



## ***Truth Teaching vs. False Teaching Discerning the Difference?*** (1 John 4:1-8)

Christians need to be so familiar with God's truth they won't be deceived by spiritual "fool's gold". Today we discover how to discern the difference between true teaching from God and that which is not.

## teachingnotes

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\* All Scripture is from CSB (Christian Standard Bible) unless otherwise noted.

### ***BIG TRUTH: Christians are expected to test what is taught.***

In the very beginning of our study we noted false teachings that were invading and impacting the Church. ***The most dangerous false teachings attempt to dilute, distort, or redefine the significance of who Jesus really is.*** Since the entire New Testament revolves around the Person of Jesus, it is this foundation that false teachers chip away at. Here's a reminder of 3 false teachings that could have prompted John to write this letter.

- ***Cerinthus*** taught that Jesus was an extremely righteous man, but *just a man*. Cerinthus did not believe the virgin birth of Jesus, and claimed that Jesus was the biological son of Mary and Joseph.<sup>1</sup> Further, Cerinthus taught 'the Christ spirit' descended on the man Jesus at His baptism, but left Him before the crucifixion.<sup>2</sup> - In other words, Jesus wasn't a full-time Messiah, nor was He truly the Son of God.
- ***Docetists*** (from Greek verb *dokeō* meaning "to seem," or "to appear") taught that Jesus only seemed/appeared to have a body, but that he was really a spirit, thus denying the incarnation of Jesus - that God put on skin and was born to a virgin.
- In John's day (as well as in our day) many ***Jews refused to believe Jesus is the Messiah***, viewing Jesus as a miracle-worker or false teacher - but only a man.

🔗 ***The most dangerous false teachings dilute, distort, or redefine the significance of who Jesus really is.***

### ***Test what is Taught***

**1 John 4:1** (CSB) <sup>1</sup> Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see if they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

Notice that John's warning to **test the spirits** is attached to the fact that **many false prophets have gone out into the world**. Christians are to discern whether the people speaking **are from God** or not. Paul warned of the same thing.

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**1 Timothy 4:1-2** (CSB) <sup>1</sup> Now the Spirit explicitly says that in later times **some will depart from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and the teachings of demons**, <sup>2</sup> through the hypocrisy of liars whose consciences are seared.

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Paul also noted that...

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**2 Corinthians 11:13-15** <sup>13</sup> For such people are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. <sup>14</sup> And no wonder! For Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. <sup>15</sup> So **it is no great surprise if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness**. Their end will be according to their works.

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<sup>1</sup> Irenaeus, 352.

<sup>2</sup> John MacArthur, 1, 2, 3 John, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2007), 8.

To keep the church from being deceived, John tells them **to test these teachers with these 3 specific questions.** (Note: This is NOT an exhaustive list of what false teachers claim in OUR day, as John is writing to **confront the teachings of Cerinthus, Docetists, and non-believing Jews.**

**1 John 4:2-3** <sup>2</sup> This is how you know the Spirit of God: **Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God,** <sup>3</sup> but every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming; even now it is already in the world.

- ① **Test #1:** Does the person confess that **Jesus** is the **Christ** - the Messiah sent by God? Jesus wasn't a part-time Messiah, as Cerinthus taught. Neither was Jesus a just prophet, miracle worker, or deceiver (as non-believing Jews claimed). Jesus was the Christ, the Messiah sent by God.
- ② **Test #2:** Does the person confess that Jesus **has come in the flesh**? Jesus wasn't a ghost, only seeming to have a body, as the Docetists claimed. Jesus was fully human, experiencing what WE experience - fully human, yet living a perfectly righteous life.
- ✗ Those who don't confess that Jesus is the Messiah and that He has lived as a fully righteous human being are **not from God.** They are being led by **the spirit of the antichrist**, that was around in John's day and continues into our day.
- ➡ As mentioned earlier, John is NOT writing an exhaustive list of what false teachers claim in OUR day. Had he lived in our day, he likely would have addressed...

### **False Teachings In Our Day**

- **Muslims** believe Jesus was a prophet, miracle worker, and without sin, yet deny that He died on a cross, rose from the dead, nor claimed to be the Son of God. In fact, the Islamic shrine known as **the Dome of the Rock**, built in AD 642 (the oldest Islamic building in the world, standing where the temple used to stand in Jerusalem), has several inscriptions that speak well of Jesus but deny His deity. One inscription says: "*Jesus son of Mary...It is not for God to take a son.*"<sup>3</sup>
- **In our day**, Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons *will claim* that Jesus is the Christ, and that He came in the flesh. BUT, they **dilute, distort, or redefine the significance of who Jesus really is.**
  - **Jehovah's Witnesses** believe Jesus was Michael the Archangel - the first creation of Jehovah - who later lived on earth as "Jesus". After death, Jesus didn't physically rise from the dead, but he returned to be the archangel Michael. They call Jesus "the Son of God" but this is used to refer to Jesus as God's creation rather than the 2nd Person of the Trinity (JWs teach "Trinity" is a doctrine of the devil). Hence, Jesus should never be worshipped.
  - **Mormons** teach "that all men and women ever to be born, including Jesus Christ, lived with God as His spirit children before this life."<sup>4</sup> Mormon theology claims there are many gods, one of which is our God...who was once a man who became God. Jesus is one of his children birthed when God had sexual relations with one of his many wives. Jesus' death did not account for all of our sins. And then there's the part about Mormons becoming gods over their own planets some day...
  - And then there are the many false teachers like **Joel Osteen** who *dilute, distort, or redefine the significance of who Jesus really is.*

### **TEST what is TAUGHT!!!!**

- ① Does it align with the Scriptures or not...*IN CONTEXT* or not?
- ② Does it HONOR Jesus as God or dilute and discount who Jesus is?
- ③ Does it bend the Bible to fit the culture or does it STAND UP against cultural claims?
- ④ Does it treat God like a man and man like God OR does it recognize God's holiness, grateful He extends forgiveness to those who turn from their sin and trust Jesus?

### **Christians are expected to test what is taught.**

<sup>3</sup> <https://ntbc.wordpress.com/inscriptions-about-jesus-on-islands-dome-of-the-rock-jerusalem/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://uk.churchofjesuschrist.org/what-mormons-believe-about-jesus-christ>

**1 John 4:4-5** <sup>4</sup> You are from God, little children, and you have conquered them, because **the One who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.** <sup>5</sup> They are from the world. Therefore what they say is from the world, and the world listens to them.

Last week we read that Christians shouldn't be surprised when the world hates us (1 Jn 3:11). Despite the difficulties, **the one who is in you - the Holy Spirit - is greater than the one who is in the world** - He will give us the strength and ability to STAND UP when things get tough.

✓ Here's a clear way to discern what is from God and what is not = What is taught must LINE UP with what the apostles of Jesus taught.

### **Does it align with what the apostles taught?**

**1 John 4:6** <sup>6</sup> We are from God. **Anyone who knows God listens to us; anyone who is not from God does not listen to us. This is how we know the Spirit of truth** and the spirit of deception.

Who is **WE** in this text? John is referring to himself and the others apostles & disciples who knew Jesus. Remember what he wrote at the very beginning of this letter - they are *eyewitnesses* of Jesus (while the false teachers never met Jesus).

**1 John 1:1-2** <sup>1</sup> What was from the beginning, what **we have heard**, what **we have seen with our eyes**, what we have observed and have **touched with our hands**, **concerning the word of life**—<sup>2</sup> that life was revealed, and we have seen it and we testify and declare to you **the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us.**

### **Christians are expected to test what is taught.**

**Test what is taught** to see if what others are teaching aligns with what the first followers of Jesus have written. Read the Scriptures!

**1 John 4:7-8** <sup>7</sup> Dear friends, let us love one another, because love is from God, and **everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.** <sup>8</sup> The one who does not love does not know God, because God is love.

③ **Test #3:** Does the person consistently **LOVE God and others**? LOVE is one of the greatest tests to see if someone is a genuine follower of Jesus.

## **FEET2FAITH**

➡ **Confess JESUS as King of your life.**

➡ **Love God & others with your life!** Have you been living like God is watching this week?

➡ **Read the Scriptures & test what's being taught.** Don't be quick to shallow what others teach.

## **heretoserveyou**

Have questions and need some help? ...real soon...how about now? Please **call** or **text** us soon!

\* Contact **Jackie** (850-673-1582), **Justin** (704-618-6144), **Christy** (673-9764), or another follower of Jesus soon!

\* Or call our **deacons & wives:** Steve & Debbie Bass (673-7952), Freddy & Joyce Howard (973-0047), Jere & Darlene Burnette (673-1888), Fain & Linda Poppell (464-1282), Jim & Derita Pinkard (464-6188), or Boss & Amelia Mulkey (464-6717).