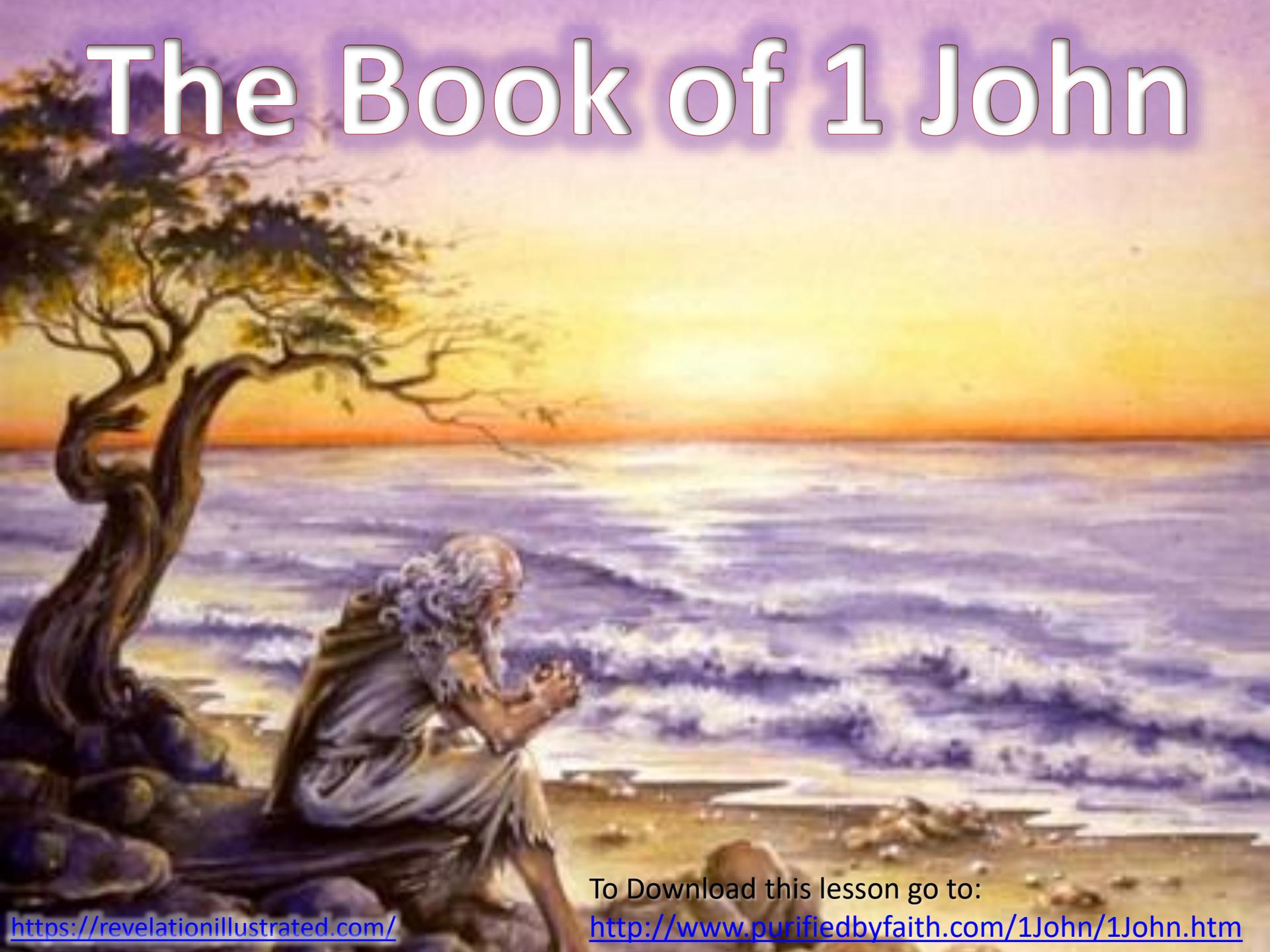


# The Book of 1 John



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# Outline of 1 John

- 1:1-4 - *Prologue: John Introduces the Major Theme of the Letter - FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD*
- 1:5-2:28 - *The First Presentation of the Three Tests of FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD: RIGHTEOUSNESS, LOVE and BELIEF in Jesus*
- 2:29-4:6 - *The Second Presentation of the Three Tests of FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD: RIGHTEOUSNESS, LOVE and BELIEF in Jesus*
- 4:7-5:21 - *The Third Presentation of the Three Tests of FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD: RIGHTEOUSNESS, LOVE and BELIEF in Jesus*

2:29-4:6

*The Second Presentation of the Three Tests of  
DIVINE SONSHIP: RIGHTEOUSNESS, LOVE  
and BELIEF in Jesus*

- 2:29-3:10a - *Divine Sonship* tested by **RIGHTEOUSNESS**
  - God is righteous therefore everyone who “*does what is right*” is “*born of Him*” (2:29)
  - The present status and future hope of the “*children of God*” (3:1-3)
  - Divine Sonship is utterly contrary to all sin (3:4-10a)
- 3:10b-24a - *Divine Sonship* tested by **LOVE**
  - Anyone who does not obey the command to “*love one another*” is not a child of God (3:10b-11)
  - Cain as the model of murder and hate - whose example is followed by the world (3:12-15)
  - Christ as the model of love – whose example we must follow in order to have confidence in our relationship with God (3:16-24a)
- 3:24b-4:6 - *Divine Sonship* tested by **BELIEF** in the Spirit’s Message

# 1 John 3:24b-4:6

## Divine Sonship Tested by Belief in the Spirit's Message

*3:24b And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us. 4:1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for 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 from God, 3 and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already. 4 Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. 5 They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them. 6 We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.*

1 John 3:24b-4:6

Divine Sonship Tested  
by Belief in the Spirit's  
Message

High Level Overview

John begins by telling us that we can ***know*** God remains in us because [our lives show evidence that] He has given us the Holy Spirit.

***3:24b And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us.*** ***4:1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for 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 from God,*** ***3 and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already.*** ***4 Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.*** ***5 They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them.*** ***6 We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.***

1 John 3:24b-4:6

John then warns us not to be *gullible* concerning spiritual teachers – we are to *test* their teachings, because there are many false teachers in the world!

*3:24b And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us. 4:1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for 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 from God, 3 and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already. 4 Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. 5 They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them. 6 We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.*

1 John 3:24b-4:6

John tells us we can **test** spiritual teachers by applying the **Christological** test: Do they have a right belief about Jesus?

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1 John 3:24b-4:6

John is confident that his readers are true believers, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, because they have not succumbed to the diabolical doctrines advocated by the false teachers.

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1 John 3:24b-4:6

Often the truth or falsehood of a teaching can be seen by who (receptively) listens to it:

- The message of the *false teachers* appeals to the *world*.
- The message of the *apostles* appeals to *true believers*.

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1 John 3:24b-4:6

John says in 3:24b “*we know*” that God abides in us “*by the Spirit whom he has given us*”. We know we have **been given the Spirit** because He **manifests Himself** in our beliefs and conduct. The Apostle Paul expresses a similar idea in Galatians 5:16 when he says, “*walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.*”

3:24b *And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us.* <sup>4:1</sup> *Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world.* <sup>2</sup> *By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God,* <sup>3</sup> *and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already.* <sup>4</sup> *Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.* <sup>5</sup> *They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them.* <sup>6</sup> *We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.*

1 John 3:24b-4:6

Throughout the John's letter, the Spirit's **primary** role is seen as bearing witness to the truth about Jesus, and in the verses that follow (4:1-6) John sheds further light on this role of the Spirit in the lives of believers.

*3:24b And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us.* <sup>4:1</sup> Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world. <sup>2</sup> By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, <sup>3</sup> and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already. <sup>4</sup> Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. <sup>5</sup> They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them. <sup>6</sup> We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

1 John 3:24b-4:6

In 4:1, John warns his readers not to believe every “*spirit*”. As we examine what John says about “*spirits*” in this section, it becomes clear that he is talking about (true or false) **prophets** whose message **ultimately** comes from a “*spirit*”: either the **Holy Spirit** or the **devil**.

3:24b *And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us.* 4:1 *Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for 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 from God,* 3 *and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already.* 4 *Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.* 5 *They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them.* 6 *We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.*

1 John 3:24b-4:6

Every “prophet” is a spokesman for some spirit: either a **false spirit** or the **Spirit of God**. John so closely identifies the prophetic spokesman with the spirit behind him that he uses the term “*spirit*” to refer to both the prophet and the spirit who inspired him. To believe the prophet was to believe the spirit who spoke **through** him.

*3:24b And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us. 4:1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for 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 from God, 3 and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already. 4 Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. 5 They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them. 6 We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.*

1 John 3:24b-4:6

John is warning his readers not to be naïve. The grammar here suggests that the readers had shown a tendency to give too much credence to the false teachers.

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1 John 3:24b-4:6

Rather than naively believing everyone who claims to speak for God, John instructs his readers to “**test the spirits**” by examining the contents of their message.

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1 John 3:24b-4:6

# “*test*” δοκιμάζω *dokimazo*

- This word was commonly used for such tests as the testing of:
  - Calves for sacrifice,
  - Officials for public office
  - Coins to see if they were valid
- The term suggests that there is an ***objective*** standard by which to put the suggested test into effect. The standard for testing true or false “*spirits*” is described in verses 2-3.
- The verb “*test*” is a present tense imperative... urging the readers to make it a practice to put any and all prophets to the test.

# *Test the spirits...*

The testing of prophets had an Old Testament precedent:

- **Deuteronomy 18:20-22** - *But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in my name that I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that same prophet shall die.* <sup>21</sup> *And if you say in your heart, "How may we know the word that the LORD has not spoken?"* <sup>22</sup> *when a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the word does not come to pass or come true, that is a word that the LORD has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously. You need not be afraid of him.*
- **Deuteronomy 13:1-5** - *If a prophet or a dreamer of dreams arises among you and gives you a sign or a wonder,* <sup>2</sup> *and the sign or wonder that he tells you comes to pass, and if he says, "Let us go after other gods," which you have not known, "and let us serve them,"* <sup>3</sup> *you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams. For the LORD your God is testing you, to know whether you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul...* <sup>5</sup> *But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has taught rebellion against the LORD your God, ...to make you leave the way in which the LORD your God commanded you to walk. So you shall purge the evil from your midst.*
- See also Jer 23:9-22; 28:9

# *Test the spirits...*

- So, to summarize the teaching found in these Old Testament passages concerning the testing of prophets, we see that:
  - The prophet must speak in the name of the **Lord**.
  - What the prophet said must agree with what God had **previously revealed**.
  - The prophet's **predictions** must **come to pass**.
- Likewise, the **New Testament** instructs us to examine and test teaching regardless of its apparent source:
  - **Matthew 10:16** - *Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves.*
  - **1 Corinthians 14:26, 29** - *When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up...<sup>29</sup> Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others weigh what is said.*
  - **1 Thessalonians 5:21** - **test everything; hold fast what is good.**

# *Test the spirits...*

- The New Testament often **commends** those who carefully test and examine teachers:
  - **Acts 17:11** - *Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.* (NIV)
  - **Revelation 2:1-2** – *[Jesus speaking:] To the angel of the church in Ephesus write... “I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false”.*

John then gives a **reason** why it is necessary to test the teachings of others: “*for many false prophets have gone out into the world.*”

*3:24b And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us. 4:1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for 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 from God, 3 and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already. 4 Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. 5 They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them. 6 We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.*

1 John 3:24b-4:6

# “false prophets” ψευδοπροφήτης pseudoprophetae

- In **non-biblical** Greek usage, a prophet was one who spoke in the name of a god, declaring the will and council of a god.
- In the Old Testament, a prophet is described as the spokesman (literally, “mouth”) of God. He was one who spoke under the influence of supernatural inspiration.
  - **Jeremiah 15:19** - *... this is what the LORD says [to Jeremiah]: "If you repent, I will restore you that you may serve me; ... you will be my spokesman. Let this people turn to you, but you must not turn to them.*  
(NIV)
- John uses the term “prophet” similarly in 1 John 4:1. These individuals are not merely teachers... They were actually inspired by a spirit – the spirit of the antichrist (1 John 4:3). The NEB refers to them as “prophets falsely inspired”.

Given what John has said earlier in this letter, he when he talks about the “*false prophets*” who have “**gone out into the world**”, he probably has in mind the **false teachers** who had left the church and were now trying to lead John’s readers astray:

- **1 John 2:19a** - *They went out from us, but they were not of us*

*3:24b And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us. 4:1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for 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 from God, 3 and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already. 4 Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. 5 They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them. 6 We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.*

**1 John 3:24b-4:6**

Having instructed his readers to “*test the spirits*”, John now gives the ***Christological*** test as the means by which they can discern which “*spirit*” a prophet speaks for: the Spirit of **God** or the spirit of the ***antichrist*** (i.e., the devil).

*3:24b And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us. 4:1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for 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 from God, 3 and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already. 4 Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. 5 They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them. 6 We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.*

1 John 3:24b-4:6

John first applies the test with ***positive*** results: you can recognize those who speak under the inspiration of ***God's Spirit*** because they acknowledge Jesus, the (divine) Christ, has come in (human) flesh.

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1 John 3:24b-4:6

Next John applies the test with ***negative*** results: those who ***do not acknowledge*** Jesus, (i.e., that ***Jesus has come in the flesh***), speak under the inspiration of the ***spirit of the antichrist*** (i.e. the devil).

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1 John 3:24b-4:6

John uses the word “*world*” here to refer to the sphere in which people (saved and unsaved) live and where both the Spirit of God and the spirit of antichrist are present and at work.

*3:24b And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us.* <sup>4:1</sup> *Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world.* <sup>2</sup> *By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God,* <sup>3</sup> *and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is **in the world** already.* <sup>4</sup> *Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.* <sup>5</sup> *They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them.* <sup>6</sup> *We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.*

1 John 3:24b-4:6

The “*the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming*” refers to the **future** antichrist whom John talked about earlier in this letter:

- 1 John 2:18a - *Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist **is coming**...*

3:24b *And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us.* <sup>4:1</sup> *Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world.* <sup>2</sup> *By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God,* <sup>3</sup> *and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already.* <sup>4</sup> *Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.* <sup>5</sup> *They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them.* <sup>6</sup> *We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.*

1 John 3:24b-4:6

The “*the spirit of the antichrist... now is in the world already*”, that is, the devil (who will animate the antichrist) was already operating through “*antichrists*” (such as the false teachers) who were in the world in John’s day.

3:24b *And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us.* 4:1 *Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for 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 from God,* 3 *and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already.* 4 *Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.* 5 *They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them.* 6 *We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.*

1 John 3:24b-4:6

What they “*heard*” might have come from either Paul and/or John, since **both** speak of such a coming in their writings:

- 2 Thessalonians 2:3-7 – *Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction,<sup>4</sup> who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God...<sup>7</sup> For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work.*

<sup>3:24b</sup> *And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us.* <sup>4:1</sup> *Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world.* <sup>2</sup> *By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God,* <sup>3</sup> *and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already.* <sup>4</sup> *Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.* <sup>5</sup> *They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them.* <sup>6</sup> *We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.*

1 John 3:24b-4:6

In this section, John indicates that one of the ways a prophet can be identified spiritually, is by observing who it is that *listens* to him. Two groups of listeners are referred to in these verses:

- John's readers who are *from* God (4:4) and who *know* God (4:6)
- The world (4:5), that is, those who are *not* from God (4:6)

*3:24b And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us. 4:1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for 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 from God, 3 and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already. 4 Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. 5 They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them. 6 We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.*

1 John 3:24b-4:6

Similarly there are two groups of *speakers*:

- Those who are from the world (4:5)
- Those who are from God (4:6).

*3:24b And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us. 4:1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for 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 from God, 3 and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already. 4 Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. 5 They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them. 6 We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.*

1 John 3:24b-4:6

So when John tells his readers that they have “*overcome them*”, what he is saying is that his readers have been **victorious** over the false teachers because they have **rejected** the false teachers’ **message**.

3:24b *And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us.* 4:1 *Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for 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 from God,* 3 *and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already.* 4 *Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.* 5 *They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them.* 6 *We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.*

1 John 3:24b-4:6

The word “*for*” introduces an *explanation* of what it was that *enabled* the readers to overcome. An understanding of apostolic truth was involved (2:24), but here John explains their victory as the product of an indwelling enablement.

*3:24b And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us. 4:1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for 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 from God, 3 and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already. 4 Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. 5 They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them. 6 We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.*

1 John 3:24b-4:6

*“he who is in you”* probably refers to the Holy Spirit:

- Earlier in the letter (2:27) the anointing (Holy Spirit) is said to indwell believers.
- In the immediate preceding context (verses 2 and 3), John has been contrasting the spirit of antichrist with the Spirit of God.

*3:24b And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us. 4:1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for 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 from God, 3 and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already. 4 Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. 5 They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them. 6 We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.*

1 John 3:24b-4:6

“*He who is in the world*” seems to be a reference to the “*spirit of the antichrist*” (i.e., the devil) who John has just said (4:3b) is “*in the world*”.

3:24b *And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us.* 4:1 *Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for 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 from God,* 3 *and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already.* 4 *Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than **he who is in the world**.* 5 *They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them.* 6 *We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.*

1 John 3:24b-4:6

“*They*” here refers to the false teachers. “*World*” refers to the evil world system. The heretical teachers were “*from the world*” in that they “*spoke its language, reflected its mentality, and followed its promptings*”. (Burdick, p.302)

3:24b *And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us.* 4:1 *Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for 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 from God,* 3 *and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already.* 4 *Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.* 5 *They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them.* 6 *We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.*

1 John 3:24b-4:6

*“Therefore they speak from the world”,* because their teaching about the person of Christ is shaped, not by the original gospel message, but by worldly categories.

*3:24b And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us. 4:1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for 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 from God, 3 and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already. 4 Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. 5 They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them. 6 We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.*

1 John 3:24b-4:6

The “*world listens to them*”, because their teaching is shaped by worldly categories and is therefore acceptable to those of the world.

*3:24b And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us. 4:1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for 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 from God, 3 and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already. 4 Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. 5 They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, and **the world listens to them**. 6 We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.*

1 John 3:24b-4:6

Although it may be broader than this, “*we*,” here, is probably a reference to John and the other apostles (cf. 1 John 1:1-4).

*3:24b And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us. 4:1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for 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 from God, 3 and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already. 4 Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. 5 They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them. 6 We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.*

1 John 3:24b-4:6

The person who “*knows God*” will invariably listen to the apostolic message. He finds an affinity with it and is therefore drawn to it. “*Like associates with like*”.  
(Burdick, p.304)

3:24b *And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us.* 4:1 *Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for 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 from God,* 3 *and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already.* 4 *Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.* 5 *They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them.* 6 *We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.*

1 John 3:24b-4:6

John's readers must not be surprised if they can't get a hearing for the original gospel from the false teachers, or from others who are not from God. A persistent acceptance of the gospel proclaimed by the John and his readers marks those who are from God, and a persistent rejection of the gospel marks those who are not from God.

*3:24b And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us. 4:1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for 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 from God, 3 and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already. 4 Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. 5 They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them. 6 We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.*

1 John 3:24b-4:6

Discernment of the spirits of truth and error is arrived at by observing who listens to the person's message. If the people of God are listening sympathetically, the message and speaker are from God; if the world is listening to it, the speaker and message are not from God but from the world.

*3:24b And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us. 4:1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for 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 from God, 3 and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already. 4 Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. 5 They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them. 6 We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.*

1 John 3:24b-4:6

# Paraphrastic Commentary on 1 John 3:24b-4:6 by Donald W. Burdick

- ▶ (24b) It is by means of this habitual obedience that we can ascertain that God is dwelling in us, and this assurance comes from the Holy Spirit whom God has given to us.

# Paraphrastic Commentary on 1 John 3:24b-4:6 by Donald W. Burdick

- ▶ (1) Dear friends, stop listening gullibly to every prophet who comes along. Instead, make it a practice to put these supernaturally inspired speakers to an objective test to see if what they are and what they say comes from God. You must exercise caution because in the world there are many teachers who are inspired by that great deceiver, the devil.
- ▶ (2) This is how you can recognize when a person is speaking under the inspiration of the Spirit of God. Any prophet who comes from God will solemnly and publicly be affirming his belief in Jesus Christ, God's Son who has taken up His residence in a human body of flesh and bones. (3) But no prophet who refuses to make such a solemn and open confession of the incarnate Christ has his origin in God. He is inspired by the same spirit who will inspire and empower that wicked end-time enemy of God, the antichrist. You have heard that this spirit is going to come. Indeed it is already here.

# Paraphrastic Commentary on 1 John 3:24b-4:6 by Donald W. Burdick

- ▶ (4) As for you, you are born of God, dear children, and you have been victorious over the attempts of the false prophets to win you over to Gnosticism. Your victory was possible because the Holy Spirit who indwells you is more powerful than the spirit of antichrist who is now present in this evil world. (5) These false prophets, on the one hand, have their origin in, and derive their characteristics from, the wicked pagan world. As a result, what they have to say comes from that pagan world, and so the people of the world are always ready to listen sympathetically to them. (6) On the other hand, we of the apostolic circle derive our being and message from God. Consequently; anyone who knows God personally listens sympathetically to us. This is how we can recognize the Spirit who is characterized by truth and the spirit who is characterized by deceit.

# Class Discussion Time



## \*Class Discussion Time

- Do you think there is a need in our day for the message we heard from John in this text? Can you give an example of something you've seen that fits in this category?
- There are many in our day who genuinely believe that sometimes our inner feelings or impressions are promptings from the Holy Spirit designed to give us guidance in our decision making. Do you think God sometimes intends to guide us through such things?
- Is there a danger in assuming that inner feelings or impressions that we may have come from the Spirit of God? If so, how can we safeguard ourselves against being *mislead* by such things?
- John held out the apostle's teaching as the only reliable guide in his day. Where do we find the apostles teaching in our day?