

# AM 1 John 4:1-6

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Date: 02 May 2021

Preacher: Rev Robert Dale

[ 0 : 00 ] Good morning to you all. Very warm welcome and especially to visitors here, Juliana's family, you're most welcome. We have our evening service at 6 o'clock as usual when I will be leading and preaching again and then on Wednesday night we have our Bible study and prayer meeting at 7 o'clock when I'm afraid it's again me. I don't take all the services though. Next Lord's Day, 11 o'clock and 6 o'clock, our preacher is our interim moderator, the Reverend Kenny MacLeod. I've been asked to read again today the following intimation concerning elders. Following the recent process to elect new elders, the following received the necessary votes from the congregation. Mr. David Kenyon, Mr. Jonathan Kenyon and

Mr. William Kenyon. The Kirk Session has subsequently judged that those elected are duly qualified for office and all have now intimated their acceptance of the office. Therefore the Kirk Session agreed at its meeting on 22nd of April 2021 that the ordination to the office of elder of Mr. David Kenyon, Mr. Jonathan Kenyon and Mr. William Kenyon will take place at the close of the morning service on Sunday 9th of May 2021. If any member of the congregation has any objections to the life or doctrine of any of those appointed to the office of elder, he or she should give prior notice to the minister or the session clerk of their intention to raise such an objection. A date will then be appointed for the Kirk Session to meet with such a person in order to hear their objection. So that is next Sunday, the ordination of our three new elders and do remember to pray for them in that prospective office.

Perhaps I could also just mention that my new book on Esther is now out, it's been published. I have a few copies available at a reduced price. If anyone's interested, have a word with me after the service.

Let's come now before our God in prayer. Our gracious God and Father, to your great name is due all praise and honour and glory.

[ 3 : 18 ] We come before you this Sabbath morning, seeking your blessing upon our time together, seeking that we may know the presence of our Lord God in our midst, in accordance with your great promises, and asking that you will help us to worship you in spirit and in truth, to lift up the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, whom you have sent to be our Saviour.

Grant us that spiritual good may be done in our hearts, and that we may glorify the one whom we love, the Lord Jesus, who has redeemed us from all our sins.

We ask these blessings in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. Now our opening praise is Psalm 34.

We're still forbidden to sing out loud, so we will hear a recording of Psalm 34, verses 1 to 10 from Sing Psalms, and it's on page 40.

At all times I will bless the Lord, I will praise him with my voice, because I glory in the Lord, let troubled souls rejoice.

[ 4 : 44 ] At all times I will bless the Lord, I will bless the Lord, and bless the Lord, and call his name with me.

I sought the Lord, his answer came, from fear she set me free.

They look to him and shine with joy, they are not good to shame.

This suffering mankind I knew the Lord, from him deliverance came.

The angel of the Lord surrounds and guards continually, He sets his people free.

[ 6 : 49 ] All those who fear and honor him, He sets his people free.

Come, come, taste and see, the Lord is good, who trusts in him is blessed.

O fear the Lord, you saints with need, you will not be overest.

Young lions may grow weak and hate, and hunger for their food.

But those who wait upon the Lord, will not lack any good.

[ 8 : 19 ] Now, children, it's lovely to see a couple of extra children today.

As usual, when I give a children's talk, I have something to show you. I'm sure you will all know what those are.

You going to tell me? They're flowers? A particular kind of flower? Daffodils. That's right. There are many thousands of these all around Scotland at the moment, or there were.

They're gradually dying out, aren't they? They're a spring flower, and I suppose by the middle of May, they'll be gone. But a local farmer kindly allowed us to take some of their daffodils from their garden, and I've brought those along here this morning.

Now, a few weeks ago, Jane and I went for a walk in a place called Castle Wood, a few miles away from where we live, and we saw there a strange sight.

[ 9 : 43 ] We saw a man digging up all the plants in the car park. And I couldn't imagine what he was doing, so I went over at a two-meter distance and asked him.

And he explained that he was digging up all the daffodils. I thought, why? You know, they're beautiful. Why would you want to dig up these lovely flowers?

And he explained to me that the problem was the daffodils in the car park were spreading down onto the Merse.

Now, he worked for the nature reserve, which owns the Merse there, and they have cows that go and graze on the Merse.

And the cows, unfortunately, eat the daffodils. Now, some of you come from the farm, and you maybe know why that's a problem.

[ 10 : 55 ] Daffodils are poisonous for cows. poisonous. They're poisonous for us as well. If I were to eat one of these daffodils and I'm not, then I would be very ill.

In case any of the grown-ups want to know why, I've got it written down here. They contain phenathrodine alkaloids. There we are.

I'm sure you wanted to know that. But enough to know, don't eat a daffodil. And don't let the cows eat daffodils.

Because they're poisonous. And they can do you a lot of harm. Now, there's a spiritual lesson there. There are many things in life that look nice.

but they can do you a lot of harm. All the wrong things that we call sin, they're poisonous to you. They can do you harm.

[ 12 : 03 ] And, there are poisonous ideas as well. Religious ideas that people have and if you believe them, they could harm you spiritually.

spiritually. We're going to be reading about that shortly in the Bible and I'm going to be speaking on it in the sermon today. The Bible tells us to be very careful what we eat, as it were, spiritually.

The ideas that we take into our minds. Bible tells us to keep only to the truth. And what is the truth? Jesus says, I am the way, the truth, and the life.

No one comes to the Father except through me. And God says also, your word is truth.

The Bible is truth. Jesus himself teaches us to believe what's in the Bible and nothing else when it comes to religious things.

[ 13 : 23 ] Let's just have a brief word of prayer. Heavenly Father, we thank you for the beauty of daffodils, the beauty of flowers all around us.

Thank you that we don't have to go around digging them all up. but Lord, we do want to be careful, all of us, not to eat anything that would harm us. And we do want to be careful spiritually.

Protect these little ones here, we pray. They're so very young now, but soon all kinds of ideas will be put before them and we pray that you will keep them from every kind of harm.

help us all to keep only to the truth of our Lord Jesus Christ in whose name we pray. Amen. Our second item of praise is Psalm 31 verses 1 to 6 from Sing Psalms.

That's on page 36. I said we're forbidden to sing but you'll probably have gathered that some of us do like to just sing softly behind our masks and there's no harm at all in that.

[ 14 : 43 ] Psalm 36 verses 1 to 6 sorry Psalm 31 verses 1 to 6 let's get this right page 36 Psalm 31 in you I've taken refuge Lord you are my shelter in distress oh let me never be ashamed but save me in your righteousness Christ in you if you of my world call Jesus may fulfill you are myself and in this hurt oh let me ever be konstraOrl Be my rock and earth defense, my song, O land, Savior, raising.

You are my fortress and my rock, for you in saving my sure night, Reserving from the town of the set, to find the red is there in thy night.

Bring me, Lord, O God of the earth, my strength, my glory to Him.

I pray for those who trust for us, I trust the Lord, for He is true.

Let's turn now to the Word of God, to the truth. And we've got two readings today, the first is from Acts chapter 20, and then afterwards some verses from 1 John, which we will be looking at later on.

[ 17 : 59 ] So Acts chapter 20, reading verses 17 to the end. Now from Miletus, Paul sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to him.

And when they came to him, he said to them, You yourselves know how I lived among you the whole time from the first day that I set foot in Asia, serving the Lord with all humility, and with tears, and with trials that happened to me through the plots of the Jews.

How I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house, testifying both to Jews and to Greeks, of repentance towards God, and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me.

But I do not account my life of any value, nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

[ 19 : 46 ] And now, behold, I know that none of you among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom of God will see my face again.

Therefore, I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all, for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God.

Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseer, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.

I know that after my departure, fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock, and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things to draw away the disciples after them.

Therefore, be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish everyone with tears.

[ 20 : 58 ] And now, I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

I coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities and to those who were with me.

In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, it is more blessed to give than to receive.

And when he had said these things he knelt down and prayed with them all and there was much weeping on the part of all. They embraced Paul and kissed him, being sorrowful most of all because of the word he had spoken that they would not see his face again.

And they accompanied him to the ship. Now we turn over to 1 John chapter 4. We've been looking at 1 John for some considerable while whenever I've been preaching.

[ 22 : 14 ] We've got this week to chapter 4 and verses 1 to 6. 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 heard was coming and now is in the world already.

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.

[ 23 : 31 ] By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error. Let's join together now in prayer.

Our Father, we thank you for your word which we have read. We thank you for the Apostle Paul's ministry.

For his faithfulness proclaiming the gospel and indeed the whole counsel of God to all the people in and around Ephesus and indeed in every place that he went to.

And we pray that ministers of Christ throughout the world this day may continue that great work of teaching all that is profitable to your people.

We thank you too for his wisdom knowing that false teaching would come. Thank you for his warning to the Ephesian elders and for John's similar warning to his readers that we may test the spirits and that we may reject all that is false.

[ 24 : 49 ] Help us here in this church to be faithful to the truth. We confess that we live in a day when there is so much confusion and so many false teachings even amongst those who profess to be Christians.

Lord, send forth your light and your truth. Undeceive the people, Lord, we pray. And grant that in this land of ours and throughout the world the pure truth of Jesus Christ may again be preached in every place.

As we read of those Ephesian elders we think of those who are about to be appointed as elders here in this church. And we commit them to you, Lord William and Jonathan and David.

We ask you, Lord, to prepare them for this work that they have undertaken. As we have seen in the book of Acts it is no small task if it is taken diligently.

And we pray that you will give them a love for the flock that has been purchased with the blood of Jesus Christ the Son of God. Lord, we pray that you will help them to be diligent in caring for your people in whatever way you equip them with whatever gifts you may give to each of them help them to serve you faithfully.

[ 26 : 29 ] We thank you for existing elders for Norman and Jack and as the years go by and they feel the burden of age and their ability to undertake all that they would wish becomes more diminished.

We thank you that we have younger men who are able to take on this burden in the future. We pray, Lord, that here in this church we may before too long be in a position to call a new minister.

We long, Lord, to have an under-shepherd of the flock here caring for this congregation and preaching week by week the precious truth of your word.

Thank you for those who have gone before as ministers and in each place where they are now we pray for blessing upon them and we pray that their labours here may yet bear fruit.

we pray for this land of ours particularly at this time with the coming election. We ask you, Lord, that you would impress upon the hearts and minds of those who are candidates in this election that they themselves are answerable to a higher authority.

[ 27 : 57 ] We pray that you will lead them into the paths of honesty and give them a real concern to do what is right and good for the nation and not merely to seek their own power and not merely blindly to follow their own ideas and ideologies but rather to see clearly what is needed in leading this country.

give wisdom, Lord, to every voter that we may vote in accordance with your will. Lord, we know that these things are complicated and Christians will differ in the conclusions they reach but help us to at least vote in accordance with our own individual consciences that we may be at peace with you concerning it.

And we pray, Lord, that whoever is elected, we acknowledge that whoever is in authority is there by your command and under your ordinance and we pray that you will help us to be loyal to them and them to us.

Heavenly Father, we would pray for the spread of the gospel through Scotland. We pray for the spread of the gospel through the whole of the UK and abroad for missionaries in every place.

We remember your persecuted people. Lord, whatever problems we have individually or as a nation, they are only small compared with the problems in other parts of the world.

[ 29 : 42 ] We remember particularly places where COVID is apparently resurgent again and we ask that you would by your mercy cause it to be brought under control.

Thank you for the vaccine that seems to have done so much to help us here. We pray that we may very soon have complete freedom again, particularly freedom to go into one another's houses, to have fellowship with one another in the fullest sense and to sing out loud the praises of our Lord in the congregation.

Look upon us kindly, Lord, in all our individual needs also. We thank you that you do know every sheep by name and we pray that you will draw near to any in this congregation who at this time are going through any kind of difficulty.

Help each one in the different areas of life that concern us. We pray for those who are working at this time that you will help them through the coming week to work diligently as to the Lord and not to men.

We pray for those who are parents that you will enable them to bring up the little ones in the love and fear of the Lord. We pray for those of us who are older that you will help us to use even the days of retirement wisely and to continue serving the Lord.

[ 31 : 14 ] We pray for us all that you will help us to advance in holiness. Help us ever to draw closer to the Lord Jesus whom once again we praise as our Redeemer who has washed us in his own blood.

Draw near to us now as we look into your word for we ask it in Jesus Christ's name. Amen. Well before we look at 1 John we're going to hear and perhaps sing softly from Psalm 19 verses 7 to 11 in the Scottish Psalter page 223.

It's verses 7 to 11 concerning the word of God. God's law is perfect and converts the soul in sin that lies.

God's testimony is most sure and makes the simple wise. God's testimony is most sure and makes the simple wise.

God's testimony is most sure and makes the simple wise.

[ 32 : 45 ] God's testimony is the Lord's name. The statutes of the Lord are right and do rejoice the heart.

The Lord's command is pure and of light to the eyes impart.

God's testimony is the fear of God and of endure forever.

The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous true and righteous all together.

They more than hope they must shine hope to be desired are.

[ 33 : 50 ] Than honey, honey from the home of two he his life should bring.

A great reward provided is for men that keep the same.

Well, let me ask you to turn, please, to 1 John, chapter 4. Continuing our studies in 1 John, looking at verses 1 to 6, I'll read again verse 1.

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God. For many false prophets have gone out into the world.

In 1921, an American police officer called John Augustus Larson began using a new invention called the polygraph, popularly known as the lie detector.

[ 35 : 31 ] Improving on the work of earlier inventors, Larson had created a machine that measures changes in blood pressure and pulse, respiration, and skin conductivity.

The theory being that when people lie, there are physiological changes in all these areas. Larson used the machine on a man called William Hightower, who was accused of murdering a priest in San Francisco.

Hightower failed the test, and he was, in due course, convicted. Larson's assistant, a man with the magnificent name Leonardo Keeler, named by his ambitious parents after Leonardo da Vinci, He worked on it further.

He improved the polygraph, and it was eventually adopted by the FBI in America. Most scientists today regard the lie detector as unreliable, because the same physiological changes can take place in innocent people when they're anxious or under stress.

And guilty people can sometimes suppress these changes. There is, unfortunately, no infallible way of telling if people are lying.

[ 37 : 22 ] Though experienced detectives can usually tell. Well, John sets before us here, in these verses, what we could call a spiritual lie detector test.

And this test is absolutely reliable. The background is the spread of false doctrine in the early church.

Jesus had warned that this would happen. In Matthew 7, verse 15, for example, Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves.

Or again, in Mark 13, verse 5, See that no one leads you astray. Many will come in my name, saying, I am he, and will lead many astray. Paul also warned of false teachers in that passage that

we read, for example, in Acts chapter 20, speaking to the Ephesian elders.

I know that after my departure, fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock, and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things to draw away the disciples after them.

[ 38 : 55 ] And he urges the elders to take care of the flock entrusted to them. Peter warns in 2 Peter chapter 2, verse 1, that just as false prophets arose in Israel, so there will be false teachers among you.

who will secretly bring in destructive heresies. Jude warns us to contend earnestly for the faith once for all delivered to the saints, because it's under attack.

John himself has raised this subject before. Back in chapter 2, and verse 18, children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that Antichrist Christ is coming, so now many Antichrists have come. Now this false teaching might come in many different ways. Sometimes it might come through straightforward preaching, preachers who have got it all wrong.

Sometimes it might have come through supposed prophecies, people claiming to speak by the Spirit of God, but actually it's just lies.

[ 40 : 19 ] It's just their own ideas, and false ideas at that. It could also take on many different forms. Some people were denying the doctrine of justification by faith, insisting that people had to keep the Jewish law in order to be saved.

Others were going to the opposite extreme, saying that Christians, because they're saved, can do whatever they like. But most serious of all, there were some who were teaching false doctrine about Christ himself.

And that seems to be John's particular concern here. Especially his concern about the Gnostics. Some of whom denied that Jesus was a real man at all.

All of these false teachings were dangerous. And John, as the loving pastor, wants to warn God's people against them.

He wants to equip them to deal with them. He wants them to be able to discern truth and error. And to recognize and reject false teaching when they hear it.

[ 41 : 49 ] This is important to John. John's grand theme throughout this letter, remember, is real Christianity. Real Christians hold fast to the truth.

And therefore, we need to know the truth. And the need is just as great today as it was then, if not greater.

Down through the ages, all kinds of false doctrines have been taught and all kinds of false prophets have arisen. Many of the old errors have been recycled as if they were new.

Quite apart from all the false religions and false philosophies that there are out in the world, even within the professing church, we have bishops who deny the resurrection.

We have theology professors who deny the divinity of Christ. Indeed, in this post-modernist world, there are some who would even deny the very concept of truth, who would speak instead of your truth and my truth.

[ 43 : 12 ] Whereas Jesus said plainly, I am the truth, and promised his apostles that the spirit would lead them into all truth. So let's look then at what John has to say about this.

And he gives us here two tests, very closely related. Test one is to ask, what do they say about Christ?

Test two is to ask, where do they get their ideas from? Now for some, I realise this is not a comfortable subject.

All this talk of false doctrine, they say, is divisive. Doctrine divides, love unites, that's what they say. They would rather that we spoke about something positive. Well I can promise you there will be some positive things in our sermon this morning.

[ 44 : 20 ] I can promise you too that tonight I'll be preaching on love in verses 7 through to 12. Truth and love go together in John's mind.

They're inseparable. Both truth and love are embodied in our Lord Jesus Christ. And both are essential for the Christian.

And you can't speak positively about the truth of the gospel without also speaking negatively about false gospels. The negative matters to John as well as the positive.

As indeed it does to Christ himself. Christ the good shepherd cares for his sheep and part of that is to protect us from everything that is harmful.

So let's look then at John's two tests. Test one is to ask what do they say about Christ? Verses 1 to 3 let's read them again.

[ 45 : 27 ] Beloved do not believe every spirit but test the spirits to see whether they are from God. 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 heard was coming and now is in the world already.

That opening word beloved shows us the spirit in which this is written. A spirit of love and tender concern for the flock.

At the end of chapter 3 he has told us that we have the Holy Spirit. But now he warns us there are others who have a different spirit.

All truth is from God. Falsehood ultimately comes from the devil. We need to know which is which. Some Christians sadly are very gullible and are willing to believe anything that is convincingly preached to them.

[ 46 : 43 ] We need to test the spirits whether they are of God. But how can we do that? John gives us this simple test.

What do they say about Christ? There is an old hymn by John Newton. I have probably quoted it before. What think ye of Christ is the test to try both your state and your scheme.

You cannot be right in the rest unless you think rightly of him. Every true spirit will confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh.

Every false spirit will deny it. In effect he is giving us a very simple confession of faith. We have the Westminster confession of faith which we hold to as a church.

Contains about 12,000 words on all aspects of theology. Here is a very basic confession consisting of just seven words about Christ.

[ 48 : 03 ] Now at first sight this may seem to be a very low bar to set. Surely everyone believes this don't they? At least everyone who claims to be a Christian.

The problem is however that many use the words without understanding their meaning. The key to it is the word Christ.

Many in the world regard Christ as just a name. In which case all that John would be saying would be that Jesus was a real person.

Well even atheists could believe that. But Christ is not just a name. It's a title. And that makes all the difference.

The Greek word Christos means the anointed one. It's the equivalent of the Hebrew word Messiah. By calling Jesus the Christ we're saying that he is the Messiah promised in the Old Testament.

[ 49 : 13 ] And that has huge implications. The Messiah promised in the Old Testament was first of all a great king who would rule the world.

God says to him in Psalm 2 ask of me and I will give you the nations for your heritage and the ends of the earth for your possession.

So saying that Jesus is the Christ implies that he is king over all the earth and that implies he is your king whom you must obey.

The Messiah also was the great saviour who would save the world. The name Jesus highlights that it means saviour.

Now what do we need saving from? First and foremost our sins. Hence the angel said to Joseph you shall call his name Jesus for he shall save his people from their sins.

[ 50 : 22 ] And how would he do that? Even the Old Testament made it plain by dying for our sins and rising again. The Old Testament prophesied in detail how the Christ the Messiah would die on the cross as a sacrifice for sin.

In Isaiah 53 for example he was pierced for our transgressions he was crushed for our iniquities upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace and with his wounds we are healed.

It also prophesied that he would rise again Psalm 16 for example you will not abandon my soul in Sheol or let your Holy One see corruption. All this is implied simply in saying Jesus is the Christ. and more no man could possibly have done this. He had to be both man and God and scripture declares him to be both.

In Isaiah 53 he is called a man of sorrows acquainted with grief and in Psalm 2 God says you are my son.

[ 51 : 45 ] In short when you say that Jesus is the Christ you are saying that the son of God became man died on the cross for our sins and rose again.

the precise wording here has come in the flesh was probably a rebuke to the Gnostics.

Christ was a real man that's what he's saying not just a spirit he didn't just appear to be a man he was a real man in the flesh born as a baby at Bethlehem he suffered as a man on the cross he rose again bodily from the grave he carried his humanity into heaven as another old hymn puts it a man there is a real man with wounds still gaping wide and that man is also the son of God denying either the humanity or the divinity of Christ is disastrous if he were not man he couldn't bear our sins if he were not God he couldn't take them away this is what this simple confession of faith implies do you believe it you must if you want to be saved because there is no other savior besides this this is the test if anyone comes denying this

John says it is the spirit of antichrist John mentioned antichrist in chapter two controversial subject perhaps but you will know that the bible prophesies that in the last days there will be a great world ruler who is opposed to the truth well John says here the spirit of antichrist is in the world already a spirit that is opposed to christ these false prophets are literally antichrist and we must reject them so this is the first test then what do they say about christ test two is where do they get their ideas from verses four to six little children you are from god and have overcome them for greater is he that is in you than he that 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 again there's that note of tender concern little children this whole passage is written in love three pronouns lie at the heart of these verses you they and we you refers to the

Christians that he is writing to and by extension to us they refers to the false teachers we refers first and foremost to John and his fellow apostles and the key question each time is where are they from you that is you Christians you are from God you're born of God you belong to God you're adopted by the father you're redeemed by the son you're indwelt by the spirit and that gives you perfect protection from error you have overcome them he says in other words you have recognized and resisted and rejected false doctrine and the reason you were able to do that is because greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world he that is in you is the

[ 56 : 42 ] Holy Spirit he that is in the world is the devil obviously God is greater than the devil and he will give you the victory he will give you the victory in every aspect of the Christian life in your fight against sin in standing up against persecution he that is in you is greater than he that is in the world but also particularly here in resisting false teaching the spirit in you will protect you from the errors of the devil as he said back in chapter two you have an anointing and he teaches you what is true they in contrast are from the world and not from God the world being seen here as fallen humanity opposed to

God their ideas are at best human ideas and at worst demonic deceptions the devil being the prince of this world they belong to the world and therefore they're worldly minded they're taken up with the things of this world and the world will listen to them to them and not to us now that can be a great trial to us can't it false teaching is popular and it finds a ready audience out in the world we long for the world to hear and believe the truth but they don't want to hear it they prefer to hear these false doctrines nonetheless we must hold to the truth whether it is popular or not simply because it is the truth and the truth alone can set us free

Jesus said at the last supper and John so often echoes the last supper you are not of the world but I chose you out of the world and therefore we must reject all worldly teaching finally he says we are from God referring first and foremost to himself and his fellow apostles and now he gives us the test whoever knows God listens to us the apostles of Christ whoever is not from God does not listen to us true Christians born of God will always listen to God's appointed messengers these false teachers are not from God and therefore they don't listen to God's appointed messengers they don't listen to the apostles they don't listen to the

Bible now this might sound a very arrogant statement everyone who's true listens to us that's how you know truth and error if they agree with us they're right if they don't agree with us then they're wrong sounds arrogant doesn't it but John is simply expressing the authority and the responsibility given to him and to his fellow apostles by Christ himself Christ himself is the good shepherd we must follow him and all true Christians will listen to his voice as he said my sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me but he has appointed under shepherds and first and foremost

among them the apostles and we can confidently follow them in so far as they follow Christ Christ said to the apostles as the father sent me so I send you he promised the apostles that the spirit would lead them into all truth he told the apostles to teach whatever he had taught them even said to Peter feed my sheep we inherit those commands and promises today but only in so far as we also follow apostolic teaching which means in turn the teaching of the Bible since Christ himself taught that the Bible is the word of God I hesitate to use shepherd illustrations having a shepherd in the congregation but let's imagine that David up there on the farm at Southwark were to employ me to help him with the sheep eventually the sheep would get to know my voice and they would follow me but they are still

[ 62 : 06 ] David's sheep and I can only do whatever he tells me to do if he sees me driving them off to Dal Beattie he will be there like a shot to come stop me so likewise with the apostles and Christ they are his representatives the sheep belong to Christ not to the apostles but the apostles are Christ's representatives and their teaching is his teaching and at the heart of that teaching is the doctrine in verse 2 that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh the two tests are thus effectively the same by this we know that the spirit of truth and the spirit of error John concludes remains for me to ask are you holding to the truth maybe that you are not yet born again in which case very likely you will be confused about the truth let me urge you in that case to accept the truth taught by the apostles the faith once for all delivered to the saints especially the truth that Jesus is the

Christ and has come in the flesh that he is our Lord and our Savior there is no salvation except through him reject reject him and you are lost believe in him and you will be saved but most of you here I'm sure are Christians hold fast to what you have believed you will from time to time be troubled with false teaching and it may sometimes seem attractive but if it's not the teaching of Christ and the apostles reject it and pray for the church in these dark and troubled times many have been deceived pray that they might be undeceived and that churches everywhere might preach the truth and pray for this world around us you were once in darkness yourself and God opened your eyes pray that

God would send forth his light and his truth that people everywhere might believe and be saved Amen we're going to hear in conclusion a hymn by William Walsham Howe O Word of God incarnate O wisdom from on high O truth unchanged unchanging O light of our dark sky we praise thee for the radiance that from the hallowed page a lantern to our footsteps shines on from age to age church O word of God O word of God incarnate O wisdom from on high O truth unchanged unchanging O light of our dark sky we praise we praise thee for the radiance that from the hallowed page a lantern to our force that shines on from age to age changing the church from her dear master received the gift divine and still that light she lifted for all the earth to shine it is the golden casket where gems of truth are stored it is the hem-drawn picture of Christ the living word he's looted like a band her before

God's host unfurled it shineth like a beacon above the darkling world it is the chart and compass that o'er thy surging sea mid midst and rocks and crates and still guides all Christ to thee see oh make thy church dear savior a lamp of purest gold to bear before the nations thy true light as of old o teach thy wandering pilgrims by this their path to trace till clouds and darkness end they see thee face to face now may the grace of our lord jesus christ and the love of god and the fellowship of the holy spirit be with you all ever more amen