

The “True-False” Test Every Christian Must Pass

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(“The Last Eyewitness” Series: A Study of the First Epistle of John – Chapter 4)

Lesson One Highlights: The Last Eyewitness

- John was the oldest and last surviving disciple, now called apostles.
- Eyewitness to (or still alive when this occurred):
- Jesus miracles and ministry on earth (one of the first four disciples chosen.)
- Jesus’ crucifixion, burial, resurrection, and ascension into Heaven
- Witnessed the overpowering descent of the Holy Spirit on them at Pentecost
- Peter changed from denier of Jesus to one of the leaders of His church
- The death of James, his brother, by King Herod- the first disciple martyred
- Persecution of Christians by and salvation of Saul-Paul
- Deaths of all his fellow apostles
- The birth of the Christian church and its struggles to survive
- Exiled, with “criminals”, on Patmos, an island in the Aegean Sea, for preaching the Gospel.
- Moved to Ephesus to spend the rest of his life preaching and exhorting the church.
- Like Paul, he battled Gnostics who were challenging the Truth of the Gospel.
- We saw the importance of personal **testimonies** to reach people for Christ – including ours.
- We learned the biblical meaning of the word **fellowship**

and what it looks like.

- John said Jesus was the **propitiation** (appeasement) for our sins. We studied the meaning.

Lesson Two Highlights: Five Evidences from the life of a Christian

- Obedience
- Love (no one born of Christ can hate)
- Hating sin and not loving the world
- Evidence against – being a pretender or antichrist
- The Anointing of the Holy Spirit

Lesson Three Highlights: Child of God or Child of the devil

- Child of God
 - If we abide in Jesus, we do not **practice** sin (live in sin or a sinful lifestyle)
 - Practices righteousness.
 - We obey His commands
 - We live as He lived
 - We love as He loved
 - Child of the devil
 - Abide or live in sin (practice sin) with no remorse or repentance.
 - Do not practice the righteousness of Christ
 - Do not love their brothers or others or others—love selectively.
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As we move our study into Ch 4, let us recall the Apostle John wrote to warn the people in the churches about false teachers and Gnostics who had infiltrated the churches (beginning in Paul's day) and were distorting the truth of the gospel of Christ.

John went to great lengths in this letter to give testimony of the true risen Christ and what a true Christian was versus

those who were lost and of the devil (his words). John ended Chapter Three summing up those who are children of God not of the devil.

"The one who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. We know by this that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us." 1 John 3: 24

Remember John's letters, like the entire Bible, were not written with chapters and verses as we have today. This verse flowed very naturally into what we read in Chapter 4. The key is this:

° ***The Spirit of God abides in us, but there are many "false spirits" in the demonic realm.*** °

"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." 1 John 4: 1

These false spirits controlled false prophets who had infiltrated the church and were going out proclaiming false doctrines. John made it clear how to "test" them against the truth.

*By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; 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. 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. They are from the world; therefore they speak as from the world, and the world listens to them. We 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 of truth and the **spirit of error**. 1 John 4: 2-6*

Jesus Christ, resurrected Messiah, is the key. He is the test

for having the Holy Spirit or being deceived by false spirits thru “antichrists” – false prophets. Children of God listen to and receive John’s message. Children of the devil do not listen—rather they listen to false teachings that “make more sense”, “seem smarter”, or “tickle their ears” (2 Timothy 4: 3). John said this is the only true test to discern between the spirit of Truth and the spirit of error.

◦ Understanding the Love of God ◦

The Love of God (to) Us

“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. 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. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. 1 John 4: 7- 10

- Love is the very nature and character of God but it is not all of Him. It is part of Him.
- Creation in His image is an expression of love of God. We were wanted not needed.
- Mercy is an expression of His love in that He did not destroy us because of our sin.
- The greatest expression of the love of God was that in His mercy, He sent Jesus to save us.
- Wrath and justice satisfied; God in His grace can now save us (J Vernon McGee)

The Love of God (thru) Us

“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. By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. 1 John 4: 11 – 13

- Twice John restates the “love one another” command. That is loving fellow Christians in these specific verses.
- “By this we know”- Being obedient to Jesus’ command is evidence as we stated in Week 2

The Love of God (with) Us

“We have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world. (see John 3: 16) Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. 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 (abiding in Him), 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. 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: 15 – 19

- The love of God sent Jesus to save us from our sins.
- Our confession is we have received Him as our Savior—He abides in us and we in Him.
- As Christians, we know and believe God loves us—unconditionally.
- Abiding in Him allows His love to be perfected in us (so that we can love others).
- Our secure standing in Christ frees us from future judgment and fear.

The Test of the Love of God – Putting it all together

“We love because He first loved us. If someone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also.” 1 John 4: 19-21

- It was impossible to love others as Christ taught and exemplified until God first loved us.
- Hate = Liar + Lost
- Not loving other Christians implies we do not love God.
- Jesus commanded (not suggested) we love our brothers and sisters in Christ.

The last four weeks have taken us deep into this short letter to Christians originally in first century churches and now all over the world. John's message is painfully consistent on two fronts: (1) children of God vs children of the devil and (2) love and hate. I pray the Holy Spirit is speaking into your life as we study this together as He is mine—

confirming what He will...convicting where He must.

For Christ's sake,

Walter