



Two Biblical Tests for Truth

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Certainly, the entire Bible is a test for Truth. It is the written authority to which we must turn. But WITHIN the Bible there are a number of direct tests for Truth given. Two of them will be discussed here.

1. Jesus is Lord

Now concerning spiritual [gifts], brethren, I would not have you ignorant. Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led. Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed: and [that] no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost. (I Cor. 12:1-3)

The context of this passage is important if we are to understand what Paul is saying. And once we do understand, we will realize that he is not merely addressing a first century problem. In principle, he is giving us a test for Truth that applies to the entire church age.

The question here is whether Jesus Christ is being presented as ACCURSED or being presented as LORD. What is the meaning of these possibilities?

Well, first of all, Paul is talking about spiritual gifts – which really include all that is from God through His people. In the NT, even teaching is said to be a spiritual gift. Paul elsewhere lists the spiritual gifts. In short, something is either of God or it is of man. That which is of God is a spiritual gift.

In that context he acknowledges that the background of those at Corinth was pagan. They worshipped demons through dumb idols. But his warning to them indicates that there might have been some residual carry-over from that pagan background. This is why he tells them that no one speaking out from the spirit of God, "calls Jesus Christ accursed."

What does that mean? Well, it is a reference to how pagans worshipped their false gods, and the concept that pagans had of those false gods. The word, "accursed," means, "devoted to

destruction.” The Corinthians, in their former pagan religion, believed what all false demonic religions believed: That you had to offer to your god an object devoted to destruction at the hand of that false god – so that your false god would be satisfied -- and lift its wrath from being upon YOU. Pagans always had to appease their false gods. This was a primary characteristic of most pagan religions.

But you will note that Paul does say that the Corinthians were continuing to practice their former religion. He does not tell them to stop offering a false God an object devoted to destruction so that the false God could be appeased. No. Rather, he is warning them against applying this false pagan construct to Jesus Christ and the Father. He is saying, “Jesus Christ is not accursed – that is – Jesus Christ was not devoted to destruction at the hand of God so that His wrath could be appeased, and lifted from believers.”

Now, this ought to get our attention. For that pagan picture of appeasement is exactly the picture that many Christian people have of the

Redemption. Many today are openly teaching that Jesus was the One devoted to appeasing God's wrath. For example, some of the most prominent Calvinists openly teach that Jesus was actually saving us from His Father's wrath – by bearing it all upon Himself.

If Jesus was, "accursed," then He was accursed of His own Father. Is that what is revealed in the Bible?

What in the world do people think Paul is telling us? The answer is easy to find and easy to see. Paul is telling us that any presentation of the gospel wherein Jesus is accursed – Jesus is devoted to God's wrath – is NOT of the spirit of God. And the scary thing is, according to Paul, such a gospel is PAGAN.

There is something about natural thinking that demands that God be angry, wrathful, and so filled with hate towards sin that Jesus MUST have been the One to bear all of God's wrath on our behalf. Some folks have no other frame of reference. To them, any other option waters down or denies the holiness and righteousness

of God. But this is a horrible picture of God. It is the result of taking human reaction and imposing it upon God Almighty.

It is amazing as to what some Christian teachers attribute to God. If human beings would have the attitudes some attribute to God we would know it was awful. If human beings would treat each other the way some say God treats human beings we would know it was evil. Yet they never make the connection. The fact is, we are to have the mind of Christ. We are to express Christ. Therefore, however you picture God – in attitude or actions – you must say that this is how those in Christ ought to function. That is inescapable.

A False Redemption

Let's push this false concept of, "Jesus accursed," to its only possible outcome. First of all, if Jesus was devoted to destruction under God's wrath for our salvation, then we really have a redemption that does NOTHING to change humanity. What we have is a redemption that actually changed GOD. By appeasing the wrath of God,

Jesus would have changed God's attitude from anger and wrath over to love and grace. But human beings would still be the same – although now out from under God's impending wrath.

Is THAT what the Bible teaches? No. God never needed to be changed. Man needed to be changed.

Secondly, scripture says:

***For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.
(John 3:16-17)***

Here we see that God did not love the world after Jesus died to appease His wrath, but rather, God love the world before sending Jesus – which is why He sent Jesus to begin with.

Do those who believe these lies about God suppose that a wrathful God managed to work Himself up into a

good mood long enough to be loving enough to send His Son? Not to be sarcastic, but for goodness sake, the Bible clearly states:

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

Clearly, God did not give humanity His Son to appease His own wrath – by bearing His own wrath. That might change God towards man – if we buy into this twisted reasoning -- but it would do nothing to change man towards God – which is the whole point of redemption to begin with.

Let’s take this further: What did Jesus bear on the Cross? His Father’s wrath upon the sinner FOR sin? No. On the Cross, Jesus bore SIN ITSELF – indeed, Jesus bore the sinner.

John the Baptist announced Jesus Christ to the world with these words:

***Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world.
(John 1:29)***

Jesus did not take away the wrath of God – He did not deliver sinners from the wrath of God. Rather, Jesus delivered sinners from SIN.

We have already seen that Jesus bore the sin of the world in His own Person on the Cross:

Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. (I Peter 2:24)

Jesus bore OUR SINS. He did not bear our punishment FOR sin, nor God's wrath FOR sin.

Now, someone is going to ask, "But did Jesus not bear the judgment of God for sin?" Yes, absolutely. But what was that judgment? Death. Jesus died bearing sin, and therefore, bore the judgment for sin.

But can we see the difference between an angry God who poured out His wrath upon His Son so that He could appease Himself – the difference between that and a God who so loved the world that He gave His Son to

bear the judgment for sin? The difference is so immense that God inspired this teaching in I Corinthians 12.

The Truth

If Jesus was accursed of God to appease God's own wrath, then there is no provision for new life or for the new birth. There is really no victory over sin and death. All we would have is victory over God's wrath – and a condition of forgiveness for humanity in the form of a lifted punishment. This is not the Truth. It is pagan.

Paul contrasts this false redemption by saying that anyone who is speaking by the spirit of God will proclaim that JESUS IS LORD.

Jesus is Lord because He became a human being, and as a human being lived a sinless life, died, was raised, and is ascended in VICTORY for God on the behalf of human beings. Jesus WON the position of Lordship over all.

Certainly being seated at the right hand of God, yes, as the Son of God,

but also as the glorified Son of Man, shows Jesus Christ as Lord of all.

God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of [things] in heaven, and [things] in earth, and [things] under the earth; And [that] every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ [is] Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Phil. 2:9-11)

Since Paul is talking about spiritual gifts we can be sure that any spiritual gift that is of God is not only going to preach the true gospel, but is going to present the nature and character of God, the Person of His Son Jesus, and God's plan and purpose all within the context of JESUS IS LORD.

This would mean that all ministry is going to exhort each believer to come under Jesus as their personal, and individual LORD. This will likewise mean that believers will be taught that in Christ, and under Christ as Lord, all victory is possible. In short, because He is Lord, to the extent that we come under Him as our personal Lord, it is

possible for His full will to be realized in and through us.

Believers will likewise be shown that God is not an angry, wrathful being, but is the God who so loved the world – who IS love.

The Lord Jesus

As we have seen, Jesus referred to Himself as The Son of Man more than He did by any other name. But after His ascension, Jesus is referred to as LORD more than by any other name. Over 150 times Jesus is called Lord after His ascension – in Acts and in the other books. Indeed, Jesus as Lord was the theme of the first sermon in Acts 2, and really, throughout the entire book of Acts.

Believers are united with the Lord Jesus at salvation. We are joined to Him – seated in Him in the heavenlies at God's right hand. Can we see that in one thought that this expresses the entire plan of Redemption – to restore all things unto God through His Son, including humanity? Can we see that if we are joined to the LORD and made one spirit with Him, that fundamental

to the working of the spirit will be to make Jesus our personal Lord? Our only Mediator?

Paul said that no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the spirit of God. He was referring to more than just saying the words – heretics say those words. He was saying that it is only by the inward work of the spirit through death and resurrection in Christ that any person can come to see and declare and live the Truth: Jesus is Lord.

2. Jesus Having Come in the Flesh

Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesses not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that [spirit] of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world. Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world. (I John 4:1-4)

The central issue in this warning from John is The Son of God become man. But John takes it a step further. He says that the spirit of God will always confess, "Jesus having come in the flesh." That is the correct tense. Thus, John is not only talking about the Truth of the Word become flesh in history, but he is talking about the Living Word, Jesus Christ, coming ever

since to dwell within flesh and blood human beings.

Once we realize that, we will see that John is talking about the very definition and basis of Christianity: Christ in us. This means that what he has to say on this matter is of vital importance.

The Test

The basis for John writing this passage was a first century heresy that had infiltrated the church. Today we call it GNOSTICISM. But this was not a pagan Gnosticism, so to speak. Rather it was a Gnostic Christianity – meaning it was a false Christianity with a false Christ. This heresy taught that the Son of God, Jesus Christ, did not literally become, through a human birth, a flesh and blood human being. According to this heresy, THE WORD did not become flesh -- and dwell among us.

There were versions of this heresy. One claimed that the man, Jesus Christ, was a mirage. Another claimed that Jesus was only a man but became indwelt by God when He was baptized.

This heresy is not a thing unto itself. John was inspired to write these words as a proclamation that Christianity is based upon The Son of God becoming The Son of Man – and then working a redemption for humanity. Thus, in principle, we can find Truth in what John is writing to apply to all that is presented as the gospel.

You'll find in the writings of John that that truth is repeated many, many times because he's writing against this error so often. It is a primary Christian Truth – the entire plan of God's Redemption through Christ depends upon the fact that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, became a flesh and blood human being.

The centrality of this Truth of Jesus having come in the flesh cannot be overstated – if we deny it or omit it we do not have Redemption. Indeed, if we deny or omit it we do not have Christianity at all. Notice why: If Jesus did not actually become a flesh and blood human being then through His redemptive work He has not come to dwell in His people. In that case,

we are not saved. The very core of Christianity, "Christ in us," is null.

The reality of Jesus Christ in His people by the means of the Holy Spirit is fully dependent upon the fact that Jesus Christ Himself was the Word become flesh – dependent upon Jesus becoming a flesh and blood human being. It is because Jesus was God the Son, born into this world from the outside of this world – lived, died for us, was raised, and ascended – all as a human being – this is what made it possible for Jesus Christ by the means of His spirit to come and dwell in His people. The two are as one truth.

"Christ in us, the hope of glory," (Col. 1:27) is the core of Christianity. It is this reality of Christ in us that John is defending in this passage. He's saying that the spirit of God will always confess this great reality. And when John says, "confess," he is talking about revealing, proclaiming, or manifesting. Indeed, the very presence of the spirit of God IS the confession of this core Truth. But even more importantly, the spirit of God will actually make this happen in our experience – God will work by His

spirit to bring us into an inward realization of Jesus Christ, Who is in us.

Joined to the Lord

The Spirit of God will always confess that Jesus Christ, having come in His flesh, presently IS come to dwell within those in the body of Christ. 1 Corinthians 6:17 says, "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit with him." When Jesus Christ comes to dwell in us, we are joined together with Christ in spirit in resurrection union. But we are not joined with Christ in soul or natural man in this age. No. Rather, Christ is joined with our spirit, but within our body and soul. Paul's picture of the believer as an earthen vessel in which dwells the Treasure is perfect.

John says, "Hereby you know the Spirit of God." The Spirit of God will not only reveal the fact that Jesus Christ dwells within His people, but the spirit of God will actually reveal Christ in His people -- the purpose for which the Spirit of God was given according to Jesus was to reveal the living Christ to us in an inward way.

The very essence, the very core, the very definition of Christianity is being addressed here. The Spirit of God will always reveal Christ to the believer in an inward way – will reveal that Jesus Christ IS come into our very being. If you read John 14, 15, and 16, every purpose for which Jesus said the Spirit of God was given centers on a revelation of Him. But not just in doctrine; not just in concept. That's all there, of course. But the purpose of the Spirit of God is to actually reveal Jesus Christ to us in an inward way so that we may know Him and inwardly realize Him.

The Spirit of Antichrist

How often is this mandatory revelation of Jesus Christ as dwelling in His people even talked about in Christian ministry today? John is saying that the Spirit of God will always confess this Truth -- and yet we almost never hear it spoken of, let alone preached, as the core truth of Christianity. We don't hear it preached as the test for Christianity; as the test for where the Spirit of God is at work. We don't even hear it mentioned.

Can we see a terrible blindness here? I don't think most Christian people are deliberately and knowingly neglecting this. But I do think that Christian people are blind to it -- Christian people don't know and they don't know to know. But if we read on in the passage, it is this blindness – merely the omission of this Truth – that is exactly the work of the spirit of antichrist.

John writes in verse 3: "And every spirit that confesses NOT Jesus Christ having come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the Spirit of antichrist."

Now, let's note something very essential to see: We just read in verse one and two, what the Spirit of God WILL confess; what the Spirit of God WILL DO. But did you notice that in verse 3 that John doesn't mention ANYTHING AT ALL that the Spirit of antichrist WILL DO? He doesn't. All that he mentions is what the Spirit of antichrist WILL NOT DO. He tells us only what the spirit of antichrist will OMIT. The Spirit of antichrist will NOT do what the Spirit of God WILL do: Confess Jesus, reveal Jesus. The

spirit of antichrist will do anything necessary, or preach as a substitute, that which will OMIT this reality, HIDE it, or BLIND people to the reality of Christ in them.

This tells us that what is NOT preached is as important as what IS preached. If, "Christ in us," that is, "Jesus having come in the flesh," is NOT being revealed – is not central to either a person's life or a church's life – then the spirit of antichrist is at work. The omission of this core reality is a sufficient identifying mark that antichrist is at work.

How many understand that antichrist blinds? The term itself suggests that possibility. "Antichrist," means, "instead of Christ," and so a primary device of the enemy is to preach anything BUT, "Christ in us" – to preach anything else as the substitute. This substitute will often blind believers to the real Truth. And so even though there are millions of Christian people who don't necessarily believe horrible error, there are millions who are blind to the Truth. But that is a set up for real deception – because if we do not know Christ

there will ultimately be no standard against error. Where Christ is not realized, the enemy can easily fill that void with that which is of darkness.

Read again 1 John 4:3: "Every spirit that confesses NOT Jesus Christ having come in the flesh is not of God." Let's talk a little more about what John means by SPIRIT. Certainly included in what he means is the spiritual environment that is governing a church. Is it the presence of Christ in his people? Is it the reality -- the knowing of him in an inward way -- the realization of Christ? Read the New Testament. That's what governs a church according to the mind of God. Where that's absent, what is governing? Well, maybe it's theology. Or perhaps it is a focus upon church life -- a nebulous idea of church as a family; as a society; as an institution. Folks get together, they study the Bible, they listen to sermons, they sing in the choir, and they have fellowship, and they have friends and they have family activities and they meet certain challenges. They try to raise the money to pay the bills. And all of it may be innocent enough; it may be honest, moral, and good. But

yet, what is the spiritual environment? Is it what John says it must be to be a living, dynamic church according to the mind of God? Paul says, "Christ, our life." (Col. 3:4) That is essentially what John is teaching. Is Christ the life of our church? Not merely in word, but actually – in experience?

When all the religion and posturing is skimmed off, what is the spiritual environment that governs this church? What is the life blood? What is the pulse of this church? Is it Christ in us -- individually and collectively -- the hope of glory? Is it Christ our life? Is it, "Yet not I but Christ?" Is it Christ crucified and raised – but also US crucified and raised in Him? Well, it's supposed to be that. And if it's not, what is it? Is it just dead religion -- or maybe just a big blank space? A blank space is a very dangerous thing. What I mean by blank space is I mean all the areas in our Christian experience that are supposed to be filled with Christ but aren't. There is an omission or a blindness there – which is evidence of antichrist.

There are many sincere churches that don't know the Truth and don't know to know the Truth. They may not be deceived into horrible error and heresy right now, but the fact that there is a huge blank space regarding experiencing Christ as our life is dangerous. that makes them ripe for deception. That makes people by the tens of millions everywhere just ripe to be picked for deception because they don't have a living experience with the living, resurrected Christ that can hold them and keep them out of it. They're not under the work of the cross. They're not in the process of losing life to him in order that he might be their life. Again, not a criticism, not a condemnation, not a put down, not taking a superior position here -- but simply repeating what John is saying here because it is vitally important. It's a warning right from the Bible. Every spirit that confesses NOT Jesus having come in the flesh is not of God. The blindness or omission is evidence that antichrist is working.

John states: THIS is the Spirit of antichrist. WHAT is the Spirit of antichrist? Every spirit that confesses

NOT, "Christ in us the hope of glory." You can't get any clearer than that. The Spirit of God focuses upon Christ in you, the hope of glory, on a personal level. The Spirit of antichrist blinds people to that and will confess anything but that.

John doesn't even mention one thing that antichrist will confess -- although there is ultimately going to be great error. But what does matter is what is NOT being confessed. Where Jesus Christ having come in the flesh -- his flesh and then ours today -- where that's absent -- the Spirit of antichrist is at work -- at least to have blinded people. THIS is the spirit of antichrist.

Antichrist Already at Work

John writes, "THIS is the Spirit of antichrist. Whereof you have already heard that it should come, and even now already is it in the world." Note the wording: John calls antichrist IT. IT. IT should come; IT is in the world. And IT was already out there in John's times. So like I said before, you may look for an individual called antichrist. If you do, I think you're

going to be deceived. And I say that despite the fact that there could be representatives and main representatives as we approach the end of the age. But regardless of that, antichrist is a spirit, a spirit that ultimately will deny and redefine the very core definition of Christianity. IT will deny, and blur, and redefine Christ in you the hope of glory as Christianity -- and offer something instead.

John wrote, "Whereof you have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world. " Paul likewise wrote, "For the mystery of iniquity doth already work. (II Thes. 2:7) These words were written 2000 years ago. Yet both apostles are telling us that the spirit of antichrist was ALREADY at work – at work in the church. Could it be more clearly stated that antichrist is NOT an individual, but a spirit? That antichrist is NOT a political figure, but a religious figure?

The greatest danger is to look outward for a person that is antichrist, all the while antichrist is a spirit working within the church – a collective man –

who is a living denial of Jesus having come in the flesh. But such are the deceptions of the enemy. It is happening right now.

The Deceptions of the Enemy

The entire Word of God is the written standard for the Truth. But in the last two chapters we have seen two, "tests for Truth," directly given to us by the apostles. It is not by accident that the two direct tests for Truth given in the NT – "Jesus is Lord," and, "Jesus having come in the flesh" – both have to do with the reality of Jesus Christ as the Son of Man; The Last Adam. For if this Truth is distorted, then the Redemption itself will be distorted. Indeed, the very meaning of Christianity will be corrupted.