

1 JOHN 4:1-6
Test the Spirits

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4 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for 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 from God, ³ and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already. ⁴ Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. ⁵ They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them. ⁶ We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

REVIEWING THE 1ST- CENTURY CONTEXT

Schism going on in the churches

- Secession by Gnostics; a group claiming a higher knowledge of spiritual matters

GNOSTICISM (from Greek word that means “knowledge”); thousands of years old

3 Basic convictions

- 1. Matter is evil (or inferior to spiritual realities)**
- 2. Salvation is acquired by gaining mystical, secret knowledge**
 - God is good & perfect, but impersonal & unknowable
- 3. All matter in the universe is corrupt & evil**
 - Even humans
 - Therefore, Jesus, as a bodily human—could not be God
 - Except, every human has a “spark” of God’s true spirit
 - Humans are inherently good souls trapped in evil, material bodies

Modern version:

- Theological liberalism; Denial of virgin birth, miracles, resurrection (all myths)
- Mankind is the deity; pursues goodness with own wisdom
- Requires self-redemption; examine your inner-spark
- Deeper truth can be found apart from God

Impact on the 1st-Century Church:

- Secessionists/Gnostics:
 - Denied the incarnation of Christ; denied substitutionary atonement
 - Claimed a special anointing of the Holy Spirit leading them beyond the “primitive” Christian gospel.

- Original Christian assembly:
 - Confused; lacking a special anointing? Lacked assurance of salvation
 - Gullible to a popular, but dangerous trend
 - FOMO

DOCETISM (one type of Gnosticism; popular during 1st Century church)

- Claimed Jesus was a ghost or phantom; only *appeared* to be human
- Denies core truths of Jesus' death & resurrection

John's response in 4:1-6

Section 1	v1	Test those who claim to be inspired
Section 2	v2-3	Use a standard for testing
Section 3	v4-6	Listening & apply the test & standard to distinguish true believers

Section 1	v1	Test those who claim to be inspired
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John asks: **Are you following false prophets? And, can you discern, or test for that in your life?**

We can ask ourselves the same questions

Examples of False Prophets

OLD TESTAMENT	TACTICS OF THE ENEMY
<p>From Jeremiah (real prophesy) – Jer 25:11 This whole land shall become a ruin and a waste, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years.</p> <p>From Hananiah (false prophet) –Jer 28:1-4 Hananiah the son of Azzur, the prophet from Gibeon, spoke to me in the house of the LORD, in the presence of the priests and all the people, saying, ²“Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: I have broken the yoke of the king of Babylon. ³ Within two years I will bring back to this place all the vessels of the LORD's house, which Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon took away from this place and carried to Babylon. ⁴ I will also bring back to this place Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, and all the exiles from Judah who went to Babylon, declares the LORD, for I will break the yoke of the king of Babylon.”</p>	

NEW TESTAMENT	TACTICS OF THE ENEMY
<p>From Jesus (Matt 7:15) ¹⁵ "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. ¹⁶ You will recognize them by their fruits.</p>	
<p>From Jesus (Mark 13:22) ²² For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform signs and wonders, to lead astray, if possible, the elect.</p>	
<p>From Peter (2 Pet 2:1) But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction.</p>	

Section 2 v2-3 Use a standard for testing

² By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, ³ and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already.

WHY IS JESUS' FULL HUMANITY NECESSARY?

Jesus HAD to be:

HUMAN
<p>For Representative Obedience Jesus was our representative and obeyed for us where Adam had failed & disobeyed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He could only represent us as a real human • If Jesus cannot represent us, He cannot redeem us • Our salvation is as dependent on Jesus' humanity as it is on His divinity
<p>To be a Substitute Sacrifice <u>Justice Requires:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Born under the law; kept the law perfectly • The same human nature that sinned, must pay for sin • Shedding of blood for remission of sins
<p>Must be a True & Righteous Man</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One sinner cannot pay for the sins of other sinners • Exchanged our sin for His perfect righteousness
<p>To Satisfy God's Wrath toward Us</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Penalty requires suffering in body & soul • His perfect human blood covered the sins of all who would believe.

HUMAN
To be One Mediator between God & Man <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We were alienated from God by sin. • We needed someone who could represent us to God
To Sympathize as High Priest <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only one who could experience the woes of mankind and rise above temptations can sympathize with human experience.
Pattern for Our Redeemed Bodies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We now have a physical body like Adam's, but we will have one like Christ's. • Christ had to be raised as a man in order to be the "first-born from the dead." • This is the pattern for the bodies that we will later have. <p>* The Redeemer had to be truly human to perfectly obey, suffer and sympathize</p>

Jesus also had to be Divine

DIVINE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • So He could bear, and fully satisfy, God's wrath <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ <i>No way a mere human could do so</i> • So He could bring a sacrifice so valuable that it is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Infinite & eternal ◦ Able to propitiate Heaven's wrath • So that He is able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Be raised from the dead (after conquering it) ◦ Apply the benefits He has earned for us <p>* The Redeemer had to be Divine in order to satisfy God & secure our eternity</p>

"Who is Jesus Christ?"

Gnostics	Divine Christ descended on the man, Jesus, then left him at the crucifixion
New Age Movement	Christ's spirit has descended on many great men over the centuries—Jesus of Nazareth being just one of them
Liberal Theologians	Reject Jesus as the God-Man, the only mediator between God and man
Jehovah's Witness	Jesus is not God; lived a perfect life; died on a stake (not a cross) and resurrected as a spirit; body was destroyed. Not coming to earth again.
Christian Science	Jesus was not God, but a man who displayed a "Christ idea"; God can never become man or flesh; did not die on the cross; not physical resurrected
Mormon	Jesus was separate from god the father; created as a spirit-child by father & mother in heaven; death on cross did not provide full atonement for all sin, but did provide resurrection for everyone

So much rests on the reality of the incarnation!

⁴ Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. ⁵ They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them. ⁶ We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

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 it might become plain that they all are not of us. ²⁰ But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all have knowledge.

1 John 2:19-20

To summarize:

True Christians are those who:

1. Acknowledge that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh
2. Listen to people who proclaim the truth about Christ

³ Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says "Jesus is accursed!" and no one can say "Jesus is Lord" except in the Holy Spirit.

1 Cor 12:3