

Bibles???

The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority

Pray for the Fathers on Father's Day

Open your bibles with me to 1 John 4

We are continuing our verse-by-verse study through this short, personal and practical letter that the Apostle John – late in his life – wrote to you and to me.

About the reality of who God is, the reality of who Jesus is and the reality of what it means to be a Christian.

And John is going to point out in our text this morning that part of our reality as a believer is to put to the test what we hear to be sure that it is true.

Let's pray...

I want to remind us that that the theme of this letter is one of fellowship.

Fellowship with God and then fellowship with each other

And remember what the word "fellowship" means –

it means having access to God, friendship with God, communication with God, intimacy with God

Fellowship is something that we actively participate in.

And so John in his letter – exposes the lie, that a person can have fellowship with God and continue in habitual unrepented sin.

The lie that a person can have fellowship with God and hate his or her brother.

The lie that a person can have fellowship with God and love the world

The lie that a person can have fellowship with God and yet their lives are not marked by love.

John makes it clear that these individuals are not true believers but make believers.

Because if we have genuine fellowship with God / if we abide in Him – He fills us with His love and His love in us is manifested in how we love one another.

We are to love people – that means believers and nonbelievers.

And it is supposed to be a biblical love –

Not an emotional love or a feeling of affection –

Biblical love is a sacrificial love – one that does not expect anything in return.

Love is a willingness to do what is right toward another person – even if it hurts.

Willingness to tell share the other person the truth – even if it might offend them.

That is love.

So we are to love –

But then the question is -

How do we respond to false teachers and false gospels?

How do we know the difference between the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error?

You see church – we have to know what we believe.

I was reading a book about George Whitfield

And the author was talking about a conversation that Whitfield had with an individual who professed he was a Christian.

And George asked him, "Sir, what do you believe?"

"I believe what my church believes," the man replied respectfully.

"And what does your church believe?" "The same thing I believe."

"And what do both of you believe?" the preacher inquired again. "We both believe the same thing!"

You know what is wrong with that statement –

A person is not saved by assenting to a church creed.

A person is saved by trusting Jesus Christ and bearing witness to his/her faith

[Rom 10:9-10 NKJV] 9 that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

10 For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

Do we believe what the bible says about the birth of Jesus, the life of Jesus, the death of Jesus, the resurrection of Jesus?

John and Paul both make the argument that it is important to believe the truth.

[1Jo 4:1-6 NKJV] 1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

John had a biblical love for the believer – for the reader of this letter.

How do we know?

Because he is warning us – remember, sometimes love requires that we say a hard thing.

John is saying – loved ones.

Be careful

Be on guard

Not everyone who claims to speak for God – does.

Now, I had you make a note of the word spirit.

Did you notice that John doesn't say – do not believe every man –

He says do not believe every spirit.

And by spirit – he means, the deeply held convictions of the teacher or the prophet.

When someone sends you a youtube clip of a pastor or you hear someone on the radio or you see them on television – how do we determine whether or not what the person is saying is true?

How do we know that the individual is speaking for God?

You see, for many people, the tendency is always to believe first and test later.

John is telling us –

First listen and then test

And you test it in the same manner someone would test a precious metal – that is the word that is used here for testing.

Is it real gold or is it just something that looks like real gold?

Is it a fake?

When we are shopping for a car or a home – do we simply take what the seller tells us at face value or do we test it???

Because there are people who will make every effort to prepare a counterfeit to look like the real thing.

So when someone says they have a word from the Lord – we are commanded to test those claims.

Just because they say they have a message from God – it doesn't make it true.

Keep this in context –

Remember, during this time, Gnosticism was infiltrating the church – the teachers were teaching false doctrine.

They were claiming that Jesus did not come in the flesh.

That they could live however they wanted because God only cared about the spirit.

They were teaching a false doctrine.

So we have to ask ourselves?

Does the message agree with God's revelation in the bible?

Does the message agree with the reality of who Jesus is?

When the JW or the LDS show up at our doors on Saturday morning – that is the only test we need.

But that is not the only test –

Turn back a few pages to chapter 2

[1Jo 2:18-19 NKJV] 18 Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour. 19 They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but [they went out] that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us.

This is John's way of saying – these false teachers left the fellowship of the apostles.

They started teaching things that were contrary to what John and Peter and the others were teaching and they left because they did not agree with what they were saying about Jesus.

They either abandoned the fellowship or they remained in the fellowship seeking to destroy the fellowship from within

[2Pe 2:1-3 NKJV] 1 But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, [and] bring on themselves swift destruction. 2 And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. 3 By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber.

So we have different tests that we can use whether their message is one of the spirit of truth or the spirit of error

2 By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has **come in the flesh is of God, 3 and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the [spirit] of the **Antichrist**, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world.**

The most important test isn't simply what they say or what they do – according to John, the most important test – is to ask them the question, “What do they believe about Jesus?”

And for those that believe that Jesus is the spiritual brother of Lucifer

Or for those that believe that Jesus is the archangel Michael

Or for those who believe that Jesus was simply a good person and a prophet

John says that they have it all wrong.

And here is the reason that his is important church -

Because a false Jesus will always produce a false gospel

A false Jesus will produce a false gospel that will only lead to a false view of salvation.

And there were many false teachers with false messages that were permeating the church back then as there are today.

And so John is saying that the believers need to apply these tests in order to avoid deception.

The true prophet receives a direct revelation from God

The false prophet claims to receive a direct revelation from God – but it is not true.

And so we have tests – in the same way that God gave the Children of Israel tests to determine whether a prophet was a false prophet in the Old Testament.

[Deu 18:20-22 NKJV] 20 'But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in My name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die.' 21 "And if you say in your heart, 'How shall we know the word which the LORD has not spoken?'-- 22 "when a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the thing does not happen or come to pass, that [is] the thing which the LORD has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him.

When a person makes the statement – this is what God is saying and that statement never comes to pass – that person is to be rejected.

I had you make a note of the phrase **come in the flesh**

By come in the flesh, John means acknowledging the full reality of what the bible teaches about the incarnation of Jesus Christ.

[Jhn 1:1 NKJV] 1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

John 1 tells us that Jesus was God and God became flesh

False prophets and false teachers who deny this biblical truth – are Antichrists, their ministry cannot be recommended.

Their teaching cannot be trusted.

So if a person is wrong about Jesus – then it is hard to believe that they can be right about anything else.

So we are to test the confession of the teacher,

what do they say about Jesus?

This is a test – not only reserved for teachers or those in spiritual leadership positions.

This is a test that is reserved for everyone who professes to be a Christian.

So when the individual on Saturday morning tells us that their founder says that Jesus is an archangel –

Our response should be, “wait a minute, the writer of Hebrews say that Jesus is greater than angels, John says that Jesus is God incarnate – that He tabernacled among us.

He is a person who really came and was born of a virgin

And lived a perfect life

And suffered real pain and was crucified for our sins.”

So we need to be able to ask everyone – tell me what you believe about Jesus.

Because refusing to acknowledge Jesus means that one denies the true person of Jesus

Every spirit that does not agree with God – that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh – those who say this, John is clearly telling us that they are not from God.

They are operating under a false confession that is consistent with the Antichrist.

4 You are of God, little children, and have overcome them (the them - this is in reference to the false teachers and the false prophets) , **because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.**

Once again, John is using a term of endearment – little children

John is making the contrast between believers (little children) You are of God and they who are of the world.

And I had you make a note of the phrase “and have overcome them – “

That phrase is in perfect tense – meaning it is something that happened in the past with present results.

So what John is saying is that at some point, these false prophets and false teachers showed up with the false message, with the false gospel, with the false views of salvation...

And the people who John is writing to who listened to what these false teachers and false prophets said – were able to discern that they were teaching a false doctrine.

They were teaching a different Jesus from the bible.

The readers of this letter had already heard all the arguments of the false teachers and the false prophets and they had successfully been enabled to see through them and to see the truth.

So John says, "You are of God and you have overcome these false teachers."

Now – what is important in this verse is to grasp how the believers were able to overcome.

Because in the same way they were able to escape the pressures of theological error back then – we need to do it today.

So how did they do it?

Were the believers simply smarter than the false spiritual leaders and teachers? No

Was it because they read book after book on every false doctrine or did they all take classes at church and became experts in cults and experts in apologetics and how to respond to their arguments? No

John says, "you overcame them because greater is He that is in you than he who is in the world."

In other words, it was not anything these Christians had that delivered them, it was the One who dwelt within them.

It was the greatness of God that kept them straight.

It was the fact that God was greater than the spirit that was at work behind the teachers of error.

This is what will keep us straight today.

So – who is the “he” who is in the world?

Is it the Antichrist?

The spirit of the antichrist?

Is it the false teachers and prophets that were going around?

Or Satan himself?

Because ultimately he is the one who reinforces and reminds the false prophets and false teachers to oppose God

Oppose the reality of who Jesus is

Oppose the gospel

Oppose grace

Turn to Romans 11

[Rom 11:33-36 NKJV] 33 Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable [are] His judgments and His ways past finding out! 34 "For who has known the mind of the LORD? Or who has become His counselor?" 35 "Or who has first given to Him And it shall be repaid to him?" 36 For of Him and through Him and to Him [are] all things, to whom [be] glory forever. Amen.

God is greater than the wisdom of the enemy

And this superior wisdom is to you and me

But we must be of God

And must have childlike trust – to believe the Word of God.

And if we do – His Word will guide us through life – regardless of what the opinions of men who speak contrary to it.

5 They are of the world. Therefore they speak [as] of the world, and the world hears them.

Three times John uses the phrase, “the world”

And what he means by the world is anything that stands in opposition to God

So - what John is saying here is

That every time that one of the false teachers or false prophets say –

The bible is not true

Jesus is not God

There are many ways to salvation

There is no absolute truth

There is no purpose in life – we are all here by chance

Or make the claim that we all evolved from goo

The world welcomes that message

And the world welcomes that message because that is what the world wants to hear.

The world wants to hear how good we are.

The world wants to hear about how smart we are –

The world wants to hear if we put our minds together we can solve any of the world's problems.

The world wants to exalt man.

But the moment someone teaches that we are all sinners in need of a Savior, the world says,

Wait a minute – that is offensive.

That is hate speech.

The world says – we don't want to hear that message.

Look at verse 6, we have another contrast.

6 We are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

John is making a bold statement here in verse 6

He is saying that we cannot be of God and against God at the same time.

He who knows God hears us – he who doesn't know God doesn't hear us.

The “us” is a reference to the sound doctrine that was taught by the apostles – who walked and talked with Jesus.

They were the ones that had entered into a union and a relationship to Jesus that grew out of hearing His teachings.

John writes in his gospel -

[Jhn 1:14 NKJV] 14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

They saw Jesus die

They saw Jesus after His resurrection for 40 days

And when Jesus ascended, on the day of Pentecost –

as Jesus had promised, the Holy Spirit was poured out upon them and they were commissioned to be the men to begin the task of proclaiming this great message unto the far corners of the earth.

That is why John says “we are of God” therefore, those who are of God listen to us.

This is another test to determine whether they message is of the Spirit of truth or the message of error.

Here is the application for us today - simplified

If a person is not saying the same thing about Jesus that the bible says about Jesus – they are not of God.

By the way –

You want to know the marks of a cult?

1. They will claim authority outside the bible. They may claim authority inside the bible but they will place higher authority outside the bible (Book of Mormoms, Watchtower and Tract Society)

2. They will attack biblical Christianity.

They will say trinity, not true.

Deity of Jesus, not true, salvation by grace alone through faith alone, not true.

Cults undermine the authority and the inerrancy and the sufficiency of the word of God and cults will promote salvation by something other than grace.

So John provides two tests for us to discern

1. Ask them - What do you believe about Jesus?

2. Are they willing to listen to our message that Jesus is Lord.

I want to end with this – it has to do with this second test.

On more than one occasion over these five years – I have been asked the question, how do I get my loved to listen to the message of the gospel

And they will say something like – they shut themselves down as soon as I start talking about the bible or salvation.

The first thing we have to remember is that it is not a hearing issue but a heart issue.

[Mat 11:15 NKJV] 15 "He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"

We witness to people according to the truth of God's word and we follow up with those who are willing to hear.

We pray for those who are not willing to hear and ask the Holy Spirit to soften their hearts and to make them ready to hear the truth.

Beyond that – there is no argument that we can make that will make their heart receptive.

If someone wants to know the truth and their heart is receptive, God will meet them.

Jesus told us in the parable of the Sower – the soil must be ready for the seed.

We just need to be faithful.

Let's pray...

To Receive Christ do the following:

Admit, "I am a sinner."

Confess and be willing to turn from your sin.

Believe, by faith that Jesus Christ died for you on the cross.

Receive, through prayer, Jesus Christ into your heart and receive eternal life.

Dear Lord Jesus,

I know that I am a sinner and need Your forgiveness. I believe that You died on the cross for my sins. Please forgive me for my sins and cleanse me by Your blood. I accept You by faith as my personal Lord and Savior. Give me a thirst for Your Word and Help me to follow You all of my days. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

John has a lot to say about the Spirit of God. He teaches us, guides us, reminds us, comforts us, confirms our status as children of God, and much more. So, let us be led by Him!

[Num 6:24-26 NLT] 24 '

May the LORD bless you and protect you.

May the LORD smile on you and be gracious to you.

May the LORD show you his favor and give you his peace.'

