

Do Not Believe Every Spirit

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[0 : 00] Take out your Bibles with me, please, and turn to the very back of your Bible. You'll find 1 John right before 2 John, which is before 3 John, before Jude, or Revelation, and then the book of Concordance.

Find it at the end, anyway. 1 John chapter 4. We come to chapter 4. John. There's only five chapters, so it's almost over. Well, it'll be a while, but...

John has been showing us how to know if we have eternal life. In other words, what are the marks and the tests to look at in our own lives to know if we're truly saved?

If the faith that we have, if the confession that we make in Jesus is genuine. Or not. And so John gives us tests.

Tests of walking in the light versus walking in darkness. Tests of the telltale test of do I love my brother. And then the test of truth.

[1 : 10] The test of what I believe. Those three tests together tell me if I'm going by this word or some other word.

And today we come to a text that, as John keeps doing, he keeps dividing things. Putting it into two different kinds of people.

Two different kinds of spirits. Now, he's going to talk about today. How do we determine if my faith is real and someone else's faith is real?

When I hear people speaking about Jesus Christ, how do I know they're speaking about the true Jesus Christ? Okay. John is going to give us some indicators today to know that.

Okay. So we want to read the word and then we'll pray and then we'll dig in. I would like to start at actually the end of John 3. 1 John 3, 23.

[2 : 09] And we'll read through 4, 6. So if you're able, please stand as I read from the word. 1 John 3, 23. And this is his commandment.

That we believe in the name of his son, Jesus Christ. Love just as he commanded us. Whoever keeps his commandments is abiding in God and God is abiding in him.

And by this we know that he abides in us by the spirit whom he has given us. 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. 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. Which you have heard was coming and now is already in the world.

[3 : 30] 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. They are from the world.

Therefore they speak from the world. And the world listens to them. 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.

So reads the word. Let us pray for understanding. Father, grant us your spirit today. The spirit of truth today to illumine us, to teach us, convict us, correct us, encourage us.

This is a critical subject, Father, because we live in an age where discernment is very, very critical.

[4 : 32] There are a lot of messages out there, Lord. There are a lot of spirits out there that are sent by the evil one. And yet your spirit is here too.

And so help us to be those who are not gullible, but who are discerning. Who recognize how to test the spirits.

Show us that today, Father. That we might have greater assurance. Not to be critical judges, but to be discerning people. That we might not be led astray.

We pray this in Christ's name. Amen. Please be seated. Every year, Ligonier does a poll, a survey of the state of theology.

So they very broadly take a U.S. survey of people everywhere. Every different religious or not religious background.

[5 : 37] How they respond to different things. And then they also categorize those responses. And I just want to look at the responses of those who call themselves evangelical.

Evangelical. An evangelical is one who believes that the Bible is God's word. An evangelical is one who believes that Jesus died on the cross for sins.

And that we receive that forgiveness by faith. Right? So, saved by grace alone. Through faith alone. In Christ alone.

To the glory of God alone. According to Scripture. Glory of God. Sorry, I got it backwards. But that's an evangelical. And an evangelical believes it's important to share their faith as well. So, this is the state of theology regarding those who are evangelical.

Surprising. Okay. They were at first. One of the questions they're asked is, does God learn and adapt? What do you think?

[6 : 44] No. God can't learn anymore? You're not adapting? Does God change? 29% of evangelicals say yes.

9% were unsure. Is Jesus God? Yes. 27% said no. The Holy Spirit.

Who's the Holy Spirit? So, is the Holy Spirit a force and not a person? This is very surprising. 42% of evangelicals said the Holy Spirit is a force, not a person.

These are people that believe the Bible. Here's an interesting one. Of evangelicals. 40% of evangelicals. Of evangelicals, 40% of them believe that worship apart from the church is a valid alternative or replacement to church.

40%. And 20% of evangelicals believe that truth is relative.

[7 : 49] It's just a matter of personal opinion. What's happening? So, the Gallup poll, the latest Gallup poll that we have access to is 2020.

And they do a poll every year since 1945 of the whole United States, those people that consider themselves members of churches.

They may not have signed a document, but they belong to a church or they believe church is important. So, the Gallup poll of U.S. membership. In 1945, how many, what percentage of the United States do you think went to church or considered themselves churchgoers?

1945. I realize some of you weren't there then. But what do you think it was? 76%. Oh, yay, you went there.

76%. 2000, what do you think it was? 20 years ago, 22 years ago, what do you think it was? 70%.

[8 : 57] That surprised me. It is 2000. In 2000. According to Gallup poll, it was still 70% considered themselves members or adherents to church or a religious organization.

Guess what it was 20 years after that? 47%. 47%. 47%. It went from 70.

So, it went from 76 to 70 in what? 55 years? Is that right? In the next 20 years, it went from 70 to 47.

This is before COVID. I don't have any numbers since then. We know it's less than that. Now. What is happening?

John, in his book, the letter that he's written in the fourth chapter, he says it's a battle.

[9 : 57] It is a battle for truth. And he says the reason why is that this Antichrist you heard is coming.

He said he's actually already here. He's already at work. He's already dividing things. He's already deceiving the world. He's already at work.

And John is writing at the end of the first century. So, he's really been working. So, John sees the battle as two things always, doesn't he?

He sees there's two groups of people. There's people that walk in light. People that walk in darkness. There's people that love one another. And there's people that hate. He doesn't say anything in between.

There's people that confess Jesus. And there's people that deny Jesus. There's nobody in the middle. Now, people would argue they're in the middle. But he's saying, no, you're either one or the other. It's black and white for John.

[10 : 56] It's truth or not truth. So, now he says there's two spirits in the world. So, he says, notice what he says in verse 6. At the end of verse 6, he says, By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

Two spirits. One is truth. One is error. He begins in verse 1, talking about testing the spirits to see whether they are from God. Why? Because there's a whole bunch of false prophets already out in the world.

And so, verse 2, this is how you know the spirit of God. Verse 3, this is how you know the spirit of the Antichrist. Two spirits. One truth from God. One error from Antichrist.

Obviously, opposite. So, John isn't alone. Paul in 1 Timothy 4 warned us that there would be some who would depart from the faith and would devote themselves.

We're talking about Christian people. Who would leave the faith. Would depart the faith and devote themselves to deceitful spirits. Peter says in 2 Peter 2, false prophets have arisen from among you, from among the church.

[12 : 09] And they secretly bring in destructive heresies to the church. And deny the master. And deny the master. Paul in 2 Timothy 4 said the time is coming when people will not endure sound doctrine.

But having... What? What kind of ears? Itching ears. Having itching ears will accumulate for themselves.

Because I don't want to hear that old stuff anymore. I don't want to hear that old tired gospel anymore. I don't want to hear that old truth and false. I want to hear new stuff. I want to hear new stuff. So they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions.

I want teachers to teach what I like to hear. Right? And they will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. Jesus warned us.

Matthew 7, beware of false prophets. They will come to you in sheep's clothing. They will look like they belong. They will fit in. You think they're okay. They say the right things.

[13 : 20] But inwardly, they're ravenous wolves. And the only way you'll know them is by their fruits. And you have to watch for a while. Because they'll give lip service. Later, Jesus said, many will come in my name.

Come saying they're speaking for me. They will come in my name. And they will lead many astray. So it's not a surprise if we have read Scripture that church membership has gone from 70% to 47% in a matter of 20 years.

And in the next two years, in these last two years, we've seen, even in our own flock, many lead. Sadly. What's going on? Antichrist is already at work. People are hearing other messages, blatant or subtle, and being led astray.

I don't need to come back to church. And not that church going is the end all. But it is something Christ called us to.

[14 : 38] It is extremely important for our health. Not to build a building or something like that. So, what do we do?

Well, how do we tell who's genuine, who's from God, and who's not? How do we know when we hear these other messages, and there are a ton of them?

John said, Jesus said, many false prophets will come out into the world. They will come from churches. They will arise from among us.

Jesus said. Paul said. Peter said. Okay. Okay. This was already happening in the first century. This is nothing new. So, how do we know when they're false?

How do you tell? How do you tell when that guy on TV seems like he's saying all the right things? How do you know? So, John gives us a couple of signs, a couple of indicators.

[15 : 45] Okay. Of false prophets. He gives us one in verses 1 through 3. That is a doctrinal issue. What do they confess about Jesus? That's first and foremost.

Who is Jesus to them? How do they describe Jesus? And John gives us kind of a little shortened formula to test by. And then secondly, we see another characteristic of them in verses 4, 5, and 6, which is their character.

So, what is their doctrine? What is their statement about who Jesus is? What do they confess about Jesus? And secondly, what's the fruit of that confession? Confession.

Confession. That's an oven, isn't it? Confession. So, how does that look? How does that manifest itself? What's the fruit? Right? What are they aiming for in their message?

Though they may give lip service to who Jesus is, what are they really telling us? Okay? So, two things that go by. So, first of all, the message. What's the content of their message?

[16:53] Specifically, I'll ask this in a question. Here's the first test. Do they confess the true incarnate Jesus of the Gospels?

He says in verse 2, every spirit that says, Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God.

Okay? Not just Jesus. Jesus Christ has come in the flesh. So, we'll get to that in a moment. Why is that so important? I would summarize it this way. Do they confess the true incarnate, in other words, come in the flesh, Jesus of the Gospels?

Not the Jesus of today. Not the Jesus of my own making. But this Jesus, who people bled and died to witness to.

That Jesus. Okay? So, first of all, he tells us in verse 1, we gotta draw lines. It's rude to draw lines, isn't it?

[17:58] In this day and age. You're not supposed to draw lines. You're supposed to let everybody say. But God draws lines. God draws lines. God sets boundaries.

So, remember, at the end of verse, end of chapter 3, he said, whoever keeps his commandments abides in God, God in him. And by this we know that God abides in us.

How do we know God is abiding in us? He says, at the end of verse 24, by the spirit whom he's given us. So, I have an internal, I have a subjective, an experiential confirmation that God is in me. The spirit in me. The spirit is working in me. Okay, how do I know that's God's spirit? Okay?

Because that's what he's gonna say next.

Chapter 4, 1. Don't believe every spirit. We know God is in us by the spirit he's given in us. Okay, well, a lot of people can say, well, oh yeah, I got touchy-feely.

[19:03] I, you know, I feel good. And then they teach a whole different kind of thing. So, how do I know that spirit? So, this is what he's answering. How do I know which spirit?

Well, I gotta draw a line. Just because people say, I speak from God, does not mean they do. He says, do not believe every spirit.

Which means there's a whole bunch of spirits that are false. Do not trust any spirit without testing. To test means to examine, to evaluate if they're genuinely Christian.

As he said, test the spirits to see whether they're from God. How do I know if that spirit is from God? How do I know if that speaker is speaking for God? Just because he says so doesn't mean he is. Even if he thinks he is, doesn't mean he is. Okay? Does that mean we be judgmental? No. Not judgmental, but critical thinkers.

[20:14] We're to be thinking. Jesus taught us to think. Right? When people ask Jesus a question, what did he do?

He asked him a question back. Well, what do you think? Think. Think this out. It's very important. Love the Lord your God with all your mind.

So, why is that important? Because he says there's many false prophets in the world. There's a whole bunch of them. They're not just some. There's many, many false prophets in the world. They will lead you astray. So, how do we test it? So, verse 2, he gives us a test. By this you'll know the Spirit of God. This is how you know. What do they confess? Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God.

Period. Period. Okay. Simple, right? Does that work? So, he gives three parts to that confession, right? Jesus.

[21:18] What's Jesus mean? What's the name Jesus really mean? Savior. You should call his name Jesus because he will save his people from all their problems.

Nope, that's not what it said. Call his name Jesus because he will save his people from their sin. Not from their debt, not from their health problem, not from, now he may do those other things but what he came to do was save his people from their sins because that's their ultimate big deal problem.

That's what he came to do. Jesus means Savior from sin. Christ. That's not his second name. That's not his, so Jesus, what's what we call his last name?

Christ. No, that's his title. Jesus is his name. His title is Christ. In Hebrew? Messiah.

Messiah. Messiah, anointed one. There was one anointed one in the Old Testament that was coming. It'd be like come through David, right?

[22 : 30] Come through Solomon, right? Come through Ruth. All the way down the line. Two Gospels trace that lineage from different lines.

Right? He comes through David, one through Nathan, one through Solomon, one goes to Mary, one goes to Joseph. He is bloodline Messiah and he is through Mary and he is royal, authority Messiah through Joseph, though not blood.

King. King. Who did Jesus say the Messiah was? Remember, he asked the Pharisees, who is the Messiah? Oh, he's son of David.

Oh, is he? Yeah. Well, how come David calls him Lord if he's his son? Huh? Huh? Have you not read the scriptures? David wrote Psalm 110.

The Lord said to my Lord, sit at my right hand. You are a son forever. Oh, I didn't know the Messiah was the son of God.

[23 : 44] I didn't know the Messiah was, whoa. Messiah was always son of God. Messiah to come would always be the king of kings, Lord of lords. And now, today, he sits on his throne.

Right? He is on his throne. Putting his enemies under his sovereign. So what do we mean when we say Jesus? He's savior from sin. When we say Christ, he is the sovereign son of God, king of kings, Lord of lords, ruling right now.

Nothing is out of his control. And then he says he has come in the flesh. What does that mean? He has come. So it's perfect tense, which means it's not a temporary thing.

He has come and he continues. It's a permanent thing. He is still in heaven with a body. Right? When he raised from the dead, what did he show them?

Touch. He didn't say I'm flesh and blood, but he did say I'm flesh and bone. Touch. Does the spirit have body?

[24 : 51] We're raised with a body like Christ. It's still a body. Right? Spiritual body. You realize that Jesus gave up that actuality?

He took a body permanently so that we might see him? Does that blow your mind? Now, if that creates curiosity, please search the scriptures.

Make sure what I'm saying is true. And if I'm wrong, you better call me on it. You will? Okay. Anybody else? Yeah, I want to prove I'm wrong.

Please. This is about this, not me. So, come in the flesh. So, what it means, what he's emphasizing is he's flesh, that he's a human being.

That's why he started this whole letter. What was from the beginning, what we have seen, what we have heard with our ears, what we have touched and handled with our hands. Right? John talks about that.

[26 : 02] He was not a phantom. He was not just an idea. He was a real person. He was the one who was from the Father eternally. Now he became visible to us in flesh that we could see and touch and handle.

And that's who we're preaching to you. So, John went out of his way to describe this Jesus. He didn't just say Jesus. He said, this is where he came from.

This is how he did it. This is all the different ways we experienced him. So, in other words, we're eyewitnesses of him who is eternal. So, this is what he's saying here too.

And the reason why he says it this way is because at the end of the first century, there was already false teachers going around talking about it doesn't matter whether Jesus was God or not.

All that matters was, you know, we get his message of love and we all learn to get along. I didn't probably say it like that. That's how we say it today. It doesn't really matter.

[27 : 03] It's just, it's just, you know, we got to catch his spirit. He was a really good guy. We should all be like that. Why is the fact, why is John pushing this?

Why does it matter that he had, that the real Jesus came in the flesh, took a real body? We just sang that in Hark the Herald Angels thing, right? Veiled in flesh the Godhead see, right?

Hail the incarnate deity. Why is that so important? Why does that matter? Isn't it just his message that's important?

Why did he have to have a body? Gee, let's see. There's something about a cross. Could a phantom die on a cross?

John the Baptist said, behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. The only way to take away the sin of the world is to pay the actual price for the sin.

[28 : 07] And why could he pay the price? Could any of us have just paid that price? Can I die for someone else and their sins are forgiven? Why not? Why not?

Why couldn't I do it? What'd you say? I'm a dirty sinner? What'd you say? I'm worse than that. You don't know me.

I'm worse than that. Not even close. A dirty person can't die in the place of another person.

It has to be a perfect... He has to be a Lamb. Right? They had to have a Lamb that had no blemish. That was a perfect Lamb. Right? To die for their sins. But that only was symbolic because a Lamb isn't a person.

And, you know... So Jesus comes as the Lamb who on the outside wasn't without blemish because he was beaten to a pulp.

[29 : 17] And Isaiah said he wasn't much to look at. Right? He's not the blonde, brulu-eyed, you know... Well, I think he was this because, you know, he was a carpenter so he had to be buff, right?

Right? He had to be like Randy. So... But he was tempted in every way yet without sin.

So he can be the holy substitute. Why? Because he kept... He kept the commandments. He kept the Ten Commandments. He kept them. Nobody else has ever done that.

He was innocent. He was innocent. The law could not accuse him because he kept the law. Now, the Pharisees tried to catch him. Oh, you're breaking the Sabbath.

No, that's not a Sabbath thing. No. Sorry. Yeah, that's a man. That's your law. What did the original Sabbath say? Keep the Sabbath holy. What does that mean?

[30 : 17] Well, you can't walk beyond the... No, that's not what it means. No, no, no, no. So Jesus pushed them, right? But Jesus kept the law and that's why he could be the Savior.

Without flesh, Jesus could not save us. If Jesus was just a good man and a good prophet and all those kind of things that the other cults talk about who say they're Christian but are not, who say, yeah, we adopt Jesus.

He's one of our prophets. What good is that? If he's just a man who was just good and not a Savior, what good is it?

What good does it do us? We're still sinners. If he could not take our sin, we're still sinners. And we still have no hope. Who's going to die for me?

Who's going to take away my sin? I can't do that. It's way too high now. Well, if I just kind of level that out. Are you kidding me? Whose standard are we going by?

[31 : 25] Going by this standard, I'm toast. And less like today, we redefine it. Well, let's call sin and we move it over here now. Yeah, right?

Yeah, makes me more comfortable. So, do they confess Jesus? Do they confess Jesus the Savior, Christ the King, who has come in the flesh, who has come, taken a real body.

He was a real man. He really did get tired. But he was still God. He was tempted in every way, yet without sin. So, on the other side, verse 3, what if they deny Jesus or they simply don't confess him?

What if they say, it doesn't matter? You know, it's just his message of love that matters. He's a good man. He's a good example for us. Why isn't that good enough?

Why is denying Jesus as the Son of God who came to earth, I know it sounds ridiculous, doesn't it? I mean, God really come and take flesh? Can he do that?

[32 : 30] Yeah. I mean, you have to do the whole through a virgin thing. I mean, you can't just, because you have to have physical seed, you have to be a physical person, you have to come through Mary at least, and then, well, does the fact that she's a virgin make her clean?

No. But the fact that the Holy Spirit overshadowed her, right? And that's why he's the Holy Son of God? So he protects that whole process?

Is the virgin birth important? Yeah. It's very, very important. Oh, I don't think that's necessary. Well, then you lose a Holy Savior. And if you don't have a Holy Savior, you don't have a salvation.

Then you've just got what every other religion has. Try to be better. Or what Paul says, if Jesus wasn't real, then, you know, it's kind of the Ecclesiastes motto.

Right? Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow you die. I mean, do the best you can. Because if there's no hope for tomorrow, then there's, what are you doing? Go party. Go have fun.

[33 : 41] Because that's it. Yeah. So, if they deny Jesus, so they're saying, oh, it doesn't really matter.

What they fail to understand is how much it really does matter. It's a fundamental truth. If he has not died for us, if a perfect substitute has not died for us, we're still in our sin.

And I have no hope. Because I can't clean myself. I can't fix myself. My only hope is someone else. So, the Old Testament set a standard for a false prophet. It's just like what John says. Listen to this. Deuteronomy 13. It says, if a prophet or a dreamer of dreams arises among you and gives you a sign or a wonder, ooh, shows you they're powerful, right?

If they give you a sign and the wonder that he tells you comes to pass, okay, how do you know then? Because obviously he's got power. If he does a sign or a wonder and it comes to pass, that person must be from God, right?

[34 : 54] He says, if that sign comes to pass and if he says, let us go after other gods which you have not known and let us serve them, what does the Bible say?

Don't believe that prophet. Don't trust that prophet. But his sign came true. Don't trust that prophet. Just because they do miracles doesn't mean they're from God. Remember Egypt?

The magicians could copy Moses' miracles. Satan can copy that. Now, not all of them because remember in Egypt, right, certain ones, they're like, oh, can't do that one.

That's the God thing there. Can't trick you with that one. So, can't raise the dead. We can call up spirits from the dead but we can't raise the dead.

So, don't listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams. Why? For the Lord God, Lord your God is testing you. Oh. That's a test from God.

[36 : 01] To know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. To know whether you're walking after the Lord your God and you fear Him and keep His commandments and obey His voice and serve Him and hold fast to Him.

That's what He's doing. Do you really love the Lord? Do you really hold fast to the Lord? But that prophet, by the way, oh, we're not done with him. That prophet, by the way, that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death.

Ouch. Harsher punishment back then. Why? Because He has taught rebellion against the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt and redeemed you out of the house of slavery.

He's taught rebellion to make you leave the way in which the Lord your God is commanding you to walk so you purge the evil from your midst. Now, we don't still do that with false prophets, by the way.

We don't kill them. We just say, you're not welcome here. You are warned twice.

[37 : 03] By the third time, you're out because the health of the congregation is more important than that person. This congregation is not America. It's not every voice matters.

No. Nope. This is God's land. This is God's land. This is God's house. His voice matters.

So what's the test? It's not whether they can do signs. It's their message. What do they say? Let's go after other gods. Oh, no. It's the same today.

False prophets offer a different Jesus. But they're very tricky about it because they give lip service. They might even pass this first test. They might even say out loud, no, we confess Jesus Christ has come in the flesh.

They might say that. Whether they really believe that is something else. They might say that to get in. So that gets harder then. So what do we do?

[38 : 09] Well, there's another test. There's another test. He brings up in verses 4, 5, and 6. So the message, right, do they confess?

The true incarnate Jesus of the Gospels. Second test is this, or second aspect of the test is this. Does the message reflect worldly interests?

Jesus. That's where you're going to nail it because they can pass the first one, you know, kind of, they can give the lip service. Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Remember, even when Jesus was preaching, remember, the demons would pop up? Remember? And they'd say, oh, we know who you are! You're the Holy One! Jesus want that publicity?

Weren't they right? Yeah, but he didn't want them telling that story. So demons confess, right?

James says, demons believe in God.

[39 : 16] They kind of, you know, have all the evidence. They know. Like, we have evidence too, but, you know, but they recognize Him. Demons believe God and shudder.

When they saw Jesus, they were truly fearful. Are you going to send us to the pit now? Because we know that's where we're going someday. So, so a demon can lie.

A demon can say the words. So how do you tell? What's the character? Remember, Jesus said, you will know them by their fruit. If they're from a bad tree, they'll eventually have bad fruit. If you have the Holy Spirit, you will have the fruit of the Holy Spirit. You will bear it. It will come out.

It will just come out because you're abiding in Christ. You won't be able to help it. Well, you can stop it by not, you know, disconnect the branch.

[40 : 17] So, does the message reflect worldly interests? In other words, so do you remember when, remember Peter's big statement?

Remember when Peter got called the rock? Remember that? What did Peter do to get called the rock? Remember, Jesus asked him a question.

Who do people say that I am? Oh, some say Elijah, some say this, some say that. Who do you say that I am? And it's Peter. You're the man. Well, he didn't say that. You are the Christ, the Son of God.

See, Peter connected Christ and Son of God. You are Christ, the Son of God. And Jesus said, you the man, I mean, you the rock. Right?

And then Jesus said, so what's the Messiah do? Well, the Messiah's going to go to Jerusalem. He's going to be persecuted. He's going to die. He's going to, after three days, he's going to rise again. What did Peter say?

[41 : 20] Oh, no, no, no, no, no, different plan, different plan, plan B. Nope, nope, nope, can't do that one. You can't die. Nope. And what did Jesus say? Get behind me, Satan.

He goes from rock to Satan. And I bet all the other disciples are going, I'm glad it was Peter that said that. Because I was thinking the same thing.

And we know Peter wasn't evil. Peter loves Jesus. I don't want Jesus to die.

But Jesus said, I have to die. And so what did he say? So get behind me, Satan, you are thinking about what? Man's interests, God's, not God's.

You are being worldly instead of God's ways. You want the easy way, not the God way. See, God's truth is not popular.

[42 : 27] God's way is not the world's way. Right? We naturally want the easy way. I don't want the hard, who wants the hard way?

Why do I go the hard way? Because that's what my master tells me to do. And that's what my master did. How can I do this? So, does the message reflect worldly interests?

Verse 4, he mentioned, you know, he had just mentioned Antichrist in verse 3, so then he says in verse 4, little children, you are from God and have overcome them. We and them. You and them. There's two sides. You have overcome them. Who's the them? The spirits of falseness, right? The Antichrist people. The people that don't speak truth.

You've overcome them. How have I overcome them? How do I overcome false teachers? How do you overcome that? Do you go punch them out? Take out your sword like they did in the Crusades?

[43 : 34] Is that how we battle it? No, we're not in a physical battle. Right? So I overcome falseness by not believing the falseness, by recognizing it and rejecting it.

You've overcome them. What about that when it gets personal? Right? So sometimes, so what if it's not just a message that's out there? What if it's a message coming to me?

What if it's a message that comes to me that's an evil spirit that says, Christians can have that, right? Can Christians be attacked by the evil one? Absolutely. Can they be controlled by the evil one?

No, because greater is he who is in me than he who is in the world. Gotcha. But they can't attack me. They can attack me. They can shoot the flaming darts, right?

And what stops the flaming darts of the evil one? Shield of faith. Greater is he who is in me than he who is in the world. Some of those flaming darts are going to say, oh, you're a bad Christian or you're a failure.

[44 : 38] See, you're not faithful. See? Oh, you sinned again. Didn't you? You failed Jesus again. What use are you? Some of those flaming darts are going to be self-accusatory, right?

How do you fight that? Shield of faith. Remember, I love the old quote of Luther when Satan was, Luther felt this tangible, right?

Because one time, he's translating the New Testament from Latin into German so that people could actually read the Bible. And he's being attacked by Satan, just the thoughts, right?

And Satan's telling him how evil he is, how sinful. How can you be writing the scriptures? You're not worthy. You're a sinner. You're despicable. And finally, Luther gets so mad, he takes his ink bottle, throws it at the wall.

I guess you can go visit the castle there and see the ink spot. And his response to Satan was, you're right. I am a sinner. I'm worse than anything you said.

[45 : 43] But my Savior, but my Savior, shield of faith, my Savior, the shield of righteous, or the breastplate of righteousness isn't mine. He gave me his.

Because mine's useless. He gave me his. I'm righteous because of him. I'm forgiven because of him. So, throw the darts.

Not, just not a long time, but yeah. That's how we handle those. Greater is he who is in you than he who is in the world. So, how do we spot the false?

So, verse five, he gives us another clue here about worldliness. We discern their character. He says, verse five, they are from the world. These people who are false, these people who, right, are from the Antichrist.

They are from the world. Therefore, they speak from the world and the world listens to them. Kind of a worldly perspective there, right? They're from the world. They're not from God.

[46 : 48] They're from the world. They speak from the world. So, what's their message? It's going to be a worldly message. And by the way, the world listens to them. Does the world listen to God?

Does the world listen to this? No. Why? Not popular. Well, I don't like what it says.

I don't like that. Right? How did he start his whole message in 1 John? God is light. In him, there is no darkness. If we say we have fellowship with God but walk in darkness, we lie.

God is light. And what do people, how do people, Jesus was light. How do people respond to that?

Some people came to the light. Most people hate the light because the light does what?

It exposes them. Jesus said, that's why they hate me. I tell them who they are. They need to know who they are so that they can come to the light and be cleansed.

[48 : 00] Right? The world wants to talk in darkness. The world wants to hide their sin. The world wants to redefine what sin is, who Jesus is, who God is.

Why? Because they hate the light. So, when you listen to a message, they might give lip service to this is Jesus and all that.

But what's the fruit of their message? What are they aiming for? What are they telling you? Are they telling you that Jesus came, Jesus owns the cattle on a thousand hills so He can pay your debts?

He came to free you from poverty. Right? He came to free you. You can hear this on TV. You can hear this. You can see. I'm making this up.

They say this out loud. And you're kind of going, people are buying this. He came to raise you and save you from all your health problems.

[49 : 12] Does God heal people? Yes. Absolutely. All the time? No. No. Even at the end of the New Testament, Paul told Timothy, you got a bad tummy, don't you?

Drink a little wine. Why didn't he say, go get healed? Go get healed. Paul had the thorn in the flesh. He asked God three times. Please take it out. Please take it out. Please take it out. What did God say? Nope. I put that there.

Yeah, I sent an evil spirit to bring it and be the messenger, but I sent it. Why did you do that?

Because my power is perfected in your weakness.

And Paul got that and said, oh, I think I like that. Because I get glory when you are weak.

[50 : 20] And yet, I've had somebody who's from a different background. We were in a men's group years ago who's from a different teaching that we talked about that text and that person said, no, Paul didn't have enough faith.

The text said, God said no. And this man said, he didn't have enough faith.

Faith in what? God's lying? This is where they go. You take a plain piece of scripture that's absolutely clear and you twist it to say what you want it to say.

Because they don't want to believe in suffering. They don't want to believe that God puts us through suffering. Have you read the gospel? Have you read about our Savior? Have you read where he said, if the master went through it, the servant's going to go through it?

Have you read that? What? So, see, people buy into it because they want to buy into it. They want to hear that.

[51 : 29] They want to hear the message. That's a worldly interest message. They want to hear that God's, yeah, going to relieve all my problems. Yeah, God's going to take away all my consequences for bad choices. And yet, see, the world listens to the worldly message because that's what they like to hear it.

It's about man's interests. It's my itching ears to suit my passions. I don't want to deny myself. I want to promote myself.

Who wants to deny themselves? Who really wants to follow Jesus? That's a worldly person. That's just ridiculous. Deny myself, take up my cross and follow Jesus.

That doesn't sound fun at all. He's probably going to send me to some weird country and make me eat ants. Or broccoli.

Ha! How cruel! Your mom made me eat broccoli. So then he says in verse 6, so they're from the world.

[52 : 42] The world listens to them. Who listens to us? The only people, he says in verse 6, that listen to us are people who know God. People who know God. The world doesn't listen to us.

Are you surprised the world doesn't listen to us? How do we get the world to listen to us? Well, let's just tweak the message a little bit. Let's just talk about the positive stuff.

Jesus heals. Jesus forgives. Oh, I like the forgiving and the grace stuff. I love, you know, keep that, you know, forget that he said repent. He didn't really mean that. But Jesus was a friend of sinners. Jesus was around sinful people. Yeah. Yeah, he loved sinners. So how did he deal with the sinners then if he loved them?

He ate and drank with them. He was criticized. I mean, the religious people were just totally offended that he did them. How did he deal with the sinners? Do you tell them, you're okay.

[53 : 43] You're good. You don't need to change. You don't need to do anything. No, he said, come to me, all who are weary and heavy laden. Learn from me. Take my yoke.

There's something to take. And by the way, repent. Repent. Repent. Repent.

Turn around. I do love you, though. In fact, I'm going to lay down my life for you. That's how much I care about you. But if you believe in me, you'll turn around.

You'll change. And then I'm going to give you all the power to do that. So, those who know God welcome his truth, they listen to it, they embrace it.

Is that you? When you hear this kind of message that the world doesn't like, do you embrace it? Do you embrace it? Even though it's kind of like, ow, hard, you still know it's right.

[54 : 57] Jesus said, my sheep hear my voice. They hear my voice. And his message is not about advancing me, it's about advancing him.

And the world's not interested in that. And preachers who don't advance Jesus but want to advance you, that's a sign that they're false. If they stir up in you coveting, if they stir up in you a desire for the easy way, okay, if they stir up in you a way to escape, that's a sign.

That's a sign. They may have made a misstatement, so had grace on me if I do that, right, but check it out. But if they're saying that all the time, get away from that, get away from that.

But they have some helpful thing, get away from that. Just get away from that. Overcome it by recognizing it and dismissing it. Okay? Don't keep listening to it because they will wear on you.

So, why do some people listen to the truth and otherwise? Let's just hear Jesus' simple explanation. In Matthew 13, Jesus explains why people, why most people can't or won't hear the truth.

[56 : 21] So, here's what Jesus says in Matthew 13. He says, this is why I speak to them in parables. Because, seeing, they don't see, and hearing, they don't hear, nor do they understand.

Indeed, in their case, the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled that says, you will indeed hear, but never understand. You will indeed see, but never perceive.

Why? For this people's heart has grown dull, and with their ears, they can barely hear, and with their eyes, their eyes they've closed.

Why? Lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and what?

Turn. Repent. And I heal them. Oh, that'd be the worst thing if I turned and I got healed. Wow.

[57 : 22] Then he tells the parable of the sower. He's talking about hearing. Now he's going to tell about the parable of the sower. Four different kinds of hearers, okay? Hear then the parable of the sower.

When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart.

It did make it into his heart. Some initial surface. This is what was sown along the path. As for that which was sown on the rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy.

Oh, there's a convert, right? Yet, he has no root in himself but endures for a while and when tribulation and persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away.

Okay? As for the one sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke out the word and it proves unfruitful.

[58 : 31] Okay, three down. Any one of these catch? As for what was sown on good soil, oh, this has got to be good. This is the one who hears the word and understands it.

He indeed bears fruit and yields. In one case, a hundredfold, another 60, another 30, another 5, whatever. That's me, 5.

So what's the point? Each one hear the word. When the word goes out, it's always, it's heard.

What's done with it? What happens to it? Well, one is snatched away immediately by the evil one.

One falls away because it's too hard. So they leave. Another one is deceived away by the cares and riches of the world and then one endures because they get it.

They receive it and they bear fruit and fruit's the only way you know if it's real. those who don't hear, they don't hear because they don't want to hear it.

[59 : 49] It's not as if the Pharisees didn't understand what Jesus was saying but they didn't want to hear it. It's not as if the world doesn't understand what we're saying and they don't want to hear it. They don't want to hear it.

They close their ears lest they really understand it and see and have to turn and repent and get healed.

I don't want to get healed. I want to fix myself. Jesus uses parables. I was always taught growing up Jesus uses parables to make, he's telling stories to clarify the truth.

That's not what Jesus said. Jesus, I use parables to hide the truth. I use parables to test people. I'm testing them to see if they really want to hear.

Remember when we went through the book of Mark, remember he was always, he had an inner circle and an outer circle, remember? And the inner circle was the people that came and said, okay, you told that parable, I want you to explain it now.

[60 : 57] Okay, I don't get it. That's the inner group because they're seeking to understand. I want to get it. I didn't get that. Help me understand that.

They want to know. They want to learn. The other's just like, oh, this parable, I don't know what to do. Well, parables are easy to kind of totally twist and tell what you want to, see, that one's about riches.

You know, you use the talent and then you get more talents and yeah, woohoo, I get rich. Yeah, right, that's what Jesus was talking about. Parables are about who's really listening, who's really seeking to understand, who really wants to know.

and today, not many. Not many. Do they still do seeker services in places?

Are people still seeking? Well, a lot of seekers, careful, I guess, huh? A lot of times the seeker services are designed for worldly people, right?

[62 : 04] So, give them what they want. Problem is, you got to keep giving them what they want. Do you ever get to the truth? Huh? What are seeker churches?

Seeker. Not secret. Those are in China. That's the martyr folks. They actually really want to go to church because they could die for it.

Those are real believers. Okay. Which message are you interested in? Which message are you seeking? You want one that makes you feel better but doesn't heal you?

Or do you want one sometimes it's hard to swallow but you know it's absolutely true and it will heal you. It will heal you. Which one do you want?

Let's pray. Father, we thank you for your word. Thank you for John who's just just tells the truth.

And Father, we recognize that in this day and age if people of the world heard what was said today they would be very, very offended.

[63 : 18] And they would hate us. Well, that's probably the way it's not probably. That is how you designed it. Help us to be fearless. Help us to care about truth.

But help us to do it for the right reason, Father. Not to pick a battle. Not to be judgmental. But to be faithful to you.

And to make sure that those that we listen to are faithful to you. This we pray in Christ's name.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Thank you.