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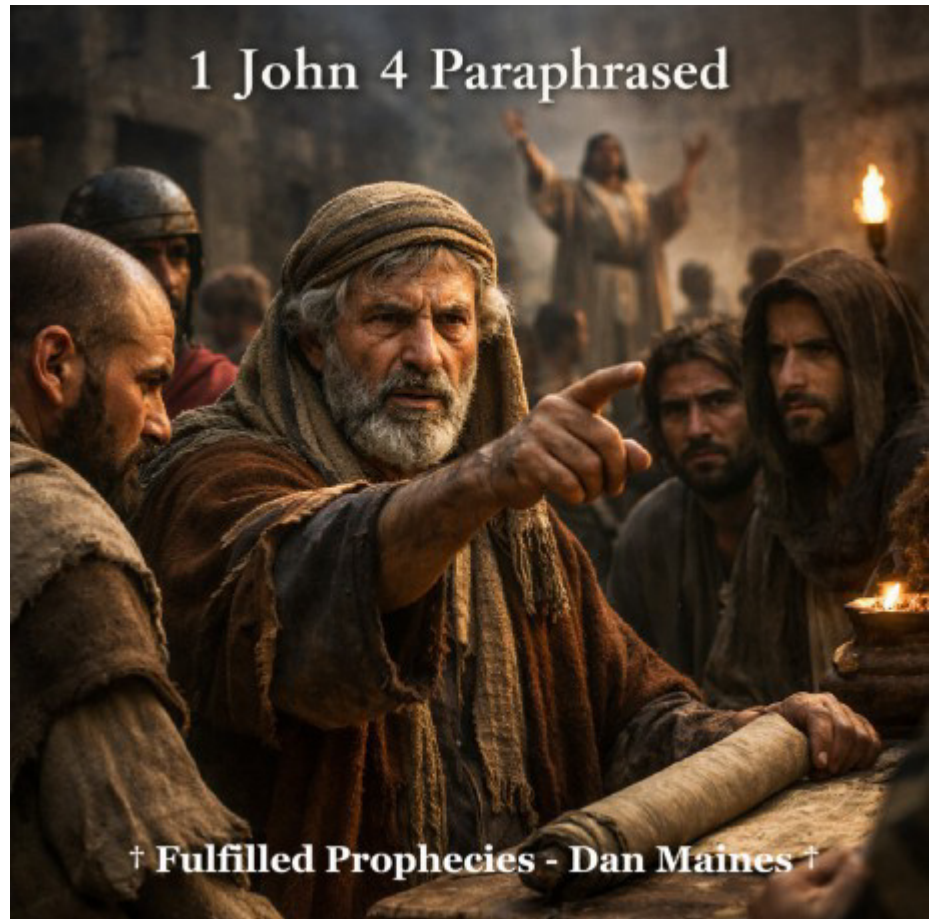
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## 1 John 4 Paraphrased



By Dan Maines

## 1 John 4 Paraphrased

### Introduction

† John continues warning believers about false teachers and false spirits that were already spreading among the churches in the first century. The issue was not theoretical. Many teachers were denying the true identity of Jesus Christ. John writes so believers would test what they hear and hold firmly to the truth about Christ. (Acts 20:29-30)

† The apostle shows that the real evidence of God's presence among His people is love flowing from the truth of Christ. This

love was demonstrated through the sending of the Son and fulfilled in the covenant people of God. (John 13:34-35)

† The chapter also confirms that God's love is perfected in His people, showing that His presence is truly among them. This fits the New Covenant promise that God would dwell with His people. (2 Corinthians 6:16)

### **1 John 4:1**

Dear friends, don't believe every spirit you hear, but test them to see if they are truly from God, because many false prophets have already gone out into the world.

† John is addressing a real first century danger. False prophets were already active among the churches, spreading teachings that distorted the truth about Christ. (Matthew 7:15)

† The command to test the spirits shows believers were responsible to examine teachings carefully rather than blindly accepting claims of spiritual authority. (1 Thessalonians 5:21)

† Early church writers like Irenaeus warned that false teachers often appeared within the church itself, using Christian language while corrupting the truth.

### **1 John 4:2**

This is how you recognize the Spirit of God: every spirit that openly confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God.

† The confession that Jesus came in the flesh was crucial because many early teachers denied Christ's true humanity. John makes this a test of truth. (John 1:14)

† The phrase come in the flesh affirms the real incarnation of Christ, not a symbolic or spiritual appearance. (Philippians 2:6-8)

† Ignatius of Antioch strongly defended this truth, writing that anyone denying Christ came in the flesh was opposing the gospel.

### **1 John 4:3**

But every spirit that refuses to confess Jesus is not from God.

This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you've heard was coming, and now it is already in the world.

† John confirms that the antichrist spirit was already active in his own time, showing that the conflict was present in the first century church. (1 John 2:18)

† The term antichrist describes opposition to the true identity of Christ rather than a single future individual.

† Tertullian also wrote about teachers who denied Christ's nature, identifying them as part of this same antichrist spirit.

### **1 John 4:4**

You belong to God, little children, and you've overcome them because the One who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.

† The victory John describes is spiritual victory over false teaching and deception through the presence of God among His people. (John 16:33)

† The One who is in you refers to God's Spirit dwelling among believers under the New Covenant promise. (John 14:16-17)

† Clement of Alexandria taught that the Spirit given to believers enables them to stand against false doctrine.

### **1 John 4:5**

They come from the world, so they speak from the world's perspective, and the world listens to them.

† John explains why false teachers gain followers, their message appeals to worldly thinking rather than God's truth. (John 15:19)

† The world in John's writings refers to the system of thinking opposed to God.

† Early Christian writers repeatedly warned that teachings appealing to worldly desires often gained the largest audiences.

### **1 John 4:6**

We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us, but whoever isn't from God doesn't listen to us. This is how we recognize the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

† John speaks with apostolic authority. The true message of Christ came through the apostles and those faithful to their teaching. (Ephesians 2:20)

† Listening to apostolic teaching was the test of truth in the early church.

† Irenaeus argued that true doctrine could be traced directly back to the apostles through faithful teaching.

### **1 John 4:7**

Dear friends, let's love one another, because love comes from God, and everyone who loves has been born from God and knows God.

† Love is not presented as mere emotion but as the evidence of God's life working among His people. (John 13:35)

† Being born from God refers to the new life given through Christ and the New Covenant. (John 3:3)

† The Didache, an early Christian document, taught that love among believers was the mark of the true church.

### **1 John 4:8**

The one who doesn't love doesn't know God, because God is love.

† John's statement shows that love reflects God's character. Those who reject love show they don't truly know Him. (John 15:12)

† This does not mean love defines God completely, but that love is central to His revealed nature.

† Augustine later explained that God's love is demonstrated most clearly through Christ's sacrifice.

### **1 John 4:9**

God revealed His love among us by sending His one and only Son into the world so that we could live through Him.

† The sending of the Son was the ultimate demonstration of God's love. (John 3:16)

† Life through Him refers to the spiritual life granted through Christ's work. (John 10:10)

† Early church teaching consistently pointed to Christ's coming as the clearest expression of divine love.

### **1 John 4:10**

Love is not that we loved God first, but that He loved us and sent His Son as the sacrifice that removes our sins.

† Salvation begins with God's initiative, not human effort. (Romans 5:8)

† The sacrifice refers to Christ's atoning death which reconciled people to God. (Hebrews 9:26)

† The church fathers often described this act as the foundation of the gospel message.

### **1 John 4:11**

Dear friends, since God loved us this way, we also should love one another.

† The love believers show each other flows directly from the love God has already demonstrated. (John 15:12)

† This command reflects the new commandment Jesus gave His disciples. (John 13:34)

† Early Christian communities were known for this love, even toward enemies.

### **1 John 4:12**

No one has ever seen God, but if we love one another, God lives among us and His love reaches its full expression in us.

† God's presence becomes visible through the love displayed among His people. (John 1:18)

† The idea that God lives among believers echoes the covenant promise that He would dwell with His people. (2 Corinthians 6:16)

† Church fathers often pointed to Christian love as evidence of God's presence in the church.

### **1 John 4:13**

This is how we know we remain in Him and He in us, He has given us His Spirit.

† The Spirit's presence confirms the relationship between God and His people. (Romans 8:16)

† The Spirit also guides believers into truth and strengthens their faith. (John 16:13)

† Early Christian teaching consistently connected the Spirit with the life of the church.

### **1 John 4:14**

We've seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world.

† John speaks as an eyewitness to Christ's mission and ministry. (John 19:35)

† Savior of the world shows the universal scope of Christ's work. (John 4:42)

† Early Christian preaching emphasized this eyewitness testimony as the basis of the gospel.

### **1 John 4:15**

Whoever openly declares that Jesus is the Son of God remains in God, and God remains in them.

† Confessing Christ publicly was a defining mark of true faith. (Romans 10:9)

† Remaining in God describes the continuing relationship between Christ and believers. (John 15:4)

† Early church communities required clear confession of Christ for membership and teaching.

### **1 John 4:16**

We've come to know and trust the love God has for us. God is love, and the one who lives in love remains in God, and God remains in them.

† Knowing God's love is both intellectual understanding and personal trust. (Romans 5:5)

† Living in love reflects a life shaped by God's character. (Ephesians 5:2)

† Christian writers throughout history have seen this as the

foundation of Christian ethics.

### **1 John 4:17**

Love reaches its full expression among us so that we can have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we live as He lived.

† Confidence on the day of judgment comes from being united with Christ. (Romans 8:1)

† Living as He lived refers to following Christ's example of love and obedience. (1 Peter 2:21)

† Early Christians believed faithful living demonstrated their union with Christ.

### **1 John 4:18**

There is no fear in love. Perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment, and the one who fears hasn't been fully formed in love.

† Fear of condemnation is removed through the assurance of God's love. (Romans 8:15)

† Perfect love refers to love reaching maturity in believers. (Ephesians 3:17-19)

† Early Christian teachers connected spiritual maturity with confidence in God's grace.

### **1 John 4:19**

We love because He loved us first.

† God's love is the starting point for all Christian love. (John 15:9)

† Human love for God and others flows from the love already shown through Christ. (Romans 5:8)

† This principle was central in early Christian teaching about grace.

### **1 John 4:20**

If someone says they love God but hates their brother, they're lying. Whoever doesn't love their brother whom they can see can't love God whom they haven't seen.

† John confronts hypocrisy directly, showing that love for God must be demonstrated in relationships with others. (Matthew 5:23-24)

† The visible test of faith is how believers treat each other. (John 13:35)

† Early church communities disciplined members who practiced hatred or division.

## **1 John 4:21**

And this command comes from Him: the one who loves God must also love their brother.

† The command summarizes Jesus' teaching about love for God and neighbor. (Matthew 22:37-39)

† Love for others is inseparable from love for God. (John 15:12)

† The early church emphasized this command as the foundation of Christian life.

## **Historical References**

† Ignatius of Antioch strongly defended the truth that Jesus came in the flesh and warned against teachers who denied it.

† Irenaeus wrote extensively about apostolic teaching and warned believers to reject false doctrines that distorted Christ's identity.

† Clement of Alexandria taught that the Spirit given to believers enables them to stand against deception and live in love.

## **How it applies to us today**

† Believers must still test teachings carefully because false ideas about Christ continue to appear in every generation.

† The true evidence of God's presence among His people is love grounded in the truth about Christ.

† Holding firmly to the apostolic teaching about Jesus protects believers from deception and keeps the church grounded in the gospel.

## **Q & A Appendix**

**Q:** What does it mean to test the spirits?

**A:** It means examining teachings carefully to see if they agree with the truth about Jesus Christ revealed through the apostles. (1 Thessalonians 5:21)

**Q:** Why was confessing that Jesus came in the flesh so important?

**A:** Because some early teachers denied Christ's true humanity, and John says denying this truth reveals a false spirit. (John 1:14)

**Q:** What is the spirit of the antichrist?

**A:** It refers to teachings and influences that deny the true identity of Jesus Christ. (1 John 2:18)

**Q:** How do believers show they truly know God?

**A:** By loving one another, because love reflects God's character. (John 13:35)

**Q:** Why does perfect love drive out fear?

**A:** Because those who trust in God's love have confidence rather than fear of condemnation. (Romans 8:1)

**† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †**

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## **Source Index**

† John 4

† Ignatius of Antioch, Letter to the Smyrnaeans

† Irenaeus, Against Heresies

† Clement of Alexandria, Stromata

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