

Truth (I John 4:1-6; 5:1-21)

John's cycles of teaching in this book have been described as one climbing a spiral staircase – bringing us to a higher understanding of the gifts and calling of God. **Obedience, love, and truth** are the recurring themes that call us upward to Christlikeness and assurance of faith. They can also describe descending the spiral staircase – leading us into a practical, deeper introspection. God's truth shall always be the standard by which we can identify and put to the test true faith, obedience, and love. However, we must beware! Throughout the world, God's absolute truth is imitated and counterfeited.

I John 4:1-6 – Beware of False Teachers and Their Teachings!

Teachers are described as “spirits” going out into the world. Whom should we believe? Is there a way to know what is truth? What is the test, by which we can know “the spirit of truth and the spirit of error”?

I John 4:1 – All truth comes from God. Not all teachers are sent by God. Teachers and their teachings must be tested. See **I John 1:5** (cp. Colossians 1:9-13); Proverbs 2:1-9; Matthew 7:7,13-29; II Timothy 3:16-17; Jude 1:3-4.

I John 4:2-3 – What do they say about Jesus Christ? Was He a real man? Was He God who became flesh? Was He just a good teacher? Did His death pay for our sins? Did Jesus really rise from the dead? How important are these things? Do their teachings draw people away from the Gospel or to the Gospel? See **I John 2:18-24**; John 5:22-24,37-39; 8:21-32; 17:1-8.

I John 4:4 – Satan is in the world, trying to confuse and deceive everyone. Satan is the open enemy of Christ – he has created a spirit of antichrist. Only if Christ dwells in your heart by faith can you know and understand the truth. See II Corinthians 4:3-6.

I John 4:5 – False teachers are worldly. They depend on earthly wisdom to produce their followings. They manipulate people by their human emotions and logic. People that do not know Christ will follow them. See Matthew 7:13-29; 15:13-14; Colossians 2:8.

I John 4:6 – God sent His Son to give us the truth (John 18:37; 8:30-32; 14:6). Jesus personally trained and prepared His apostles to be our true guides into the truth of the Gospel (John 17:14-20). Paul was a specially called apostle to the Gentiles (Acts 26;13-18). The other twelve apostles acknowledged Him. Those who know and love the truth will listen to the apostles via the New Testament. Those teachers, who twist the Scriptures, often confuse the teachings of the Old and New Testaments. Most professing Christians have not read the entire New Testament once in their life! See II Peter 3:15-18; I Corinthians 15:1-4; Romans 1:1-5; 16:25-27; I Timothy 1:1-11; II Timothy 3:15-17.

I John 5:1-21 – God’s Testimony Gives us a New Life that Overcomes the World, Sin, and the Wicked One.

I John 5:1-5 – Faith and love will overcome the world. The Gospel of Christ brings a new birth. This new birth produces a life of obedience and love, based on truth. It involves the reciprocal (two-fold) action of 1) loving and obeying God with 2) loving and serving our spiritual family. Because of His love working in us, keeping God’s commandments is not a burdensome chore, but rather a fulfilling way to live. Consider all the temptations, fears, and deceptions that are in the world and realize that the knowledge of the Son of God gives us motivation and power to overcome these worldly forces.

See John 8:30-36; 16:33; 17:1-26; Galatians 1:3-4; 2:20; 5:1,13-26; Romans 12:1-21; Philippians 4:13; II Corinthians 5:14-21; **I John 2:15-17; 5:18-20.**

I John 5:6-13 – We must focus on the testimony of God. The faith that overcomes the world must have the right source and the right object. The source of faith is God’s Word and God’s Spirit. The object of overcoming faith is Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

That Jesus came by “*water and blood*” is best understood if you consider this as a reference to His baptism and His death on the cross. His baptism is where he officially began His earthly ministry. The cross, of course, is where He ended His earthly ministry. The resurrected Christ did more work on earth (Acts 1:1-9), but that is beside the point. Here we are focusing on God’s testimony of His Son. At the baptism, God’s Spirit appeared in the form of a dove, while the Father’s voice spoke of His approval of His Son (Matthew 3:13-17 cp. John 1:29-34). At the cross, God did many amazing things that demonstrated that Jesus was the Son of God (e.g. Matthew 27:46-54). Besides this, God’s Word, hundreds of years before, foretold the ministry of the Messiah. Jesus’ life and ministry fulfilled those predictions. By these fulfilled prophecies we can know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God (John 5:30-47; Luke 24:25-27,44-48 cp. II Peter 1:16-21).

To receive God’s testimony about His Son (i.e. gospel truth of the Bible) is to receive eternal life. To reject God’s testimony is the same as calling God a liar. Ignore or reject the Bible evidence and you face eternal loss.

[Note I John 5:7-8: Newer Bible translation differ greatly with the KJV and NKJV. See the Addendum on the next page.]

I John 5:14-21 – Responsibility to God’s truth. God’s truth makes us free – free to have a powerful prayer life; free from a life controlled by sin; free from the powerful, worldly, wicked control of the wicked one; free from ignorance. Through the knowledge of God’s Son, we have eternal life – now! God will discipline us and use us, but we must not be hypocritically careless about sin or about lustful idols in our life. See II Timothy 2:1-13.

Addendum: The Challenge of Dealing with I John 5:7-8

(The Johannine Comma)

*“For there are three that bear record **in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.**” I John 5:7-8 (KJV)*

[the **bold letters** indicate the controversial portion – that does not appear in the newer translations.]

I John 5:7-8 is a difficult place in Scripture to explain – not because it is that hard to understand, but because of the complication created by the fact that the English Bible has contained all of it from about the Sixteenth century until near the end of Nineteenth century. But in the late 1800's 24 English words (most of verse seven and part of verse 8) were omitted because no Greek manuscripts prior to the Sixteenth century could be found to contain those words (one exception – in the tenth century there was a Greek manuscript found with the words in the margin). They were only found in Latin manuscripts. So, newer translations do not contain that portion of I John 5:7-8. The KJV and the NKJV, along with a few others, retain all of it. Time and space do not allow for a deep discussion of this problem. So, the following words of explanation may seem like an over-simplification. Historically, there have always been controversial theories about the deity of Christ and the Trinity. Because of two thousand years of heretical teachers, religious debates and an enormous amount of copying / translating manuscripts, involving Greek, Latin, and English, the story of how the New Testament got to us is very complicated and often dramatic. Here are some things to consider for now:

- I John 5:6-13,20 teaches that God the Father and God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are all united as one solid witness that Jesus Christ is the sinless One, sent to be the only Savior of the world.
- The early English translators (e.g. Tyndale, Luther, KJV translators) believed in the deity of Christ and in the Trinity of God. They used what they felt were the best manuscripts.
- The later English translators (except for a few heretical movements) also believed in the deity of Christ and in the Trinity of God. They used what they felt were the best manuscripts.
- If you wanted to destroy the Bible's teaching of Christ's deity and of the Trinity, you would have to remove or tamper with a vast amount more verses than I John 5:7-8.
- Both categories of translators, mentioned above, would agree that the questioned words of verse seven and eight are true statements.

- There are a few instances of early church Fathers / Bishops using the questioned words during the third – sixth centuries. Most early church Fathers did not. The words are not cited in any of the great, historic Trinitarian debates of Arianism and Sabellianism.
- There is plenty of other Scripture to use for the teaching and defending of the doctrine of Christ's deity and the doctrine of the Trinity. It is best, if you enter a debate with someone about these doctrines, to not use I John 5:7 as a proof-text. You will just be drug into a debate about manuscripts and dates. Most of us would be wearied and distracted in the process.
- **You do not have a Bible full of errors!** For hundreds of years this book has been checked and rechecked. No book in the world has been more scrutinized (by proponents and antagonists alike). There are more manuscripts of the Bible, carefully documented and cataloged, than of any other piece of literature in existence. Books that comment on the Bible and its teaching fill the earth. That men have handled this book for thousands of years and have created discrepancies about its thousands of manuscripts and hundreds of thousands of words should be no surprise. All the truth of Scripture is supported by any honestly, reverently, handled translation. Some do a better job than others. But God's Word will not be destroyed by man! See Matthew 24:35; Isaiah 40:6-8; I Peter 1:23-25; Psalm 119:89.