



Back to Genesis 3:1-5...

...and the first temptation –

What happened at that very first temptation?

So, what did the serpent introduce in v. 1?

- Confusion, doubt – “did God *actually* say...”

How about 4?

- Contradiction – what God said was wrong: “You will not surely die...” echoing God’s words from 2:17, probably with a bit of a sneer.

And then v. 5?

- Well, we have to stick with *con* words, so we’ll say this: contortion...truth all twisted up.

What Satan always tries to do with God's words:

- Confuse, contradict, and contort.

The very first temptation began with an attempt to confuse their understanding of God's clear words, to contradict His clearly revealed will, and to twist and contort His clear meaning.

- And the strategy has never changed. It was devastatingly effective then, and it still is now.

Ok—we know that, we've been over that several times. Why, if we're going through the short letter of 2 John, are we starting back in Gen. 3 with all of this stuff about the first temptation?

Remember back to what we covered in the first lesson on 2 John...

He writes to a local church, somewhere near Ephesus, late in the 1st century, because, as a shepherd, he has a concern for their souls.

The letter's main theme: It is the genuine love for one another among believers, in obedience to the command of God, that is critical in preventing the influence of false teaching to spread in the church.

Notice John's concern again in v. 7: he talks of the reality of deceivers, he exposes the core of their deception, and he identifies them: the antichrist.

Here's the outline we're using for 2 John:

- v. 1-3 ~ John's greeting to the church he loves:
Grace, mercy, and peace
- v. 4-6 ~ John's request of the church he loves:
love one another
- v. 7-11 ~ John's concern for the church he loves:
watch yourselves
- v. 12-13 ~ John's desire for the church he loves:
that their joy may be complete

Ok—back to the question: why, if we're going through the short letter of 2 John, are we starting back in Gen. 3 with all of this stuff about the first temptation?

Let's take a look at 1 John 4:1-6 ~

How does John characterize false teachers here?

- *As spirits*—the false prophets who have gone out into the world are under the influence of “the spirit of the antichrist.”
- John reminds the saints to be discerning: “test the spirits...” ~ there are unseen spiritual influences that can be tested and known.

What is the test that John tells them to use?

- v. 2-3—do they confess “that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh”?
- Remember: the spirit behind the false prophet is incredibly subtle and deceptive, and we are “little children.”

Testing the spirits ~ 1 John 4

Notice again, the test is this: “every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God.” He puts it like this in 2 John 7: the deceivers are “those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh.”

So that brings us to this question (or these questions): Why is that such a big deal? Why is *that* the criteria that John gives? What prompted John to write this? Are there other things we should look for? Is this still an issue for us now in our day?

We'll get to v. 7-11 in John's letter next week, but I want us to talk about testing the spirits this week...

Testing the spirits ~ 1 John 4

A couple of really quick thoughts ~

- The first thing we can say is this: if nothing else, believers must be discerning. Simply because it carries the label “Christian” doesn’t mean it is.
- And this: We need to know some theology. We have to look beyond smooth voices, pretty music, cool stage lighting, thick make up, good sounding words...and, well, to be blunt: we have to judge. To judge is not to be judgmental, it is to be discerning. What we evaluate is their theology and its life implications (i.e., 1 John 4:7-8).
- Discernment is not optional—it is essential.

Testing the spirits ~ 1 John 4

Notice all of the tests that John writes of here:

- v. 2-3—the Christological test: is Christ, as fully God and fully man, exalted and emphasized?
- v. 5-6—the truth test: are the Scriptures held as the only inerrant and infallible Word of God?
- v. 7-8—the genuine love test: is there evidence of genuine change resulting in love, especially for other believers?
- v. 13—the indwelling Spirit test: the first three tests noted above are evidences that the Holy Spirit is indwelling the believer.

Testing the spirits ~ 1 John 4

What I want to do with the rest of this lesson is not to give a full exposition of 1 John 4:1-6, but to try to show us what the kind of biblical discernment John speaks of looks like—then next week we'll continue on with our expository study through 2 John with, hopefully, a clearer understanding of what it looks like to recognize and evaluate the “many deceivers (who) have gone out into the world” ~ 2 John 7.

John is reacting in both his first and second letters to teaching that was spreading late in the 1st century stating that matter was base and corrupt and therefore inherently evil...

Testing the spirits ~ 1 John 4

...and therefore the divine Christ could not have had a human body, because matter is base, corrupt, evil. So the true Christ could not have come in the flesh, He only *appeared* to be human.

A true confession of Jesus Christ acknowledges the full deity and full humanity of Jesus—many will say that He walked this earth...but are they teaching the full truth and implications of His full deity and humanity? Big difference.

“test the spirits” ~determining if your gold is pure or impure: “a critical examination of something to determine its genuineness.” ~ Mounce. See Pr. 17:3

Testing the spirits - 1 John 4

John MacArthur on the true work of the Holy Spirit in believers: "He produces in us a desire for repentance, a hatred of sin. He produces in us a desire to seek salvation and forgiveness. He produces in us a belief in the gospel, a love for the Lord Jesus Christ... He produces in us a delight in the Holy Scripture, a longing for obedience. He produces in us joy in trials and tribulations, love of other believers, desire for fellowship, understanding of the Bible, illumination of Scripture, inclination to prayer, holy affections, a desire for praise, a heart of thanksgiving, worship as a way of life, and increasing Christlikeness. That's pretty encouraging stuff."

Testing the spirits ~ 1 John 4

But in everything that the Spirit does in man, He starts with an exaltation—all the attention on—Jesus Christ, and not the Spirit Himself. How do you know a deceiving spirit? To put it simply: Christ is not emphasized, something else is.

Let's pick some low-hanging fruit first: what is the Mormon teaching about Jesus?

- The spirit-brother of Lucifer; a created being, created by God, who himself is a created being.
- All cults have a wrong, aberrant view of Jesus Christ. I'm not all that concerned about the cults today—we should be able to recognize them readily.

Testing the spirits ~ 1 John 4

MacArthur again—he says this well, and it is worth noting before we go on: “Where you see any deficiency in the nature of Christ, or the prominence of Christ, the preeminence of Christ, or the gospel, this is not the work of the Holy Spirit.”

Remember that. Ok—we’re going to see some names here. Names prominent within what would be called the evangelical church. We’ll see some quotes and then apply these tests.

- We are not condemning, we are evaluating. We are trying to use careful, biblical judgment, or discernment, to “test the spirits.”

Testing the spirits ~ 1 John 4

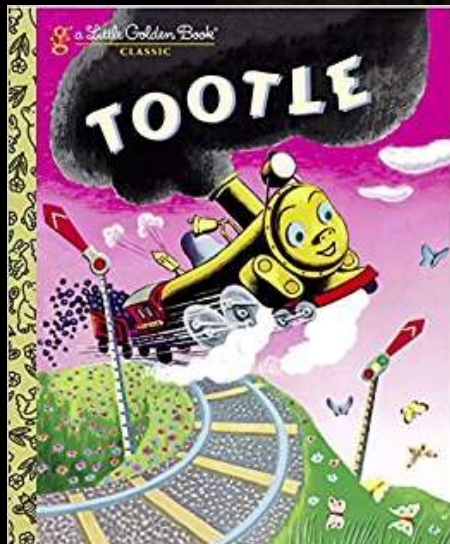
One more thing: we're not going to know the context in which these quotes were given. All we can do is evaluate what we see. Ready? Here we go ~

Jack Hayford: "In the Pentecostal potpourri only one thing is the same for all: the passion they have to experience the Holy Spirit presence and power."

- Does this exalt and emphasize the Lord Jesus?
- Is this the purpose of the gospel and the church?
- Any red flags waving? Compare the emphasis in Hayford's quote with that in Paul's prayer in Eph. 3:14-19.

Btw, if there are Red Flags Waving, what do you do?
You stop. Because you must always Stop for a
Red Flag Waving.

“There were red flags waving from the buttercups, in
the daisies, under the trees, near the bluebird’s nest,
and even one behind the rain barrel. And of course,
Tootle had to stop for each one, for a locomotive
must always Stop for a Red Flag Waving.”



Testing the spirits - 1 John 4

Author Jeff Parks: "Shortly after the Holy Spirit revealed Himself, I saw Jesus. And then I asked the Lord to take me to His secret place. I was lying in the grass and I said, 'Jesus, would You lie down next to me?' We were right there looking into each other's eyes. The Father came, too, and reclined next to Jesus."

What do you think? Apply the tests.

- Does that portray the Lord Jesus accurately? Does it exalt Him as we see Him portrayed in Scripture: infinitely glorious, exalted as King of kings, reigning on heaven's throne forever?

Testing the spirits ~ 1 John 4

Kenneth Copeland: "Why didn't Jesus openly proclaim himself as God during his 33 years on earth? For one single reason. He hadn't come to earth as God, he'd come as man."

Ummm—any problems with that? How about this: "How did Jesus, then, on the cross say 'My God?' Because God was not his Father anymore. He took upon himself the nature of Satan. And I'm telling you, Jesus is in the middle of that pit. He's suffering all that there is to suffer. His emaciated little wormy spirit is down in the bottom of that thing..."

Testing the spirits ~ 1 John 4

Creflo Dollar ~ “Jesus didn’t show up perfect. He grew into his perfection. You know, Jesus in one scripture in the Bible, he went on a journey and he was tired. You better hope God don’t get tired, but Jesus did. If he came as God and he got tired...boy, we’re in trouble and somebody said, ‘Well, Jesus came as God.’ Well, how many of you know the Bible says, ‘God never sleeps nor slumbers,’ and yet in the book of Mark we see Jesus asleep in the back of the boat.”

Respond to that biblically (after you go throw up).

Testing the spirits ~ 1 John 4

One more from Copeland, who sees himself as speaking for Jesus here: "Don't be disturbed when people accuse you of thinking you are God. They crucified Me for claiming I was God. I didn't claim I was God. I just claimed that I walked with Him and He was with me. Hallelujah. That's what you're doing."

Test the spirit: does that sound like the Spirit of the glorious Lord Jesus Christ, or the spirit of the antichrist?

Testing the spirits ~ 1 John 4

Benny Hinn: "He (Jesus) who is righteous by choice said, 'The only way I can stop sin is by me becoming it. I can't just stop it by letting it touch me; I and it must become one.' Hear this! He who is the nature of God became the nature of Satan when he became sin!" Copeland teaches the same thing.

Test the spirit: does that sound like the Spirit of the glorious Lord Jesus Christ, or the spirit of the antichrist?

- If in any way the gospel is minimized or devalued—as it certainly is here—it is *not* the work of the Holy Spirit.

Testing the spirits - 1 John 4

Joel Osteen was asked what he thought about people who refused to believe in Christ as Savior: "Well I don't know if I believe they're wrong. I believe - here's what the Bible teaches, and from the Christian faith this is what I believe. But I just think that only God will judge a person's heart. I spent a lot of time in India with my father. I don't know all about their religion, but I know they love God. And I don't know. I've seen their sincerity, so I don't know. I know - I know for me, and what the Bible teaches, I want to have a relationship with Jesus." "test the spirits to see whether they are from God."

Testing the spirits ~ 1 John 4

So—we test the spirits. John Stott: “True faith examines its object before reposing confidence in it.”

That is testing the spirits. Stott continues: “There is an urgent need for discernment among Christians. We are often too gullible, and exhibit a naïve readiness to credit messages and teachings which purport to come from the spirit-world (editor’s note: for instance, like the book *Jesus Calling*).”

The truth that John writes of in 1 John 4:3 is sobering: “every spirit that does not confess Jesus *is not from God*,” regardless of what they might claim.

Testing the spirits ~ 1 John 4

So the test is the confession of Jesus Christ
“come in the flesh.”

“Confess” literally means *to speak the same thing*,
to admit, to declare openly a deep conviction.

- We confess that when Jesus Christ came in the flesh He came with a perfect, eternal, divine nature: He was God in the flesh (John 1:14).
- We confess that when Jesus Christ came in the flesh He took upon Himself at that time and everlastingly a full, yet sinless, human nature, and in that human nature He never sinned.

Testing the spirits ~ 1 John 4

“The Person of Christ is central. No system can be tolerated, however loud its claims or learned its adherents, if it denies that Jesus is the Christ come in the flesh, that is, if it denies either His eternal deity or His historical humanity. Its teachers are false prophets and its origin is the spirit of antichrist. Those who deny the Son have neither the Father nor the Spirit.” ~ Stott