

# How to Test the Spirits

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1 John. My sermon this morning is entitled: "How to Test the Spirits." 1 John 4, the first six verses deal with this: testing the spirits. We might just pick up the last sentence in chapter 3 because there is no break here as John penned this. And since he does introduce the Spirit to us in the second half of v. 24 of chapter 3, let's read that. "And by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit Whom He has given us. 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. 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 antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already. Little children, you are from God and have overcome them. (That would be the false prophets who are moved and motivated by the spirit of antichrist.) You are from God and have overcome them. For He Who is in you (and we see that that's the Spirit of God Who abides in us - 1 Jn 3:24), He Who is in you is greater than he who is in the world." The devil is in the world. This is the spirit of antichrist. The Spirit is stronger than the devil. "They (the false prophets) are from the world, therefore they speak from the world and the world listens to them. We are from God." Now that may be collectively we: Christians. Probably John is speaking about the Apostles here. "We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us." The Apostles, the Apostles' doctrine, and any of those that propagate that doctrine. "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."

## False Prophets

Now this applies to us. And I don't think it's very difficult for us to fathom the nature of the problem that John has in mind here. Look at verse 1. "Many false prophets have gone out into the world." That's what John sees. The world. Guess what? When we look out into the world? Many false prophets. Many. These are the same people that if you look back in 2:18, they're called antichrist. In 2:22, they're called liars. And here's what John sees: he sees us Christians in the midst of that. So what he sees is we are in the middle of false prophets - many false prophets. And guess what happens? Guess what happens when you drop a child of God in the midst of many false prophets? He recognizes we are going to interact with them. We're not isolated. That's what he recognizes. You drop a Christian in the midst of this world, this world is full of many false prophets. That means liars. Men and women who speak lies. We're dropped in the middle of that. And he doesn't see us as isolated. He sees us as rubbing shoulders with them. He sees us communicating with them. He sees them in the same church building even. He sees us in the same workplaces with them, on the same campuses with them, in the same families with them. That's the problem.

John sees something else here too. (incomplete thought) Did you notice how much spirits are spoken about here? What John recognizes is that when somebody comes along and they speak lies, there are spirits involved. When somebody speaks truth, there is a Spirit

involved. That's what you see. (incomplete thought) There's a spiritual realm out there. The spiritual realm is actively involved. He sees the Spirit of truth. He sees the spirit of error. The Holy Spirit of God. The evil spirit of antichrist. He tells us that what men and women believe comes from somewhere. It comes from somewhere outside themselves. You remember this, Paul: "The Spirit expressly says that in the later times, some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons." And here's the thing, church, (incomplete thought) I want you to get this. Some people are afraid of this. Some people don't like this. Some people don't like churches that take this seriously. But I want you to catch this. The very first thing John says in chapter 4 is an imperative. This is a commandment. Notice, by commandment, John prohibits gullibility. He charges us. He commands us under the inspiration of God: Do not be gullible. Don't believe every spirit. Don't believe every person that comes along. Test them. Don't believe them. John prohibits gullibility. Just because somebody comes along and says they speak for God does not mean that they speak for God. Just because somebody comes along and claims to be a Christian does not mean that they are a Christian. Just because someone says something concerning Christ, concerning the Gospel does not mean it's true. And the very reason we need to be on guard is this: there's many people - many - who are going to claim something that is not right. That's what he says that there's many of them. "Many false prophets have gone out to the world."

### **Wolves in Sheep's Clothing**

And here's the thing, it's not like: "Oh, there's one over there!" Because he just comes strutting down the road with horns sticking out of his forehead and beady red eyes. That's not how they come. They don't have 666 stamped on their forehead. Do you know what they look like? Here's what Jesus says: "Beware of false prophets..." He says this in Matthew 7:15. "Beware of the false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves." Guess what they look like? If they come in sheep's clothing, what do they look like? They look like sheep. By their very nature, they appear genuine. When they walk through that door, we don't all say: "Oh, there he is, false prophet! Look at the scowl on his face. We've got him pegged." Nope. He comes through the door and he looks white and pure and fluffy. That's how they look. That's what Jesus says. They come in sheep's clothing. They're nice people. They look good.

They look good... I was just telling Seth, I told my wife this earlier too, I've been reading Martyn Lloyd-Jones' two-volume biography. And do you know what he says? He says I think the true preachers of God are ugly. He believed that. And you probably can say "Amen" right? But I was talking to Ruby and I thought John MacArthur's not ugly. Now John Piper... you know. But I'm in that ugly category too. (incomplete thought)

But we can't tell. We can't tell them by what they look like. And the fact is, a lot of times, the smoother, the whiter, the purer, they look good, they sound smooth, and what John says is not a few. Many such people come claiming to speak in the name of God who in reality do not speak in the name of God. And Peter puts it this way, 2 Peter 2:1, "There will be false teachers among you who will secretly bring in destructive heresies." We really need to realize what's at stake here. Destructive heresies. Those heresies don't destroy houses. They don't destroy cars. They destroy souls. That's what's at stake in all this. That's why we need to beware. People

speaking such destructive heresies don't look destructive. They look smooth. They claim to speak God's truth and they come in sheep's clothing and they look soft and white. So we must test the spirits. We must.

### **What Is the Test?**

And here's how: Here's the test - 1 John 4:2, "By this you know the Spirit of God..." And obviously what he's saying is you know that you're dealing with an individual. Remember? John has this idea that those that hold the truth and those that hold to error, there is a spiritual realm behind all of it. He says when I come across a person, I can tell that the Spirit of God is actively at work here. I can know the Spirit of God. I can know where He's at work. How? "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." There it is. That's it. What think ye of Christ? We need to be asking people what they think about Christ. This is how you test the spirits. It's not whether you like to go to church or not. It's not whether you had an experience or not. The test is Christ. The test is theological. Those churches, those people, those teachers who would say "doctrine divides," "we don't need it," beware. Beware. Many false prophets have gone out into the world and when you diminish doctrine, that means you diminish the teaching about Christ. Our Christianity is based on the facts of Christ. It is based on truth about Christ. That's what we have. That is the test.

Find out what a man believes about Christ. I'm not talking about what he flippantly says. I'm talking about what he really believes. At the deepest level, what he believes about Christ. What he thinks about Christ, what he confesses about Christ. And you know what? I can tell exactly what that man is or is not by that test. And that's what John's saying to us.

The thing is, why does this test always work? Now maybe some of you are thinking, well, I don't know that that test always works because you can come across people who are orthodox. Yeah, but I'm talking about what they really believe. Listen, what's the problem with every lost person? They don't really believe. Right? They're unbelievers. That's what it is to be lost. It's to be an unbeliever. That means they don't really believe the things about Christ. This is an infallible test. You find out what a man or a woman really believes about Christ - now, I know, I know people can articulate truths that they don't really believe. That's not the test - what they can say. But when you look at their life, what do they really believe? What do they really confess? What do they really show by their life is most valuable in their life? Those things are a dead giveaway.

### **Why is this Test Fail Proof?**

And the reason that this test always works is this: He that is in us is greater than he that's in the world. That's why the test always works because the Spirit of God is there. Because the spirit that is in the world, he deceives. That's always it. Men and women who are lost, they don't believe, they don't see, they don't recognize, they don't understand the Christ of Scripture. They don't believe in Him. That's deception. They've been led to believe something else about Him.

But the Spirit that inhabits Christianity is more powerful. And what does that mean? Well, what that means is this: The Spirit of God is going to come along to God's people and convince

us of the truth about Christ even despite all the false prophets and the spirit of antichrist that is out there working against it. The Spirit of God is going to keep us on track. The Spirit of God is going to keep us believing the right thing about Christ. He who is in us is greater.

And this greater Holy Spirit, what did He do? He gives us ears to hear. And hear who? Well, did you realize what was said here in 4:6? "We are from God. Whoever knows God, listens to us. Whoever is not from God does not listen to us." And those pronouns throughout there, I would argue that John is probably more than just referring to Christians in general. He's arguing for the apostolic witness. And the reason I think that is you take those pronouns there and you just compare those pronouns to the ones he spoke in 1 John 1.

Flip back to 1 John 1. Let's read these first three verses of the whole letter. Because you have to recognize, when John starts this letter, he has all these things in mind that he is wanting to confront by this letter. Listen to how he starts. "That which was from the beginning which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes." Now he's not talking about all Christians in general. He's talking about the Apostles. He's talking about these disciples that walked with Christ and talked with Christ, witnessed His sufferings, that were there from the days of John the Baptist all the way through His ascension. "...Which we looked upon and have touched." See, you and I haven't touched Him, but they did. "...Touched with our hands, concerning the word of life. The life was made manifest and we have seen it and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life." See, they proclaim to us what they saw, what they touched, what they beheld. "...Which was with the Father and was made manifest to us, that which we have seen and heard, we proclaim also to you so that you too may have fellowship with us."

You see what he's saying there? The Apostles' doctrine - that's the issue. Do we listen or don't we listen? What the Spirit of God does is the Spirit of God gives us ears to hear the apostolic testimony about Christ and to believe it.

I ask you this, what do we really know about Christ other than the apostolic witness? We know nothing! People can invent all sorts of things, but we don't know anything besides the apostolic witness. Someone is always trying to reinvent Jesus. But the test is this: it's the Apostle's doctrine. It's Scripture. Those who are motivated and moved upon by a spirit of error, they don't listen. You can show some people Scripture; you can speak to them about Scripture. "Well, that's your interpretation. That's your opinion." They don't have ears to hear. They will twist. They will reinvent. They will ignore. They'll deny Scripture. The Apostles are witnesses. They state the facts. Do we listen or don't we? That's the question.

### **Three Difficulties of Testing Spirits**

Now, that's the test. Brethren, we need to speaking to one another about Christ all the time. People come in, we need to speak of Christ. The facts of Christ. That's the test. We are commanded to test the spirits. We are commanded to not be gullible. But you know what? I was thinking, there may be more than this, I just thought of three difficulties. Three things that tend to make testing the spirits difficult for us. I have three "E's" here.

### **Ecumenical Spirit**

One, the ecumenical spirit of our day. That can make it difficult. You know what? We're told it's not acceptable to find fault with people about their religious convictions. We're supposed

to be accepting. And you know what? That's what we don't like. You know, we don't like that - that title given to us. We don't like those adjectives used. Well, that church is judgmental. They're mean. (incomplete thought) Now look, a church can be mean. I'm not saying on the scale of niceness and meanness, then everybody in this room is all over on the nice side. (incomplete thought) There can be mean Christians. There can be mean people who profess to be Christians. But I'll tell you this, you know this, if we test the spirits and we did it perfectly, we're going to be hated. And you know how I know that? Because Jesus was perfect and He was hated, and He told us that if we strive to be like Him, we're going to be hated as well. If you seek to test the spirits, you are going to be labeled as judgmental. This world is going to label you that way and especially in our day. Narrow. Bigoted. See, we're told that there's truth in every religion. This is a day of the whole relativity thing. Everything's relative. We say this is truth; "well, that's your opinion." "I have my truth." "You can't call what I believe error. Because it may be error for you, but it's not error for me." And this is the climate that we live in. We're made to feel bad that there's so much disunity.

I hear this. I hear Catholics say: "See, all of us Catholics, we're in unity. That's how you can tell we're the real church because all you Protestants, you all fight against each other. You're all divided." Brethren, we know over at the abortion clinics, the Catholics want us to put down our Gospel and hold hands with them. (incomplete thought) Other Protestant churches are doing that. They're holding hands with the Catholics there on the frontlines. Why aren't we? "It's because they're a cult." People love to throw these accusations if we're going to stand for truth and we're actually going to test the spirits.

Jason and I were just down in Mexico City. We went to a Christian hostel - it's a bed and breakfast kind of place - that caters to Jewish backpackers. And the guy that runs the place told us: well, we tell the Jews, your God and our God - the same God. That's not true. That is not true. Jesus said if you deny Me, you deny the Father. It is not true that we have the same God. They deny the God of Scripture because the God of Scripture holds up Jesus Christ as the only hope for mankind. Jews - they deny that.

See, we're expected to swallow this. We're pressed to accept the relativism of our age. We're criticized. We're expected to receive anyone and everyone who comes along talking about God. And we just need to say, church, wake up. There's many false prophets. Our truth is going to constantly be under attack even from within, even from people that sit within. (incomplete thought) There's a test. And we have to be good to this test. We have to test the spirits. John commands us not to accept anyone and anything without testing it. "Oh, but we'll be criticized for being critical and mean-spirited."

Don't we hear all the time: "Judge not, lest ye be judged." "Love believes all things." Well, we might just recognize if you go study Matthew 7, when Jesus says, "Judge not, lest you be judged," He goes on to clarify what He means. He doesn't say that we shouldn't judge. He's talking there about judging hypocritically. And He says get the beam out of your own eye so that then you are able to see things right and help your brother get that splinter out of his eye. But you are supposed to look for splinters and beams, just don't do it hypocritically.

And as far as "love believes all things," look, love believes all things as long as there aren't facts that show us that we shouldn't believe it. The proverb says the simple believes everything. If I come along right now and I tell you Jesus Christ did not raise from the dead, well,

love believes all things! You see, love believes all things as long as there's reason to believe it. The idea there is it's not constantly jumping to suspicions. But it's not blind. It weighs out the facts. Doesn't Paul say he doesn't want us to be like little children who are blown about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness and deceitful schemes? How are you ever going to diagnose situations and actually see what a scheme is unless you're evaluating things? Of course, we're supposed to be discerning people. Of course we are. "Beloved, do not believe every spirit." Don't believe them.

So that's the first one. That makes it difficult because we live in an age where we're expected to accept everything, and if we don't accept it, then we're labeled as something that we don't like to be labeled as. We need to be kind to people, but you know what? The greatest kindness is if somebody comes along and by their ideas about Christ and the Gospel you can recognize this guy doesn't know the Lord, what's the kindest thing you can do? But you see, when Jesus shined the truth on mankind, they didn't take kindly to that at all.

### **Experiences of Individuals**

Here's the next thing. Experiences of individuals. This can make it difficult to test the spirits. Why? Here comes a guy. He walks in the door. "Praise God, I've been saved!" Really? Tell us about it. "Well, I was a drunk. And I did crystal meth. And I had a bad marriage. And I had all this, and then, I had this experience with God. I came under Paul Washer's preaching." Whoa! See, sometimes we hear that: "Oh, Paul Washer? Got to be the real deal." Be careful. Then you start to get to know him. Nice guy. You like him. He's had this experience. His life is truly transformed. It looks like something really has happened. But you get talking to him, and the guy's modalistic. He holds to oneness ideas about Christ. You see, people's experiences oftentimes make it difficult for us. Because we hear this experience. Supposedly they were converted through this kind of preacher. There's a place for people to have ignorance and we come to the Apostle's doctrine. Guess what? If the Spirit of God is operative in them what's going to happen? They're going to hear us. We are from God. This is John speaking: We are from God. Those who hear us, well, they're from God. You see, you take them there and you begin to show them this.

We don't want to fall into this trap. People have all manner of experiences. I'm sure you've heard it. People have been healed. Oh, how often do you get that? People are healed. I've heard stories about people who see angels. I've heard people come along and, "I don't sin like I used to." Ten months later, they're back sinning like they used to. People have all manner of experiences. You know what? Test the experience. Test the individual. Don't let the experience dictate to you what they are. John doesn't say that's the test: look at their experience. He says test the spirits and you test it by this: by their theology of Christ. That's where we have to go. They can have all manner of wonderful experiences.

I had a guy stand at my front door. And he tells me what a wonderful thing God did to him and how his life is changed and how he's got this peace. He had this wonderful feeling come over him. But he's Mormon. What does he believe about Christ? Not what the Apostles' doctrine says about Christ. So we have to be very careful. Experiences can be very convincing. People love to tell you their experiences. We all love to tell our experiences. We all like to have experiences. We do. I do. And you know what? God gives His children many wonderful

experiences. But the thing is, the devil can imitate those. Remember, John's talking about spirits all the way through here. He's talking about supernatural things. People will come along and they'll say: God healed me. God delivered me from this accident. When I should have died, I didn't die. (incomplete thought) I started coming to this church and God gave me a job. I started coming to this church and my marriage got better. The thing is most of the time these people really had those experiences. They didn't just make it up. Their experience is genuine. It's not from where they think it's from, but it's a genuine experience. And they're excited about that experience. Be careful. Be careful. There's something supernatural in all this. That's true, but test the spirits.

Brother, sister, we have to be discerning. John doesn't say test these experiences. What is their thinking about Christ? This is it. This is the test. It always is. Not whether they spoke in tongues; not whether they had specific gifts. You know what? You can hear a man stand up in the pulpit and he can preach eloquently. And not only are we automatically convinced he's a Christian, but he's called of God! But you be careful. Supernatural experiences, ability to preach, even preach eloquently, to look good, to sound good... remember Lloyd-Jones. Typically it's the ugly guy.

But we have to be careful. Because there's a lot of talk about experiences. And I hear it. I hear it among you. You know what? Like I say, we experience. I've had experiences. But that's not the test. That's not what you want to test me by. You can come and ask me: What are the experiences? I could ask you, but in the end, that's not conclusive. We must test the spirits. Evil spirits can do miracles. Evil spirits can do the supernatural. Evil spirits can give experiences. Test the spirits.

### **Our Own Feelings**

Now, here's the third thing. Not just the ecumenical spirit of our age that makes it difficult to test the spirits. Not just other people's experiences, but our own feelings. You see, certain people make us feel a certain way. And I'm not saying that there aren't people who have tremendous discernment, and the way they feel often is a gift of God, but we have to be careful of our own feelings. Sometimes we can put too much stock in the way our impressions are about certain individuals. What I mean is we can meet people. We try to figure out where they're at spiritually by the way we feel. We walk away from our interaction. We talk to people that way. "Oh, I met so-and-so." "What's your take on that? Where do you think they're at spiritually?" We want to be very cautious about attaching greater importance and significance to the way we feel about somebody than to what people say about the Christian faith and say about the Christ of that faith. (incomplete thought)

I was looking for a Martyn Lloyd-Jones sermon on faith a couple weeks back. I didn't find what I was looking for, but it was interesting, I stumbled on a sermon that he did from Romans 3 where he stated some examples of exactly what I'm wanting to communicate to you on this point. Listen to this. This is Lloyd-Jones: "On a visit to London some years ago, I went into a certain book room. To my astonishment, I found they were selling there a second-hand book by a man who had written a well-known book about Christianity in which he virtually denied all the cardinal articles of the Christian faith. As I was looking around, the secretary came to speak to me. So I called his attention to this book and expressed my amazement. 'Ah,' he said, 'Wait a

minute. You know we must be very careful.' (This is Lloyd-Jones) 'What do you mean?' I asked. (The other man said) 'Have you ever met this man?' And when I told him that I had not, he replied, 'Well, I have. I stayed with him a few months back. He entertained me for the night. And the next morning, we went into a little chapel attached to his house where he took family prayers. And you know, I don't think I've ever been in such a spiritual atmosphere. It was a blessing to my soul to hear him taking family prayers on that occasion.' (This is Lloyd-Jones) 'Yes, but my dear sir,' I said, 'What does he say in this book?' 'Oh, I know that,' he said. 'But you see, if you had heard him taking those prayers, I've never known a more devout man. I've never been in a more devotional atmosphere.' My reply was this, 'But I don't care what you felt. This is what the man says about the Lord Jesus Christ and His work and it is a denial of the Scriptures.'" See, that's getting right to the heart of what I'm trying to say here. You be careful about how you feel. Brethren, this test works every time.

Now again, you have a young convert. They have some wrong ideas. You take them to the Word of God and you see the genuine believer: They look here. They find truths about Christ. You can see them light up. The Spirit is teaching them. The Spirit is bringing them along. We have to allow for ignorance, but I'm talking about when people know what the Scripture says and they deny it. That's what I'm talking about.

Lloyd-Jones actually had four different accounts that he dealt with. I'll just give you one more. He says, "A few years ago, there were various campaigns - (these Christian campaigns, evangelistic campaigns) - at which all kinds of people had come together who had never been together before." I think what he's talking about here is people from all manner of different denominations. "And evangelical Christians were saying, 'You know, these others are such nice people. They're much nicer people than we ever thought.'" That's what they were saying. These people at these religious campaigns, very nice. Lloyd-Jones makes this remark: "Why they should ever imagine that people who are wrong in their doctrine are of necessity not nice, I do not know." You see the point? People walk through that door with bad doctrine. They can be the nicest people on the face of the earth. And sometimes we attach niceness to the fact that they must believe the right thing. It's mean people who must believe the wrong thing. And he's saying why they ever would have thought that... it's not right. He says I don't know why they would think that. "But the argument had reached the point at which it was being said that because they were so surprisingly nice, it did not matter very much after all that they were so wrong in their doctrine."

Can I tell you this? Being nice is powerful. It really is. But it's not the test. Test the spirits. This kind of thing is still going on in our day. It doesn't matter what people say and teach. They may deny the very heart of Christianity, but if I like them, if I'm attracted to them, if I can talk to easily to them, that's what counts. We let our guard down. We don't test the spirits. We'd rather test our emotions. How do we feel? Those are three of the problems. We hear people's experiences. We test it on that. We see our feelings; we feel our feelings. We test it by that. We don't want to be called narrow, judgmental, and so we back off from testing at all. And I think we all feel those three things. We all feel those. Because we feel! We feel certain feelings when we interact with other people. And we hear what people say about their experiences, and obviously, to become a new creation in Christ is to have an experience. We are looking for experiences that line up with the kind of experiences that we would expect in Scripture that is going to



happen with somebody that is genuinely converted. But sometimes we can take that experience and we can just leave that by itself without actually looking at the doctrine.

So away with these ecumenical expectations of our age. Look past a person's experiences. Look beyond our own feelings. And John says this, John says the first and most important test of the Spirit at work in any man is that man's conformity or lack of conformity to the apostolic doctrine concerning our Lord Jesus Christ. John says in v. 6, "Whoever knows God listens to us. Whoever is not from God does not listen to us." Whatever a man may claim, we must ask, does that man listen to the apostolic witness and believe it? These men walked with Christ - these Apostles - they walked with Christ. They've given us the facts about Christ. They have borne witness about a Person. And that is the question: Do we submit to this? Do we bow to it? You see, the true Christian, the Spirit of God is going to move upon us to truly bow. We submit. If my thinking does not line up with Scripture, I submit to that. That is the test.

### **What Is the Error?**

So let's think here as we wrap this up about the error. Look at v. 2. "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 which you heard was coming and now is in the world already." Obviously in John's day, what were the false prophets saying? They were saying that Jesus Christ had not come in the flesh. Notice, they do not completely deny the existence of Christ. What do they do? They misrepresent Him. That's the issue.

It's not difficult when somebody comes in here and says - who was it, Bertrand Russell the atheist, who said there's not even any proof that the Man ever even lived speaking of Jesus Christ. That's not hard to see. It's the twist on Who Christ is. Is Jesus the Christ? What do we say about Him? The false prophets misrepresent Christ. They don't totally deny the existence of Christ. When it says there that they do not confess Christ, the idea is they don't confess the Christ of Scripture. That's the idea. To not confess the Christ of Scripture is to not confess Christ. Because Christ is the Christ Who's found in the Bible. To say anything else about Him is not the Christ of the Bible. To say anything else about Christ than what the Bible says, what the Apostles say about Him is to deny the Christ. That's the idea here. So, 1 John 2:22 says this, "Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son." You deny Jesus being the Christ, you just misrepresent who Christ is, you deny the Son and the Father. Why? Because the Father has testified to us about Who the Son is. You're denying the Father if you deny the Son. And you deny the Son, not by saying He never existed, but just reinterpret Him. That's the idea.

Didn't Paul speak about "another Jesus"? People like to give the names of Jesus to somebody who's not Jesus. It's another Jesus. And you know the problem with another Jesus? No other Jesus than the One found in Scriptures is the One Who can save you. That's why the heresies are so destructive. They destroy souls. John says we need to avoid such heresies. And I'll tell you this, as you value your soul, you must avoid such heresies. That's why we need to test the spirits. That's what's at stake here.

### **What Is the Truth?**

Now let's think about the truth for a second. The truth. Jesus Christ has come in the flesh. That may just seem so: Well, of course He has! Jesus Christ has come in the flesh. But think about this: This is Jesus - Jesus of Nazareth. He's a Man. He's the Man Jesus. Jesus means Savior. This is the Man Who came to save us. None other name under Heaven given among men whereby we must be saved. This is it. This is the name. But remember, the name represents the Christ Who is proclaimed in Scripture. It's not just any Christ we dream up or the false prophet dreams up or the antichrists dream up. And believe me, the spirit of antichrist is out there dreaming up a million other Jesus's. That's why the false prophets are so dangerous. They come through the door with another Jesus, but their Jesus sounds strangely like ours at first appearance. And remember what they're wearing. They're wearing sheep's clothing. And they come in and they sound good. Have you ever noticed? When the JW's or the Mormons come to your door, they do not dump out their heresies concerning Christ. It's all cloaked. It's veiled. As Christians we can walk right up and we can say to somebody the moment they come to the door: Jesus Christ is God. Unashamedly we can say it. And there is no other hope! We can say it all. We can lay it out on the table. We don't have to hide anything. But you know full well, they do hide things. Those who come along without the truth, they hide things. And you know what, they give different meanings to words. That's one of the favorite tricks of the devil. Just put a spin on the meaning of the word. So you could use terminology that sounds right, but what they mean by it is totally another Jesus, totally another Gospel. This Jesus - He's a Man. He's a Savior.

But then he says "Christ." Christ means Messiah. Yes, yes, it does. It means Anointed One. But I'll have you know this, that when He is called the Christ by John, you go do a search on "Christ" throughout John's Gospel. Listen, I'll just give you two examples here. John 11:27, "You are the Christ, the Son of God Who was coming into the world." John says as he's wrapping up the whole Gospel of John in chapter 20:31, "These are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God." Do you see? The Christ. The Son of God. To know Him as Christ is to know Him as God the Son. This is Man. This is God. This is the God-Man Who came in the flesh. He is Christ. God the Son. That's what this is all about. And He came in the flesh. Listen to what this says. Jesus Christ is come. Where did He come from? It's amazing in John's Gospel how often Jesus tells us: "I am the living bread that came down from Heaven." Or John 8:42, "I came from God and I am here and I came not of My own accord, but He sent Me." Or John 16:28, "I came from the Father and have come into the world, and now I am leaving the world and going to the Father." He is a Man. He is God. He has two natures. Two natures in one Person. He's come from where? He's come from somewhere. Where has He come from? He came from the Father. He came from Heaven. This can be said of no one else. You did not come from somewhere else. We were conceived. That's where we started. Jesus didn't start when He was conceived. He came from somewhere else. That's what he's saying: Jesus Christ has come in the flesh. He's come from outside this world into our world.

This is the infallible test. Do we believe on this Christ? Christ Who is altogether, in every respect He is Man, and in every respect He is the radiance of the glory of God. Is this the One we believe? And that He has come? And that He has come to rescue us? And that He's come to

lay down His life for us? And He's come and there is no other way? There is no other name given. He is come. Do we believe in this One? And He has come to give His life a ransom for many. He has come to bear the wrath of God in the place of His people on that cross. Is this the One we believe in? You see, there's been these errors from the very beginning that somehow He was not fully God; somehow He was not fully man. Somehow the fullness of deity and the fullness of humanity did not go to the cross. What John is saying is your soul depends on believing in the Jesus Christ that is God and is Man, and did go to the cross, and did pay the penalty, and came from outside our world, and came from the Father, and the Father sent Him and sent Him on purpose, to give us a Redeemer. This is the reality. And any teaching that attacks that, it never comes from the Spirit of God. Jesus Christ is come. Do you see what this is saying? Jesus Christ lived before He came. The eternal Word of God broke into the world in the womb of a virgin. Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. John is describing the miracle and the wonder of the Incarnation. He is come. You say, but somebody's over there proclaiming Christ. Yes, but you must ask, what sort of Christ is it? That is always the question. Jesus Christ came from another realm. Where? From glory. From the glory He had with the Father before the world began. He entered the world. He entered human history. There have always been people that have denied one or the other. The Word became flesh. The Word was God. God became flesh. Immanuel: God is with us. And He's come. He's come in the flesh. Fully. Yet robing Himself with the likeness of sinful flesh. Without sin. But in that likeness, with all the likeness of us, in every respect. It was necessary. And that's what He did. And this is the very thing the Spirit of God will never deny.

Probe men and women. What do you really believe about Jesus? What do you really believe? See, if you really believe this, this will be your highest treasure. There will be nothing else more important in your life than this. Because you will see, this is my only hope. I don't want to trade this Christ for another because I recognize this is my only hope. And you look at men and women. They may even speak words that sound like the truth, but if they really believed this; if they really believed Jesus Christ has come in the flesh, they really believe that, they confess that, they will confess it by a life that shows there's no more important truth than this. This is it. As you value your souls, test the spirits. The Word was made flesh. Born of a virgin. Two natures in one Person. Jesus Christ has come in the flesh. Man's only hope. Praise God that sinners have any hope at all, and this is it. This is it. There is no other. Here it is. Jesus Christ has come in the flesh.

### **Prayer**

Father, I pray that my brothers and sisters and myself, Lord, we pray that You would make us very skillful, narrow - yes, we need to be narrow. There is none other name. We are a narrow people. There is one hope. Make us lovingly narrow and kind, but oh Lord, make us bold. Make us unbending. Make us skillful testers of the spirits. Father, we pray that Your Holy Spirit would work mightily in our midst in just the way that we have read about, giving us ears to hear the Apostles' doctrine and all the glories and wonders of Christ, coming face-to-face with this Christ of Scripture and loving Him and living for Him and living worthy of Him. Lord, may it be so. We pray in Christ's name, Amen.