

1 John Chapter 4

1. Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

A. Beloved- Gr. **agapetos**

B. do not believe every spirit,

1. believe- Gr. **pisteuo**- *to trust, rely upon*

2. spirit- Gr. **pneuma**- *The word as used here refers to "one in whom a spirit is manifest or embodied, hence one actuated by a spirit, whether divine or demonical" (Thayer). Paul finds the source of false doctrine in demons who actuate the false teachers who propound heresy- Wuest Word Studies*

C. but test the spirits,

1. **tests-** Gr. **dokimazo**

a. You test prophets and prophecy by the Word of God and the fruit. [Isa. 8:20](#), [Matt. 7:16](#)

2. **spirits-**

a. *Which presents itself in the person of a prophet. The Spirit of truth, and the spirit of error, speak by men's spirits as their organs. There is but one Spirit of truth, and one spirit of Antichrist. -JFB Commentary*

D. whether they are of God,

1. Not every spirit, prophet, or prophecy is from God. Not everything that glitters is gold.

E. because many false prophets have gone out into the world

1. **false prophets-** Gr. **psuedoprophetes**

a. Here we see John is speaking of prophets who are either motivated by the Spirit of God or evil spirits.

2. **gone out-** Gr. **exerchomai**

a. These spirits come from the spirit realm and move out into the world to do the bidding of either God or Satan.

b. Jesus sends out his messengers into the world with the truth of the good news. Satan also sends out his emissaries with false messages to deceive.

3. **world-** Gr. **kosmos**

a. This is the battle ground. Satan took over the world through

Adam's submission to him. Although Jesus has legally received the authority of the earth back He will not occupy it in full until He returns.

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

A. By this you know the Spirit of God;

1. **know-** Gr. **ginosko-** *to know by experience or relationship*

2. Spirit of God

a. Only a Christian has the Holy Spirit in them. The Holy Spirit bears witness to both the deity and humanity of Jesus. [1 Cor. 12:3](#), [1 John 4:2](#)

[12:3](#), [1 John 4:2](#)

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

1. **spirit-** Gr. **pneuma**

2. **confesses-** Gr. **homologeō-** *to say the same thing, acknowledge, to share a common view or be of a common mind about a matter, agree*

a. The Holy Spirit says Jesus Christ came in the flesh. It is up to us to say the same thing. If a prophet or prophecy says differently they and it is not from God.

3. **come-** Gr. **erchomai**

a. This is what makes Christianity different than all religions. Our savior came to us! In all other religions you must try to go to God yourself and reconcile yourself. Jesus came to us and reconciled us to God. This is grace and love in action!

b. This is in the perfect tense. He has permanently come in the flesh and will remain the God-man throughout eternity.

4. **flesh-** Gr. **sarx**

a. Jesus took part in flesh and blood so that He could destroy the devil.

b. Jesus had to take on flesh to be our proper representative.

c. Jesus had to be born of a human woman so that he can be connected to the human tree in order to redeem us all at once.

d. The fall came through a man, so salvation had to be wrought also by a man.

e. The Gnostics taught that Jesus did not come in a physical

body, but only appeared so. They taught the physical matter is evil so the Savior would not take on a human physical form and be defiled by it. This is false of course.

3. and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the *spirit* of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world.

A. and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God.

1. **spirit-** Gr. **pneuma**

a. Again this refers to a prophet or a prophecy.

2. **confess-** Gr. **homologeō**

3. **come-** Gr. **erchomai**

4. **flesh-** Gr. **sarx**

B. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist,

1. **Antichrist-** Gr. **antichristos**

a. The spirit of antichrist is against the person of Christ and His work.

C. which you have heard was coming,

1. **heard-** Gr. **akouō**

2. **coming-** Gr. **erchomai**

a. There is a literal antichrist coming. He is also called the Beast in revelation.

D. and is now already in the world

1. **world-** Gr. **kosmos**

a. The spirit of antichrist has been present during the church age and will culminate in the literal person called the Antichrist.

4. You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.

A. You are of God,

1. This means they were born of God.

B. little children- Gr. **teknion**

C. and have overcome them,

1. **overcome-** Gr. **nikao-** *to carry off the victory, to conquer, when one*

is arraigned or goes to law, to win the case, maintain one's cause

- a. We overcome by faith in the truth of who Jesus Christ is and what He has done. [Rom 8:37](#) We overcome by the new birth and our faith in Jesus. [1 John 5:4-5](#)

2. them

- a. This refers to the false teachers and prophets.

D. because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.

1. he

- a. John goes from the word "them" to the word "he". There is a he behind them. Satan is the he that is inspiring them- the false prophets.

2. greater- Gr. meizon

- a. The anointing of the Holy Spirit teaches us the truth by which we overcome when we believe it.
- b. The truth is always greater and stronger than a lie.
- c. A person armed with truth is never at a disadvantage against a person with a lie.

2. world- Gr. kosmos

- a. Ultimately, this means that the Spirit of Christ in us is greater than Satan who is the source of the antichrist spirit and the false prophets. [Eph 2:2](#)
- b. This shows that the power Satan has is found in the lies he spreads, if indeed they are believed.

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

A. They are of the world

1. they

- a. John goes from the word "he" now to the word "they". This shows Satan is the spirit that is inspiring the false teachers and prophets of his day.

2. world- Gr. kosmos

- a. This means the false teachers are not born again from above. They are natural men of this world.

b. It is sad when there are unregenerate people serving and ministering to and in the body of Christ. This was happening in the days John lived and sadly it is happening now.

B. Therefore they speak of the world,

1. speak- Gr. **laleo**

a. The false prophets speak what they have heard, but their source of their hearing is not the Spirit of God, but another spirit. This is called the spirit of the world. [1Co 2:12](#)

C. and the world hears them

1. hears- Gr. **akouo**

a. Just because a speaker or a message is wildly popular does it mean they or it are of God.

b. What is greatly prized by the world is an abomination to God. [Luke 16:15](#)

c. These prophets preached a natural carnal message that was readily accepted by natural men. The natural man cannot receive the things of the Spirit because they are spiritually discerned. [1 Cor. 2:14](#)

d. A natural man considers the things of the Spirit as foolishness, and a spiritual man considers the things of the natural man foolishness likewise.

6. We are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

A. We are of God

1. We

a. John goes from using the words "he" and "they" to using the word "we". "We" speaks of born-again Christians.

2. of God

a. Christians are of God. This means they are born of God.

B. He who knows God hears us,

1. knows- Gr. **ginosko-** *know by experience or relationship*

2. hears- Gr. **akouo**

a. [Joh 8:47](#)

C. he who is not of God does not hear us.

1. not of God

- a. They are not born-again.
- b. A true prophet will hear and acknowledge the authority of the Scriptures. [1Co 14:37](#)

D. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error

1. know- Gr. **ginosko**

- a. We can only know the spirit of truth by having a relationship with God through His Word.

2. spirit- Gr. **pneuma**

3. truth- Gr. **aletheia**

- a. This is the Holy Spirit. He is the Spirit of truth. [Joh 14:17](#); [Joh 15:26](#); [Joh 16:13](#)

4. error- Gr. **plane**

- a. This is the spirit of the world and antichrist.
- b. The spirit of error, the world, and antichrist are one in the same.

7. Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.

A. Beloved- Gr. **agapetos**

- 1. John uses this word "beloved" five times in this letter. Five is the number of grace. God's love for us does not come from our own performance but purely out of the grace and mercy of God.

B. let us love one another,

1. love- Gr. **agape**

- a. Jesus new command of love added the component- "as I have loved you". The OT command was to love others "as you love yourself". We can only love others with the resource of God's love that has been freely given to us first.

C. for love is of God,

- 1. Agape love is from God as a source. We can only love others from the love we have first received from God. We love because He first loved us. [1 John 4:19](#)

D. and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.

1. loves- Gr. **agapao**

a. We love others from the love shed abroad in our heart by the Holy Spirit when we got born again. [Rom. 5:5](#)

2. born- Gr. **gennao**

a. We must be born again to have the capacity to receive the love of God.

3. knows- Gr. **ginosko**- to know by experience or relationship

1. Please note that you must first be born of God in order to know God. Those who have not been born again do not know God. They may have knowledge about God, but they do not know Him.

8. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

A. He who does not love does not know God,

1. love- Gr. **agape**

2. know- Gr. **ginosko**

a. In the previous verse we saw that you must first be born of God to know God. If someone does not know God, it is because they have not been born of God.

B. for God is love

a. It does not say God has love. It says God is love. He can't not love and be Himself. The cornerstone of love though is choice. Some choose to reject Him and suffer the consequences.

b. Some say how could a God of love send someone to hell. First of all, God sends no one to hell. They send themselves by rejecting the only source of salvation that was freely offered to them- Jesus Christ. In doing this they reject God. To reject God, you end up with the absence of God. This my friend is hell. Hell is the absence of all comfort and peace. It is a place where the absence of God is experienced- pain and torment. The absence of heat is cold. The absence of peace is torment. The absence of comfort is pain. The absence of God is hell. No one has to go to hell. They can choose salvation through Jesus Christ.

9. In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him.

A. In this the love of God was manifested toward us,

1. love- Gr. **agape**

2. manifested- Gr. **phaneroo**

a. Many want God to show them that He loves them. However, this love is manifested in that Jesus Christ, God's only begotten Son, was sent to die for their sins so that they might live through Him. [Rom. 5:8](#)

b. Many want to experience God's love, but they put themselves into the equation wanting to qualify for His love. God's love was seen towards us before we were ever born. This takes our performance or worthiness totally out of it. God loves us because He is love and we are in the Son of His love.

c. If you want to experience God's love then place your meditation on Christ and what He did for you at the cross. Only in this will you experience the love of God manifested to you and in you.

B. that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world,

1. sent- Gr. **apostello-** *to send forth with authority*

a. The word "sent" here speaks of the pre-existence of Jesus Christ.

b. Jesus is the apostle and High Priest of our confession. [Heb. 3:1](#)

2. only begotten- Gr. **monogenes**

a. Jesus Christ was eternally begotten of the Father having no beginning nor end.

b. Jesus is called the only begotten, but those who accept Jesus as Lord and Savior are born of Him. [1 Pet. 1:3](#) Our new birth is not seen separate from Christ, for we are born-again in Him, sharing His eternal life. We are not God or Divine, but we are partakers of the divine nature through Christ. [2 Pet. 1:4](#)

c. We are called the church of the Firstborn. [Heb. 12:23](#)

d. He is our head, and we are His body. [Col. 1:18](#)

3. Son- Gr. **huios**

4. **world-** Gr. **kosmos**

- a. This speaks of those not born-again. They are unbelievers.
- b. This is a sister verse to [John 3:16](#), also written by John.

C. **that we might live through Him**

1. **live-** Gr. **zao**

- a. The life we are given is the very eternal life that Jesus Christ possesses. He shares it with us. We are not the source of it, but we are the receivers and possessors of it.

2. **through Him-** Gr. **dia autos**

- a. Eternal life can only be experienced through Christ. [John 17:3](#), [Col 3:4](#) He shares everything He is and has with us as co-heirs with Him. [Rom. 8:17](#)

10. **In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.**

A. **In this is love,**

1. **love-** Gr. **agape**

- a. We need to see God's love in the person and work of Jesus. It is the only stable foundation for God's love to us. It is unchanging. If you relate God's love to your circumstances or behavior, then God's love will seem to wax and wane like waves of the sea and the tides.

B. **not that we loved God,**

1. **loved-** Gr. **agapao**

- a. God loved us when we did not love Him. The world's kind of love will not love someone that does not love them.

C. **but that he loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.**

1. **loved**

- a. [John 3:16](#)

2. **sent-** Gr. **apostello**

3. **propitiation-** Gr. **hilasmos-** *to expiate, atone, an appeasing, satisfaction, propitiating, atoning sacrifice, sin offering*

- a. Propitiation means to bring satisfaction. What did the blood and death of Jesus satisfy? It satisfies the divine justice that

had been broken by sin and the subsequent wrath that broken justice had incurred.

b. This word means to expiate- *To atone for; to make satisfaction for; to extinguish the guilt of a crime by subsequent acts of piety or worship, by which the obligation to punish the crime is canceled. To expiate guilt or a crime, is to perform some act which is supposed to purify the person guilty; or some act which is accepted by the offended party as satisfaction for the injury; that is, some act by which his wrath is appeased, and his forgiveness procured.* -Webster's Dictionary

4. sins- Gr. **hamartano**

a. Jesus both died to sin [singular] and paid the penalty for our sins [plural]. [Rom. 6:10](#), [1 Pet. 2:24](#)

11. **Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.**

A. **Beloved-** Gr. **agapetos**

1. Again, another example of the use of a term of endearment before giving a strong exhortation.
2. People often need to be told they are loved before they are told they are wrong. There is a problem when we tell people they are wrong but don't tell them we love them. Also, it is a problem if we only tell people we love them and not tell them they are wrong when it is needed.
3. This word is used around 25 times in connection to a corrective word or exhortation in the NT.

B. **if God so loved us,**

1. **loved-** Gr. **agapao**

C. **we also ought to love one another**

1. **ought-** Gr. **opheilo-** *that which is due, the debt*

- a. Vertical gifts from God become a stewardship horizontally. [1 Pet. 4:10](#)
- b. A stewardship is something that becomes an obligation. We are not obligated to pay God back for His gifts, but these gifts become a stewardship given to us to bless those around us with.

c. The chief gift we have received from God is His love. We are to steward this love to those around us.

12. No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us.

A. No one has seen God at time

1. **seen-** Gr. **theaomai-** *to behold, look upon, view attentively, contemplate (often used of public shows)*

a. This speaks of seeing God the Father in his full face. No mortal can see the face of God and live. [Exo 33:20](#) Only Jesus has beheld the face of God the Father. [Joh 1:18](#)

b. In the OT it says people saw God, even face to face. [Gen 32:30](#), [Exo 24:10](#) However, in these instances it was the pre-incarnate appearances of Jesus Christ who is the visible member of the God-head.

c. God the Father is invisible. [1Ti 6:16](#), [1Ti 1:17](#)

B. If we love one another,

C. God abides in us,

1. **abides-** Gr. **meno**

a. Abide is a relationship term.

b. Loving others with agape love is proof that God is present, for God is love. No one can love others with the agape love of God if God is not present in them.

D. and His love has been perfected in us

1. **perfected-** Gr. **teleioo-** *to bring to completion, to accomplish, finish*

a. The goal of God's love is not just that you are loved. No, the end goal is that love to be shared with others, so they can receive it as well.

b. God's love needs to go from vertical to horizontal.

c. This is like the giving of the Spirit which vertically it is a well of water, but then horizontally it becomes rivers of water to others.

13. By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit.

A. By this we know that we abide in Him,

1. **know-** Gr. **ginosko-** *to know by experience or relationship*

a. John talks about knowing 43 times in this short letter. It is crucial what we know. Ignorance of God's Word is a killer!

2. **abide-** Gr. **meno**

a. John uses this word 23 times in this letter. Knowing is key to abiding. You can't abide where you don't know.

B. and He in us,

1. We are the temple of the Holy Spirit. [1 Cor. 6:19](#)

C. because He has given us of His Spirit

1. **given-** Gr. **didomi**

a. This is a permanent gift. The Spirit of God will abide with us forever. [John 14:16](#)

2. **Spirit-** Gr. **pneuma**

a. An unbeliever does not have the Spirit of God in them. [Rom. 8:9](#)

14. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son *as* Savior of the world.

A. **seen-** Gr. **theaomai-** *to behold, look upon, view attentively, contemplate (often used of public shows)*

B. **testify-** Gr. **murtureo**

C. **sent-** Gr. **apostello-** *to send with authority*

1. Again, this speaks of the pre-existence of the Lord Jesus Christ. This reveals He is God.

D. **Son-** Gr. **huios**

E. **Savior-** Gr. **soter**

1. He is the Savior of the world in that He is the only one who could and did provide redemption for all mankind for all time. This does not mean all people are automatically saved.

F. **world-** Gr. **kosmos**

1. Jesus was sent to save **all of the world**, not just a select number [the elect] who would accept it as Calvinists teach. [1Jn 2:1-2](#); [Joh 1:29](#), [Joh 3:16-17](#), [Joh 4:42](#), [Joh 12:47](#), [1 Tim. 4:10](#), [Heb. 2:9](#)
Calvinism is an error.

2. This verse is used by Universalists that say everyone is saved because Jesus died for everyone. This also is an error. One must accept Christ by faith in order to be saved. [Eph. 2:8-9](#)

3. This verse needs to be taken in context with the next verse which states that one must confess Jesus for God to abide in him, and he in God.

4. *The expression, "the Savior of the world" has a reference to the fact that the Roman emperor was called sōtēr tou kosmou, "Savior of the world." The Samaritan men also have the above in mind when they say to the woman, "We have heard Him ourselves, and know that this is the Christ, the Savior of the world" ([Joh 4:42](#)). Emperor worship was the state religion of the Roman Empire, and the binding factor that united its far-flung, heterogeneous subject-peoples together in a union stronger than that of any military force. To recognize our Lord as the Savior of the world instead of the Emperor was a capital offence, for such recognition was a blow at the very vitals of the Empire. That was the quarrel which Rome had against Christianity, and that was the reason for the bloody persecutions. - Wuest Word Studies*

15. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.

A. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God,

1. confesses- Gr. homologeo

a. Here we see that the previous statement in the last verse must be taken in context with this verse. One must confess Jesus in order to be saved. [1 John 1:9](#)

2. Son of God

a. This is a term of divinity.

b. This is similar to [Rom. 10:9-10](#), where it says if we confess Jesus is Lord [divine title] and believe He was raised from the

dead we will be saved.

B. God abides in him,

1. abides- Gr. meno

a. The Father abiding in us is contingent upon us receiving Christ. You can't have the Father without Christ. The Gnostics were teaching you could have God without Jesus.

C. and he in God

1. We abide in God through our faith in Jesus Christ His Son.

16. And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him.

A. And we have known and believed the love that God has for us

1. known- Gr. ginosko- to know by experience or relationship

a. You first must know about the love of God before you can believe it.

2. believed- Gr. pisteuo- to be persuaded

a. We all need to be persuaded of the love of God for us. We can only be persuaded of this when we look at Jesus giving up His life for us on the cross.

b. Many know about the love of God, but they have not believed in God's love for them. Look at Jesus on the cross and believe!

3. love- Gr. agape

B. God is love,

1. God does not merely have love, He is love.

C. and he who abides in love abides in God,

1. abides- Gr. meno

a. Abiding in love does not make us abide in God but abiding in God makes us abide in love.

D. and God in him

1. God abides in us through His Spirit.

17. Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the

day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world.

A. Love has been perfected among us in this

1. **perfected**- Gr. **teleioo**- *to carry through completely, to accomplish, finish, bring to an end*

a. Love is perfected when we love others. We will not love others if we are under a load of condemnation and guilt. We usually reflect on others how we feel about ourselves in our heart. Those who are full of criticism and judgment feel condemned and guilty themselves.

B. that we may have boldness in the day of judgment,

1. **boldness**- Gr. **parrhesia**- *all out-spokenness, freedom to speak*

2. **day**- Gr. **hemera**

3. **judgment**- Gr. **krisis**

a. There awaits a day of judgment for believers. However, it is not a judgment for our sins. Jesus once and for all was judged for our sins on the cross. This will be a judgment upon our works to determine our reward. [1 Cor. 3:10-15](#)

b. Just as Jesus is approved by God, so we are we because we are in Him having His righteousness both imputed and imparted to us. [2 Cor. 5:21](#)

C. because as He is,

1. We are just like Jesus in our born-again spirit. We have His DNA [sperma] in our born-again spirit.

2. We are created in Christ in true righteousness and holiness. [Eph. 4:24](#)

D. so are we in this world.

1. **world**- Gr. **kosmos**

a. This verse does not say we will be like Jesus some day in heaven. No, it says as He is so are we now in this world!

b. Many Christians are trying to get a glimpse of who they are in Christ. They are looking the wrong direction. They need to look to see how Christ is right now, and then they will know exactly how they are right now.

18. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.

A. There is no fear in love;

1. **fear-** Gr. **phobos-** *dread, terror*

a. This word denotes a cringing fear. A better term for this is to “be afraid”.

b. There is a good type of fear which is reverential respect and awe of God.

2. **love-** Gr. **agape**

a. God is love. This means there is no fear in God. We are in God, so we should not have fear in us! [2Ti 1:7](#)

B. but perfect love casts out fear,

1. **perfect-** Gr. **teleios-** *fully accomplished, fully developed*

a. When God's love is fully developed in us we will see just how perfectly Jesus has met every facet of divine justice in our behalf. There will be no fear of judgment left.

2. **casts out-** Gr. **ballo exo-** *to throw out*

a. This is a forceful word. Fear is not pushed out by God's love. It is thrown out on the seat of its pants!

C. because fear involves torment.

1. **torment-** Gr. **kolasis-** *correction, punishment, penalty*

a. We have been delivered from hell [Hades], the place of torment. [1 Cor. 15:55](#)

D. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.

1. **made perfect-** Gr. **teleioo**

a. If we live in fear we have an incomplete understanding of what Jesus has done for us at the cross.

19. We love Him because He first loved us.

A. love- Gr. **agape**

1. God is the initiator of all things. We do not initiate anything in respect to God. He was the first mover, and we are the responder. He loved us before we were around. His love precedes us. [Jer 31:3](#)

2. Grace [God's initiation] always precedes our faith [our response].

B. first- Gr. protos

1. God's love is the cause for our love. It is both the cause and the resource to love.
2. If you have a problem loving, it is because you have a problem receiving love first.

20. If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?

A. If someone says,

1. A professor does not make a possessor.

B. I love God,

1. love- Gr. agape

C. and hates his brother,

1. hates- Gr. miseo
2. brother- Gr. adelphos
 - a. Fellow believer

D. he is a liar,

1. liar- Gr. psuestes
 - a. This person is of the devil, who is the father of lies.

E. for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen,

1. seen- Gr. horao
 - a. To love someone we can see, we must first receive love from God whom we don't see. Loving someone who we see is proof we have received love from the One who we can't see.

F. how can he love God whom he has not seen

1. This is not talking about receiving God's love but loving Him. If we don't love someone we can see, we won't love someone we can't see.

21. And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God *must* love his brother also.

A. And this commandment we have from Him,

1. commandment- Gr. entole

a. Jesus commanded this during His earthly ministry. [Joh 15:17](#)

B. that he who loves God must love his brother also.

1. You can't just have a vertical relationship with God without it affecting the horizontal relationships around you.