

**Text: 1 John 4:1-21**

Section 1

*1Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. 2By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; 3and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world. 4You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world. 5They are from the world; therefore they speak as from the world, and the world listens to them. 6We are from God; he who knows God listens to us; he who is not from God does not listen to us By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error. (1 John 4:1-6)*

We ended last time by discussing this passage as a cross-reference to the one being studied, so it should be somewhat familiar. Here John is concerned about the proliferation of heretical teachers and doctrines in the young Church, particularly those that taught only a “spiritual” Christ, rather than one that actually came to earth to live, and die, and rise again in corporeal form. This is amazing considering that eyewitnesses to the physical Christ were still alive at the time, and openly defies the Scriptures that teach that our Lord was born in a very human manner, and even after His Resurrection He still had a tangible, physical body.

**1Now in those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus, that a census be taken of all the inhabited earth. 2This was the first census taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. 3And everyone was on his way to register for the census, each to his own city. 4Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, 5in order to register along with Mary, who was engaged to him, and was with child. 6While they were there, the days were completed for her to give birth. 7And she gave birth to her firstborn son; and she wrapped Him in cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. 8In the same region there were some shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night. 9And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened.10But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; 11for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. 12" This will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." 13And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying,**

**14"Glory to God in the highest,**

**And on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased."**

**15When the angels had gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds began saying to one another, "Let us go straight to Bethlehem then, and see this thing that has happened which the Lord has made known to us." 16So they came in a hurry and found their way to Mary and Joseph, and the baby as He lay in the manger.17When they had seen this, they made known the statement which had been told them about this Child.18And all who heard it wondered at the things which were told them by the shepherds.19But Mary treasured all these things, pondering them in her heart. 20The shepherds went back, glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen, just as had been told them. (Luke 2:1-20)**

**36While they were telling these things, He Himself stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace be to you." 37But they were startled and frightened and thought that they were seeing a spirit. 38And He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? 39"See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have." 40And when He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet. 41While they still could not believe it because of their joy and amazement, He said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?" 42They gave Him a piece of a broiled fish; 43and He took it and ate it before them. (Luke 24:36-43)**

More generally, how do we tell God’s true servants apart from those false teachers? We look to those that teach what the Scriptures say: about God the Father, about Christ, about ourselves, about salvation—everything. It is ALL God’s Word.

**16All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; 17so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16-17)**

Not only is all of Scripture God’s Word, but He is not going to send any “new” or “later” revelations that abrogate part or all of revealed Scripture. Fulfill? Yes—we know that portions of the Old Testament were fulfilled in the New and rendered no longer binding in their original sense. Abrogate (or change or cancel)? No. God does not change, and therefore neither does His Word!

**6"For I, the LORD, do not change; therefore you, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed. (Malachi 3:6)**

Why are false teachers successful? Because they tend to preach what unregenerate Man wants to hear. We must always take care to be discerning, heeding only those teachers that teach the whole counsel of God, not those that **tickle** our ears.

**I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: 2preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. 3For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, 4and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths. (2 Timothy 4:1-4)**

## Section 2

*7Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. 8The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. 9By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. 10In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. 11Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. 12No one has seen God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us. (1 John 4:7-12)*

So we are to love God and love one another. This shouldn't be surprising, as our Lord Himself identified these as the greatest commands of the Law, and indeed a summary of the entire teaching of the Bible.

**37And He said to him, "'YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.' 38'This is the great and foremost commandment. 39'The second is like it, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.' 40'On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets." (Matthew 22:37-40)**

More specifically, we as Christians are to love our fellow believers. This means first of all that we will prefer the company of Christians to that of others, and look forward to our weekly meetings together for fellowship, encouragement, admonition, and edification.

**23Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; 24and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, 25not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near. (Hebrews 10:23-25)**

Love is not just a feeling, though—it shows itself in action. Our Lord demonstrated His great love for us by dying for us. He told us that to **lay down** one's **life for his friends** is the greatest love a man can have. This might mean literally dying for another person, though the principle also extends to the giving of our possessions and provisions so that the needs of our brethren can be met, much as the early Church did as described in Acts 4.

**12'This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. 13'Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. 14'You are My friends if you do what I command you. (John 15:12-14)**

**32And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul; and not one of them claimed that anything belonging to him was his own, but all things were common property to them. 33And with great power the apostles were giving testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and abundant grace was upon them all. 34For there was not a needy person among them, for all who were owners of land or houses would sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales 35and lay them at the apostles' feet, and they would be distributed to each as any had need. (Acts 4:32-35)**

God, of course, amazingly demonstrated such love for us by sending the Lord Jesus Christ to die in our place. He did this not because there was anything worthy in us, but out of pure, unmerited favor. Think about how dirty your sin is before a holy God, and then think of how awesome His mercy is, that He has saved you from the due punishment for your sin. Then, fall on your knees and thank Him for His tremendous mercy and love!

**8But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8)**

Earlier we read that Christ commanded His followers to love one another. When we are obedient to this and other commands that He has given us we are confirmed in the faith, knowing that we abide in Him, and He in us.

**10'If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. 11'These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full. (John 15:10-11)**

### Section 3

*13By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. 14We have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world. 15Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. 16We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. (1 John 4:13-16)*

Besides our love for one another, we have the inner testimony of the indwelling Holy Spirit that we are God's Children. What a wonderful thing it is to be led, taught, encouraged, and comforted by the Spirit of God Himself!

**14For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. 15For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!" 16The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, 17and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him. (Romans 8:14-17)**

John says *We have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world.* Each of us has a testimony regarding God's working in our own lives, but the Apostles had even more—they had actually seen the risen Christ. In fact, LOTS of people had seen Him, and this was and is powerful evidence regarding the truth of Christianity.

**16For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty. (2 Peter 1:16)**

**1Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, 2by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. 3For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, 5and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. 6After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep; 7then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles; 8and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also. (1 Corinthians 15:1-7)**

When we confess Jesus is the Son of God—in effect, as Lord and God—we are saved!

**9that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; 10for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. 11For the Scripture says, "WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED." 12For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call on Him; 13for "WHOEVER WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED." (Romans 10:9-13)**

### Section 4

*17By this, love is perfected with us, so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment; because as He is, so also are we in this world. 18There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love. (1 John 4:17-18)*

*Because as He is, so also are we in this world.* What does that mean? It means we can be confident in facing judgment because the indwelling Holy Spirit has made us increasingly like Him. As I have said so often, “check your fruits!” There are two lists in Galatians 5, and we need to be like the second one. If the first one looks more like our lives, then we have some unconfessed sin to deal with...and perhaps have not yet been “born again.”

**17For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. 18But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law. 19Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, 20idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, 21envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. 22But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. 24Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. (Galatians 5:17-25)**

The Gospel is a miraculously simple thing—we just read a summary of it in five verses—and we should not present it to those we wish to see converted in a way that is unnecessarily convoluted. However, as we mature in the faith we must come to see that salvation really is at least a five-part event. Three of these happen instantaneously when we are saved: we are regenerated by the Holy

Spirit, we are justified legally before God, and we are adopted into His family. The next part, sanctification, is a lifelong process of continuing and increasing conformity to Christ's Character. If this is not present in our lives, then we have reason to doubt our salvation, and Peter therefore warned his readers to **be diligent** in performing the works that were commensurate with a true salvation experience. If the only evidence in your life that you are saved is that you "made a decision" or "prayed a prayer" or "filled out a card" or anything else past like that, and you don't have any continuing obedience and growth to indicate that you are a child of God, you very likely need to be saved—repent and believe today!

(The last part of salvation, glorification, does not occur until the Final Resurrection.)

**1Simon Peter, a bond-servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ: 2Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; 3seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. 4For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust. 5Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, 6and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness, 7and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. 8For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins.10Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; 11for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you. (2 Peter 1:1-11)**

### Section 5

*19We love, because He first loved us. 20If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. 21And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also. (1 John 4:19-21)*

God loved us first, even when we were dirty, filthy, unlovable sinners. In fact, He chose us before the foundation of the world to be His People! Not only that, He causes us to be **conformed to the image of His Son**. This is one reason that we cannot claim to love God if we do not love the brethren: if the brethren are conformed to the image of Christ and we don't love them, we can't possibly love God either! If we love God, we must also love His People.

**28And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. 29For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; 30and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified. (Romans 8:28-30)**