

1 John 4-Part 1

A. The spirit of truth and protection against the spirit of error.

1. (1) The fact of false prophets and the need to test the spirits.

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.

a. **Do not believe every spirit:** John warned against believing every _____; that is, we are never to assume every spiritual experience or every demonstration of spiritual power is from God. We must test spiritual experiences and spiritual phenomenon to see if they are in fact from God.

i. Many, when first encountering the *reality* of the spiritual world, are too impressed and amazed to ask whether they are of God. This leads to easy _____.

b. **But test the spirits:** This is important because many _____ have gone out into the world. Even though the early church had a strong life and a large measure of purity, John still knew the danger false prophets and their message was real in the early church.

c. **Test the spirits, whether they are of God:** This is the responsibility of every Christian, but especially of congregational leadership. According to [1 Corinthians 14:29](#) (*let the others judge*) and [1 Thessalonians 5:21](#) (*Test all things; hold fast what is good*), testing the spirits is the work of the body of Christ. This job is to be done using the gifts of discernment God has given to Christians in general, especially the _____ of a congregation.

i. All prophecy is to be judged by _____. It is never to be received just because it is dramatic or given by a certain person. We trust in the principle that God will never contradict Himself, and we *know* what He has already said in His Word.

ii. [2 Peter 1:20-21](#) tells us true prophecy is never of any _____. This means that there will be agreement and confirmation from the body of Christ, though perhaps (or probably) not *everyone* will agree or confirm.

2. (2-3) How to know when a false prophet speaks.

By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, 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.

a. Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God:

True prophecy, and true teaching, will present a _____. In John's day, the issue was about if Jesus had *truly* come in a *real* body of flesh and blood. Many Gnostic-influenced teachers said that Jesus, being God, could not have actually become a flesh and blood human being, because God could have no partnership with "impure" material stuff.

i. Today, some groups deny that Jesus is really God (such as the Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, and Muslims). But way back in John's day, in this time closest to the actual life and ministry of Jesus on this earth, people didn't have a hard time believing Jesus was God. They had a hard time believing that he was a _____. This false teaching said Jesus was truly God (which is correct), but really a "make-believe" man.

iii. Today, we are passionate about saying, "Jesus is God," and we should be. But it is no less important to say, "Jesus is a man," because both the deity and humanity of Jesus are _____ to our salvation.

b. Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God:

Some think that this is the *only* test of false doctrine. This is not the only test, but it was the significant issue challenging the church in John's immediate time. Today a person might confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh yet deny that He is God as the Bible teaches He is God. They also are giving _____ because they are not presenting a *true Jesus*.

c. **This is the spirit of the Antichrist:** To deny the true Jesus is the basis of the **spirit of the Antichrist**, which John has already mentioned in [1 John 2:18-23](#). It is the spirit which both _____ the true Jesus and offers

a _____ Jesus.

i. The devil doesn't care at all if you know Jesus or love Jesus or pray to Jesus – as long as it is a *false* Jesus, a *make-believe* Jesus, a Jesus who is not there, and who therefore *cannot* _____.

3. (4) The protection of the child of God.

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.

a. **You are of God, little children, and have overcome them:** The child of God need not fear the *spirit of Antichrist*, even though they should be _____ of it, because they have the indwelling Spirit of God ([1 John 3:24](#)). That indwelling Spirit is greater than he who is in the world – Satan and all of his allies.

b. **He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world:** The believer has a resource for victory, the vital presence of the indwelling Jesus, which makes _____ always possible – *if* we will rely on **He who is in you** instead of relying on ourselves.

c. **He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world:** This means the Christian has no place for _____. We have many spiritual enemies, but not *one* of them is greater than Jesus who lives in us.

i. Earlier in the letter, John brought up the idea of the world and its threat to the Christian life ([1 John 2:15-17](#)). He presented the **world** not as the global earth or the mass of humanity, which God Himself loves ([John 3:16](#)). Instead it is the community of _____ that is united in rebellion against God. Here, John suggests that there are forces of spiritual darkness that guide and influence **the world**.

4. (5-6) The contrast between those in the world and those who are of God.

They are of the world. Therefore they speak as of the world, and the world hears them. 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.

a. **They are of the world:** Those who are of the world are evident because they _____ as of the world; the influence of the world is evident

in their speech. As Jesus said, *out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks* ([Matthew 12:34](#)).

b. **And the world hears them:** Those who are of the world are also evident because the world hears them. They face none of the rejection the child of God will face from the world ([1 John 3:1](#)), because they are _____ with the world.

i. **The world hears them:** The Christian always wants to speak to the world, and to bring the gospel of Jesus Christ to the world. It is exciting when the world will listen to the _____, but we must take care that they are not hearing us because we speak as of the world. Just because the world is hearing the message doesn't prove that the message is God's message.

c. **He who knows God hears us:** Those who are **of God** enjoy fellowship with other _____; they speak the common language of fellowship with God and with each other, because one flows from the other ([1 John 1:3](#)).

i. This language of _____ transcends language, culture, class, race, or any other barrier. It is a true gift from God.

d. **He who is not of God does not hear us:** Understanding just who hears what God has taught us through the apostles, as recorded in the New Testament, helps us to know the spirit of _____ and the spirit of _____. If someone hears what God has said in the Bible, we know he has the **spirit of truth**. If he does not hear it, he has the **spirit of error**.

ii. We keep in the **spirit of truth** by _____, the One who said *I am the truth* ([John 14:6](#)).