

1 John 4 – Faithful Instruction to God’s Church

1. John tells us to test the Spirits to see if they are of God or not. What would a spirit of God speak to us? What would a false spirit speak to us? (See Tit 1:2; Heb 6:18; John 8:44; and Rev 12:9) What truth about Christ’s first coming does the Spirit of God affirm? (See Rom 8:1-4) What difference does this make? (See Heb 2:14-18) Why would Satan want to deceive us on this point? What truth does John remind believers of in v. 4 that assures us of victory? (See 1 John 2:13; 1 John 3:6, 9; 1 John 5:4). What was the reason that some people hear God’s message and some people don’t? (See John 15:18-21). (v. 1-6)

(1Jo 4:1-21 NKJ) 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.

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.

2. John continually repeats the imperative that we love each other. Why does John emphasize this so often? (See John 13:34-35; Matt 22:35-40) What is the only way John tells us we can achieve this? (See v. 7; 1 John 2:5; John 1:12-13) How does John tell us that God's love was revealed (manifested) to us? (v. 7-16) (See also John 3:16; Rom 5:6-8). What conclusion does John come to in the light of God's love for us? (see v. 11) Why did John put this "strange" statement in the middle of this passage? (v. 12) What does this verse communicate to us? (See John 1:14-18; 13:1, 34-35; 15:12; 17:3-4,6 for some ideas) According to v. 12, how can we know that God abides in us? How can we know that we abide in Him according to v. 13? How can we experience Him in us and us in Him? (v. 15)

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.

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.

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.

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. 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.

3. There are several passages that speak about “perfect love” and its results. Read these passages for ideas about how “perfect love” manifests itself (Col 3:12-15; 1 John 2:4-5, 28; 1 John 4:12, 17-18). Why would this “perfect love” and living as Christ in this world give confidence (or boldness) in the day of judgment? Read Romans 2:14-16 and Titus 1:15-16 to see how having done evil or good effects the conscience. What experiences have you had that corroborate this? What alone can cleanse our conscience of our sins (See Heb 9:13-14)? If God has given His only son to cleanse us from dead works, and has given us of His Spirit to sanctify and perfect us in love, and if we by faith receive all of these things, what could keep us from having faith and boldness in the day of judgment? (See Rom 8:29-39 also). On the other hand, if we do not love our brother, or have bitterness, hatred and contempt for him, how can we have faith and boldness in the day of judgement? (See Ps 50:2-6, 19-22).

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 (punishment).

But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.

¹⁹ We love Him because He first loved us.

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.