

False Teachers and Brotherly Love

1 John 4

When we first started our study here in the book of 1 John, I shared with you that John used a variety of “tests” throughout the book to help us determine if we were truly Believers or not; rather or not we were genuinely “born again” by the Spirit of God or simply trying to play Church.

The three tests were as follows:

- 1. The Moral Test** – John speaks in several instances about what a Believer’s life should look like on the outside. The Moral Test causes us to look at our actions, both public and private to determine rather we are led by the Holy Spirit of God or are we continually and only led by the flesh or the world.
- 2. The Social Test** – beyond our own personal actions, the Social Test looks directly at how we treat other people, and in particular how we treat our Brothers and Sisters in Christ. About a dozen times in this short book he makes a statement similar to *“He who does not love his brother abides in death.”* That is a part of the social test.
- 3. The Doctrinal Test** – Doctrine matters and there are some things about God and about Jesus Christ, that if you do not believe them, John says you are of the anti-Christ and the truth is not in you. As we get into chapter 4, we will see this test stated very directly.

But before we get into chapter 4, I want to begin with verse 24 of chapter 3, and actually tag that onto the context of chapter 4. As a matter of fact, many of the Bible publishers already place 3:24 into the context of chapter 4. Let’s look at what it says –

1 John 3

²⁴ *Now he who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. And by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.*

This is particular verse is more along the lines of the Moral Test: “Are you doing what you should be doing as a Believer? Are you keeping His commandments?” *Now he who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him.*

I don't obey to become a believer, I obey, because I am a Believer; and in my obedience I demonstrate the presence of the Holy Spirit within me.

The Holy Spirit dwells in every Believer's life. This is so clear throughout the New Testament –

2 Corinthians 1

²¹ *Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God,*
²² *who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.*

Ephesians 1

¹³ *In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, ¹⁴ who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.*

Romans 8

⁹ *But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.*

Romans 8

¹⁶ *The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,*

Paul agrees with the words of the apostle John as he states, *“the Holy Spirit working in our lives is the evidence and witness that we are children of God.”*

When we are led by the Holy Spirit of God, He will definitely be evident in our lives. But there is no doubt that there are some who are being led by a spirit other than the Holy Spirit. As we move into chapter 4, John is bringing a warning about those who may ‘sound like’ they are Believers, but in reality they are led by another spirit... the spirit of anti-Christ.

Here we see one of the strongest of **Doctrinal Tests** – *“What do you believe about Jesus?”*

1 John 4

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. 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.*

John isn't just concerned about having the correct verbiage in our declaration of faith.

The battle John was fighting in his day was actually three-fold:

1. Did Jesus actually have a flesh and blood body
2. Is Jesus the flesh and blood revelation of God Himself
3. Was Jesus the Christ at the beginning or did the spirit of Christ descend upon Him at the baptism and leave at the crucifixion

All three of these doctrinal issues were coming against the Church of John's day and unfortunately, the battle still rages on today.

John was affirming the very statements he made in his Gospel account. It was John who so clearly declared in the Gospel according to John, chapter 1

John 1

¹ *In the beginning was the Word (logos), and the Word was with God, and **the Word was God**. ² He was in the beginning with God.*

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.*

John's declaration was that Jesus was God who came to earth via human flesh when He was born of Mary; He had real flesh and blood from the beginning; the very reality of **Immanuel**, God with us; He was Christ before His birth, Christ crucified, dead, and buried, now risen and ascended into heaven at the side of the Father.

We clearly read through the Gospel record how the Jews sought to kill Jesus for **blaspheme**, "for making Himself equal with God" (John 5:18), Jesus Himself continually made statements such as "I and the Father are One" (John 10:30), "He who has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:9).

Philippians 2:6 speaks of Jesus, “...*who being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God...*”

Hebrews 1:3 declares Jesus as being “...*the express image of (God).*”

These and a multitude of other scriptures bring testimony of the deity of Jesus Christ. If an individual doesn't believe that Jesus Christ is God in human flesh, then that individual and his doctrine are of the spirit of anti-Christ. It doesn't matter how devout or good or moral he is. He has wrong belief and is therefore not of God and follows after the false prophets and the spirit of anti-Christ.

From their own website (www.jw.org), the Jehovah's Witness declare, “...*we do not worship Jesus, as we do not believe that he is Almighty God.*”¹ They are false teachers and of the spirit of anti-Christ. Those who believe and follow their doctrine cannot please God, for they do not keep His commandments and therefore His Holy Spirit does not abide in them.

According to the doctrine of the **Latter Day Saints (LDS), the Mormons**, in both the books *Mormon Doctrine and Gospel Through the Ages* they believe Jesus and Satan are spirit brothers and sons of God.² In the officially accepted doctrinal statements brought out by *The Gospel Through The Ages, Gospel Principles, Mormon Doctrine, and Journal of Discourses*, they teach how God put forth His plan of salvation for the world, and Satan proposed his own plan. Jesus accepted the Father's plan and offered to implement it as the Savior.³ It is through the teachings of Brigham Young in his *Journal of Discourses*, and the Apostle Joseph Fielding Smith (who later became 10th Prophet) in his *Doctrines of Salvation*, vol. 1 that the Mormons are taught that “*Heavenly Father*” chose Jesus, and the spirit of Jesus was given a body through the virgin Mary.⁴ He was crucified on a Roman cross, and rose from the dead three days later to establish His deity. The character and life of Jesus is attainable by anyone who performs at such a righteous level.

¹ <https://www.jw.org/en/jehovahs-witnesses/faq/believe-in-jesus/>

² *Mormon Doctrine*, p 163; *Gospel Through the Ages*, p 15.

³ Milton R. Hunter, *The Gospel Through The Ages*, 1945, p. 15; *Gospel Principles*, 1992ed., pp 17-18; *Mormon Doctrine*, p 193; *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 6, p 8.

⁴ Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 1, p. 50; Apostle Joseph Fielding Smith (who later became 10th Prophet), *Doctrines of Salvation*, vol. 1, 1976, p 18.

This and so much more of their doctrine, although at times sounding very mainstream Christian, shows that they are not declaring the truth of the Bible, therefore their teachers are false prophets and are following after the spirit of anti-Christ. Those who believe and follow their doctrine cannot please God, for they do not keep His commandments and therefore His Holy Spirit does not abide in them because they do not believe in the one true, Son of God. They believe in a false Christ.

John clearly states:

1 John 4

*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. 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.*

And the Jesus Christ he speaks of is the same one he spoke of in his Gospel record – the Logos or Word of God who was with God and was God from the beginning.

It is the Apostle Peter who also warns us –

2 Peter 2

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.

We need to pray that our Jehovah's Witness and LDS neighbors, family and friends coming to a knowledge of the real truth and reject the lies they've been told for generations. And, guarding our own hearts, we need to warn others... even Believers who might get sucked up into their half-truths and spiritual sounding doctrines.

In verse 4 John tells us –

1 John 4

⁴ You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. ⁵ They are of the world. Therefore they speak as of the world, and the world hears them. 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.*

Some who we warn will listen and receive the truth, but don't be surprised when others won't listen and will not receive the truth. Their hearts are already hardened to the truth. But that doesn't mean we don't continue to share the truth with them. You never know when the Holy Spirit is breaking up that hard soil, to allow the seed of the truth to be planted and take root.

John now circles back around to the **Social Test** – our love for the family of faith.

1 John 4

⁷ Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. ⁸ He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. ⁹ In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him.

It is an interesting direction of words given to us here by the Holy Spirit through the pen of the Apostle John. In verse 7 he actually speaks about two distinct and I believe separate conditions – being born of God and then also knowing God. Bear with me as I explain.

For an individual to be born of God is an act of God Himself upon the individual's eternal soul –

Ephesians 2

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not of works, lest anyone should boast.

Titus 3

⁵ not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit,

And a host of other verses.

However, to come to truly know God, is an act of the will of each individual. Peter prayed that we might –

1 Peter 2

² *as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that **you may grow** thereby, ³ if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious.*

2 Peter 3

¹⁸ *but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*

To be born of God is one thing, to grow in the knowledge of God is another thing. The unfortunate reality is that many Believers, even today expect God to place a funnel on their heads and pour into them all that they need, without ever lifting a finger or a Bible to grow in knowledge.

If we are *born of God **and know God***, then we will love one another, for God is love. If we are *born of God*, yet do not love, then we are demonstrating that we are still babes in Christ, controlled more by our flesh and the world than by the Holy Spirit who bought us.

John was very aware that there were Believers who struggled with this whole thing of loving one another. That's why it is such an important part of this small book.

¹⁰ *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. ¹¹ Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.*

That's the reason we love one another, because he first loved us. Not in order that we could earn His love. God already loved us and sent Jesus, *His Son to be the **propitiation for our sins.***

The **hilasmōs**, hilasmōs, (*hil-as-mos* ') for our sin. This is an interesting word, here translated as *propitiation*. According to the *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, the word *propitiation* has the basic or original meaning of:

*“Turning away of anger by the offering of a gift. The word was often used by the pagans in antiquity, for they thought of their gods as **unpredictable beings**, liable to become angry with their worshipers for any trifle. When **disaster struck it was often thought that a god was angry and was therefore punishing his worshipers.** The remedy was to offer a sacrifice without delay. A well-chosen offering would **appease the god and put him in a good mood again.** This process was called propitiation.*

*Of course (for Jehovah, the God of the Bible), his anger is **not an irrational lack of self-control** as it so often is with humans. **His anger is the settled opposition of his holy nature to everything that is evil.***

*Such opposition to sin cannot be dismissed with a wave of the hand. It requires something much more substantial. And the Bible states that it was **only the cross that did this**. Jesus is “the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world” (1 Jn 2:2 KJV).⁵*

The amazing thing we find from the word of God is that even in our sin and rebellion, God made provision for the propitiation of our sins... and the whole world. That’s why John tells us here –

¹¹ Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. ¹² No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us. ¹³ By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit.

Then John returns back to the proof of the validity of his message and the reason he can make these statements – He was there, he saw, and therefore he testifies...

1 John 4

¹⁴ And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world. ¹⁵ Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.

Again, let me remind you, he is speaking of belief in and confession of the Jesus found in the Gospel record – not the Jesus made up of man’s false doctrines and teachings.

¹⁶ And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him.

Some look at this verse and declare, “See, that is who God is. God is love, therefore he would not punish..., therefore he would not allow people to go into an eternal hell...,” and a host of other false statements.

The problem is they misunderstand that Love is only one of the many attributes which make up the character of who God is. He is also *Righteous, Just, and Holy*. Therefore, He cannot let sin go unchecked and unpunished. Yet, even in His punishment of sin, it’s

⁵ Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel, “[Propitiation.](#)” *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 1784.

His **Love** that directs and limits the harshness of the punishment. It's His **Love** that put Jesus on the cross in our place.

Yes, God is **Love**, but it truly is in the balance of all His attributes where He remains God.

¹⁷ Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the Day of Judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world. ¹⁸ There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. ¹⁹ We love Him because He first loved us.

Someone has rightly said that on Judgment Day, God will owe no man anything, not even an explanation. His love reached out to us long before we ever considered Him.

We finish up this chapter with John's continued admonition –

*²⁰ If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? ²¹ And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God **must love his brother also.***

The situation we have with other Believers effects our worship... it effects rather or not God will receive it.

Listen to what Jesus said –

Matthew 5

*²³ "Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that **your brother has something against you,** ²⁴ leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. **First be reconciled to your brother,** and then come and offer your gift.*

Matthew 18

¹⁵ "Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother."

John 13

³⁴ "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. ³⁵ By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

Do you still have an excuse?

