinners.” (Rom. 5:8).

4:11 **Beloved, if God so loved us [so immensely], we also ought to love one another.**

1. Those who love God must love one another.
2. The “ought” is not a mere suggestion or option, but a mandate. Gr. “opheil’o” [o fay’ lo]
3. John earlier discussed the great love we are to have for one another. (1 Jn. 3:16-18).

Seeing God

4:12 **No one has beheld God [invisible Deity] at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected [accomplishes its purpose] in us.**

- Lit. “having been perfected in us” is perfect participle of “teleioo.” [tel ay o’ o]
 - “popote” [po’ par teh] - “ever, at any time, never.”
1. God cannot be seen as He is. (Jn. 1:18; 1 Jn. 4:20, 21). The words “has seen” are the Greek perfect tense and comes from the Greek “the’omai” [the’ o mi] meaning “to see or behold.”
 - a. God is “Spirit.” (Jn. 4:24).
 - 1) A “spirit” is not fleshly. (Lk. 24:39).
 - 2) God is not flesh. (Matt. 16:19).
 - b. “Spirit” is invisible. (Col. 1:15).
 - c. God dwells in light unapproachable. (1 Tim. 6:15).

Note:

1. The word “God” (theos’) does not have the definite article “the” before it.
 - a. The Greek has “theon’.”
 - b. The article is also omitted in John 1:18 - “theon’.”

2. It refers to Deity (God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit).” No one has seen Deity as it is.
3. God has revealed Himself. This is known as a theophany. This is a visible manifestation of God or a god.
 - a. Gen. 18:1, 22; 19:1.
 - b. Exodus 33:23 “Then I will take My hand away and you shall see My back, but My face shall not be seen.”
 - 1) Here God permitted Moses to see Himself in a form.
 - 2) He did not see God as He is.
4. We will see God in the next life. (Matt. 5:8; Rev. 22:4).

MAT 5:8 "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.	REV 22:4 and they shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads.
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- a. We will no longer have physical bodies. (Rom. 8:11; 1 Cor. 15:49-57).
- b. We will be given the blessed privilege of seeing God.
- c. What a glorious moment that will be when we see God and have the blessing of being with Him for eternity.

Note:

1. Though God is not seen with the human eye, this does not mean He is not real and He is not near us.
2. He is so near that He lives in us.
3. an’ thro po mor’ phism
 - a. Representation of God with human attributes - eyes, ears, arms hands, face, etc.
 - b. It can also be an ascription of human characteristics to things not human.

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