

# A Study through 1 John: Chapter 4

## INTRODUCTION.

- A. In chapter 1, we saw the importance of remaining in fellowship with the heavenly Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.
- B. In chapter 2, we saw:
  - 1. The means through which we can receive the forgiveness of our sins,
  - 2. As well as the warnings and instructions toward maintaining fellowship God and abiding in Him.
- C. In chapter 3, we saw . . .
  - 1. What it means to be children of God,
  - 2. As well the importance of loving our fellow brethren in Christ in order to maintain our fellowship with our Lord and Savior.
- D. As we step into chapter 4, we see . . .
  - 1. the apostle John's warnings against false teachers,
  - 2. as well his continuing admonition to love one another.

## I. CHAPTER FOUR.

- A. In 1 John 4:1-6, we see a strong warning regarding "*false prophets*" or false teachers. (1 John 4:1-6)
  - 1. John begins this section by warning the saints to "*not believe every spirit.*" (vs 4:1)
    - a. Not every "*teacher*" was inspired by or led by the teachings of the Holy Spirit.
    - b. To "*test*" the "*spirits*" was to compare their teachings to that which the Holy Spirit had already given by inspiration. (cf. Galatians 1:6-9)
    - c. John states the following reality: ". . . *many false prophets have gone out into the world.*" Jesus warned of this in Matthew 7:15-20.

- d. Peter describes some of the fruit born by false teachers in 2 Peter 2:1-3.
2. Within the context of this letter, the apostle John gives us a very specific litmus test for those who claim to be inspired by the Spirit of God. (vs 4:2-3)
  - a. During John's days, there were those who essentially denied Jesus as the Son of God.
    - 1) The Gnostics did not believe Jesus Christ had come in the flesh.
    - 2) If a person denied Jesus Christ coming in the flesh, then their source of authority was not God.
  - b. Any person who denied Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh was "*antichrist.*" Many of those who were "*antichrist*" were already teaching in the world. (cf. 1 John 2:18-25)
3. The apostle John commended the recipients of this letter for having "*overcome*" those who were "*antichrist.*" (vs 4:4-6)
  - a. Those who are in fellowship with God "*overcome*" those who deny Jesus the Christ.
  - b. The people who deny Jesus the Christ are of the world. They are speaking as the world speaks and thinking as the world thinks.
  - c. However, Christians are "*of God.*" The person who is striving to serve God will receive "*the spirit of truth.*"
- B. In 1 John 4:7-10, John reminded the brethren of God's example of love in sending Jesus Christ to be the "*propitiation for our sins.*" (1 John 4:7-10)
  1. Again, the apostle John admonishes the brethren to "*love one another.*" A person who "*loves is born of God and knows God.*" (vs 4:7-8)

2. God set the standard for love, not man. (vs 4:9-10)
  - a. Let us consider three verses which refer to the manifestation of God's love. (John 3:16; 1 John 3:16; Romans 5:8)
- C. If we love God, then we are to love our fellow brethren in Christ. (1 John 4:11-21)
  1. The apostle John continues the admonition to love one another. God's love for us is the basis for our brotherly love. (vs 4:11)
  2. In verse 12, John reminds the brethren they have not seen God. (This fact will reoccur throughout the rest of this chapter.)
  3. John also connects loving one's brother with obedience to God and "*abiding*" in God. (vs 4:12-13)
    - a. If we, as Christians, love one another as God has loved us, then we remain in fellowship with God. This truth is seen in the phrase "*we abide in Him, and He in us.*"
    - b. We also see in this passage the Lord having "*given us of His Spirit.*"
      - 1) When Jesus left this earth, He sent the Holy Spirit to inspire the first century teachers to teach all of God's will for man.
      - 2) By giving the Holy Spirit, God confirmed His promises of righteousness and salvation. We see the idea conveyed in the following verses: 2 Corinthians 1:20-22; 2 Corinthians 5:4-5; Ephesians 1:13-14.
  4. In addition to God having "*given us His Spirit,*" the apostles had also "*seen*" and testified "*that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world.*" (vs 4:14)
    - a. We have the testimony of those men who walked with Jesus, who saw His death as well as His resurrected person. (cf. 2 Peter 1:16-18)

5. A person who truly “*abides*” in God does so because he “*confesses that Jesus is the Son of God.*” (vs 4:15)
  - a. “*Confesses,*” in context of this letter, reminds the brethren to confess Jesus to be the Son of God, in contrast to the Gnostics who were denying the truth of Jesus Christ.
  - b. There is more to being in God than simply confessing one’s belief in Christ. Complete confession involves a genuine belief and obedience.
  - c. Again, the idea of God abiding in us and we in God looks directly at the teaching on fellowship seen in 1 John 1.
6. Believing in, and confessing Jesus Christ, is a belief in God’s love. (cf. John 3:16) (vs 4:16a)
7. A person who abides in the love which God taught abides in God because of their obedience to Him. A Christian maintains this fellowship by obeying God’s command to love their brethren. (vs 4:16b)
8. We have seen several references in this chapter to God’s love for us. God’s love for us grants us “*boldness in the day of judgment.*” (vs 4:17)
  - a. A Christian can have “*boldness*” or “*confidence*” (ESV) because he “*abides in God*” and God abides in him. (cf 4:16)
9. Just as God’s love brings us “*boldness in the day of judgment*” it likewise removes our fear of judgment. (vs 4:18)
  - a. A mature Christian, one who faithfully and obediently loves God, will not fear God’s judgment. Consider the following verses which also establish this truth:  
Romans 8:15 and 2 Timothy 1:7.
10. Our love for God is solely based upon His love for us. (vs

4:19)

11. If we are to love God, we must also love our fellow Christians.  
(vs 4:20)
  - a. If a person hates his brother, then he cannot love God. Jesus clearly connected love with obedience in John 14:15. To not love one's brother is to disobey God's command.
  - b. The question, "*for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?*" brings us back to John's statement in 1 John 4:12: "*No one has seen God at any time.*"
12. The apostle John closes this section with the clear and undeniable command to love one's brother. (vs 4:21)

#### **CONCLUSION.**

- A. As Christians, we must avoid the false teachers of the world and always remember to love our brethren just as God has loved us.
- B. The apostle John has dealt very heavily with the importance of confessing Jesus Christ as the Son of God as well as loving fellow Christians. Despite the erroneous teachings of the Gnostics and other worldly teachers, Christians must believe in Jesus Christ, follow His doctrine, and truly love their brethren in Christ.