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1 John 4

1 John 4:1

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

† John commands discernment, as false prophets were active in his day.

† Testing the spirits meant measuring against apostolic teaching.

† Josephus (Wars 6.5.2) described false prophets in Jerusalem who deceived people before its fall, fulfilling John's warning.

1 John 4:2-3

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, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world.

† True confession acknowledges Jesus as having come in the flesh, refuting early heresies that denied His incarnation.

† Denying Christ's humanity aligned with the spirit of antichrist.

† Ignatius (Letter to the Smyrnaeans 5) opposed docetists who denied Christ came in the flesh, showing John's warning in action.

1 John 4:4

You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.

† Believers already had victory over false teachers through Christ in them.

† The Spirit's power in believers surpasses the power of the world.

1 John 4:5-6

They are from the world, therefore they speak as from the world, and the world listens to them. We are from God. The one who knows God listens to us; the one who is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

† False teachers appeal to the world and find an audience there.

† True believers heed apostolic teaching, which divides truth from error.

† Clement of Rome (1 Clement 42) affirmed that the apostles carried God's authority, echoing John's statement.

1 John 4:7-8

Beloved, let's love one another; for love is from God, and everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, because God is love.

† Love is the proof of being born of God.

† God's very nature is love, so lack of love shows lack of knowledge of Him.

† The Dead Sea Scrolls (1QS 1.9-10) described the sons of light, but only Christ revealed that God is love itself.

1 John 4:9-10

By this the love of God was revealed in us, that God has sent His only Son into the world so that we may live through Him. 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.

† Love is revealed in God sending His Son, not in our love for Him first.

† Christ's sacrifice is the definition of divine love.

† Justin Martyr (Apology 1.63) testified that Christ was sent for the salvation of men, echoing John.

1 John 4:11-12

Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God remains in us, and His love is perfected in us.

† God's unseen nature is revealed in our love for one another.

† Love is the mark of His presence dwelling in us.

1 John 4:13-15

By this we know that we remain in Him and He in us, because

He has given to us of His Spirit. We have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God remains in him, and he in God.

† The Spirit confirms God's indwelling presence.

† Confession of Jesus as the Son of God is the foundation of true fellowship with God.

† Irenaeus (Against Heresies 3.16.2) affirmed the confession of Christ as Son of God as the mark of true believers.

1 John 4:16

We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who remains in love remains in God, and God remains in him.

† John repeats the truth that God is love, stressing the inseparable link between abiding in love and abiding in God.

1 John 4:17-18

By this, love is perfected with us, so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment; because as He is, we also are in this world. There is no fear in love, but perfect love drives out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love.

† Love gives confidence before God, removing fear of judgment.

† Perfected love replaces fear with assurance.

† Clement of Rome (1 Clement 50) said love casts out fear and brings unity, confirming John's teaching.

1 John 4:19

We love, because He first loved us.

† Our love is a response to God's initiating love.

† Divine love is always the source of human love.

1 John 4:20-21

If someone says, "I love God," and yet he hates his brother or sister, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother and sister whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God must also love his brother and sister.

† Claims of love for God are false if not accompanied by love for fellow believers.

† Love for the visible brother proves love for the invisible God.

† Augustine (Homilies on 1 John) repeated this truth: one cannot love God while hating his brother.

How it applies to us today

† 1 John 4 teaches that love is the defining mark of God's people.

† Testing the spirits ensures that our faith rests in the true Christ who came in the flesh.

† Perfect love removes fear and gives confidence in God's presence.

† The fulfilled perspective shows that God's love now fills His covenant family, where hatred and deception are exposed.

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

Source Index

† Josephus, Wars 6.5.2 - false prophets deceiving Jerusalem

† Ignatius, Letter to the Smyrnaeans 5 - Christ's true flesh against heresy

† Clement of Rome, 1 Clement 42 - apostolic authority

† Clement of Rome, 1 Clement 50 - love casting out fear

† Justin Martyr, Apology 1.63 - Christ sent for salvation

† Irenaeus, Against Heresies 3.16.2 - confession of Christ as Son of God

† Augustine, Homilies on 1 John - love of brother proves love of

God

† Dead Sea Scrolls, 1QS 1.9-10 - imagery of light and community of love

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