

# 1 John

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1 John 4:1-6

Vss. 1-3

- In John's time worship services were largely unstructured. Prayers, hymns, and the spoken word. But all of it, including the spoken word, was usually spontaneous...as the Spirit led. There were always traveling preachers, teachers, and prophets. "Does our guest have a word from the Lord for us?" the question would be. This is how the gnostic teachers, the false prophets, were able to so easily get into the church in the first place. The guest preacher would always claim the authority of the Spirit and in the case of the gnostics, the guests would claim a new revelation revealing a new truth from God. And so it has gone down through the centuries and today's false prophets can come right into your home via the internet or your own TV.
- So how can you know who is false and who is true? John says we are to "test the spirits" and we will discover what is false and what is true. The word John uses here for "test" is the same word a blacksmith would have used to determine the strength of a metal. "Is this sword made of real steel, or does it have alloys that make it look good but also makes it weaker?" Any preacher, Bible study teacher, every church leader should be subject to John's test.
- First, for John perhaps his singular truth is found in John 1:14: "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us." Any spirit that denies that God's Son walked the earth in human form is a false spirit, both those who deny the humanity of Jesus or those who deny the divinity of Jesus. The gnostics denied that Jesus ever came in the flesh, claiming that He was just a spirit. All other religions may have some parallels to Christianity, but none can say "the Word became flesh." Without the humanity of Jesus, He cannot be the

example we are to follow. Without the humanity of Jesus, God cannot know our suffering or what it is like to be tempted and thus Jesus cannot be our High Priest, our Advocate. Without the humanity of Jesus, He cannot really be our Savior for He cannot spill His blood and die for my sins. Without the humanity of Jesus there can be no physical resurrection of the dead. Because He was raised bodily from the grave, Jesus is able to promise that we too will be like Him when we are raised. Without the humanity of Jesus, our bodies cannot be redeemed and can never be the Temple of the Holy Spirit. Without the humanity of Jesus, Christ cannot stand in the gap acting as a bridge between God and humanity. Without the humanity of Jesus, there is no real salvation and no Christian faith.

- Today we more commonly face the other side of the coin where the divinity of Christ is denied. Without the divinity of Jesus, He is not the center of history where all that came before was in preparation for His coming and that comes after is able to be redeemed. Without the divinity of Jesus, the promises of God are never fulfilled. God always keeps His promises, but to say that Jesus was not His Son means that there is no Messiah and that God's promise of the Messiah is false, calling into question all of His promises. If Jesus is not the Messiah, then perhaps God does not walk with us through the Valley of the Shadow. Without the divinity of Jesus, there is no kingship of Jesus as Christ. Jesus did not only come to save but to reign. Without the divinity of Jesus, there is no Kingdom of God and we are hopelessly on our own.
- The spirit that denies either the humanity of Jesus or the divinity of Jesus is the spirit of the antichrist. They have *always* been successful because their spirit comes from the same spirit that rules a rebellious world, a spirit that strains to escape the touch of God.

Vss. 4-6

- You are of God. You are from God. You belong to God. You have already won the battle against the spirit of the antichrist that is in the world, because you abide in Him and He abides in you and He is greater than the

Adversary. The world of racism, hate, division, darkness, and fear has no power over you who are in Christ. In the world's darkest times you can look forward with optimism.

- We do not need to fear the false teacher or be swept away by their popularity. The world listens to them and will love them, for they speak the language of the world. There was a proverb in the church during the days of Roman persecution: Great is the Truth and in the end it will prevail.
- John wants us to clearly see the line between the people of Jesus and the people of the world. "The world" to John's mind, is human nature that is completely devoid of God and is in fact in opposition to God. If the world is running a rat race to success or an arms race to power, how can it know a life that is not a race but of sacrificial service to others? How can a world that celebrates the Self ever on its own know a Way where the Self is denied and crucified with Christ? How can a world that desires material gain above all else know a Way where the love of Christ is the greatest treasure?
- As John sees it the difference is such a wide chasm that not only do we have two totally different cultures, but two totally different languages. The world hears the words of the Spirit of Christ and understands it only as "foolishness" (1 Cor. 1:23). Paul was called an "idle babbling" by the best and brightest of Athens (Acts 17:18). Humanly speaking, there are people in the world who we may think could NEVER be reached because they are so alien to the Way. But we must never forget that WE were reached and that there are no limits to God's amazing grace. There is no one ever beyond the Holy Spirit's reach, no matter how deaf to the Truth, no matter how wicked, no matter how lost. Jesus died for them as much as he died for you.