

1 John 4:2 Commentary

PREVIOUS

NEXT

CLICK VERSE

To go directly to that verse

[1 John 4:1](#)
[1 John 4:2](#)
[1 John 4:3](#)
[1 John 4:4](#)
[1 John 4:5](#)
[1 John 4:6](#)
[1 John 4:7](#)
[1 John 4:8](#)
[1 John 4:9](#)
[1 John 4:10](#)
[1 John 4:11](#)
[1 John 4:12](#)
[1 John 4:13](#)
[1 John 4:14](#)
[1 John 4:15](#)
[1 John 4:16](#)
[1 John 4:17](#)
[1 John 4:18](#)
[1 John 4:19](#)
[1 John 4:20](#)
[1 John 4:21](#)

FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD AND HIS CHILDREN
Click chart to enlarge
Charts from [Jensen's Survey of the NT](#) - used by permission
Another Overview Chart - [1 John](#) - Charles Swindoll

BASIS OF FELLOWSHIP		BEHAVIOR OF FELLOWSHIP	
Conditions of Fellowship	Cautions of Fellowship	Fellowship Characteristics	Fellowship Consequences
Meaning of Fellowship 1 Jn 1:1-2:27		Manifestations of Fellowship 1 Jn 2:28-5:21	
Abiding in God's Light		Abiding in God's Love	
Written in Ephesus			
circa 90 AD			

From Talk Thru the Bible

1 John 4:2 By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God:

Greek - en touto ginostete (PAI) to pneuma tou theou pan pneuma o homologei (PAI) lesoun Christon en sarki eleluthota (RAP) ek tou theou estin (PAI):

- **every spirit** - 1Jn 5:1 John 16:13-15 1Co 12:3**come** - 1Jn 4:3 John 1:14 1Ti 3:16
- [1 John 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- Related Resource: Critiques of Online Resources for First John

THE DIVINE TEST: CHRISTOLOGICAL CONFESSION

NLT This is how we know if they have the Spirit of God: If a person claiming to be a prophet acknowledges that Jesus Christ came in a real body, that person has the Spirit of God.

Wuest - In this you know experientially the Spirit of God. Every spirit who agrees that Jesus Christ in the sphere of flesh is come, is of God.

KJV Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: (Notice that KJV translates "**know**" as an imperative, which a few modern scholars agree with, but most do not, instead favoring this as an indicative. The latter feel John was instructing and not commanding in this verse.)

Hiebert on 1Jn 4:1-6 - These verses show no close connection with what follows and are best viewed as an elaboration of the reference to "the Spirit which he hath given us" in 3:24. The conflict now presented forms the final aspect of the conflicts that mark the Christian life which John has been depicting since 2:18. He has already dealt with the conflict between truth and falsehood (2:18-28), the conflict between the children of God and the children of the Devil (2:29-3:12), and the conflict between love and hatred (3:13-24). This section points to the supernatural character of this conflict as ultimately involving "the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error." It sets forth the crucial importance of the proclamation of a sound Christology for assurance and victory in the Christian community. ([The Epistles of John- An Expository Commentary](#))

Steven Cole explains why John gives the divine test - A false teacher may be gentle and loving. He may speak prophecies that come true. He may even perform miracles or cast out demons or speak in tongues (Mt. 7:22; Ex. 7:11, 22; 8:7; Dt. 13:1-3). But, the question is, does he lead people to follow a false god? ([Spiritual Discernment 1 John 4:1-6](#))

By this (en touto) - Always pause and asks **By what?** To what is the author referring? To something he has stated before or something he is going to state subsequently? In this case **by this** refers to that which follows. John gives the believers a straightforward test to prove whether a prophet is energized by the Holy Spirit.

A T Robertson - With the clamor of voices then and now this is important. ([Word Pictures](#))

John uses the phrase **by this** 12 times in First John (out of a total of 41 NT uses) - 1John 2:3, 5; 3:10, 16, 19, 24; 4:2, 6, 9, 13, 17; 5:2

John Trapp on **by this you know** - Bring it to this test. Gold may be rubbed or melted, it remains orient; so doth truth. Whereas error, as glass (bright, but brittle), cannot endure the hammer of fire. ([1 John 4 Commentary](#))

You know ([1097](#))(ginosko) means you perceive or know by experience and **present tense** indicates their continual knowing of this truth. **Vine** adds that John is saying "*you know by experience of facts*" and so are able to recognize. The experience is comprehensive and belongs to all true believers."

You know the Spirit of God - That is, **the Spirit of God** filling and controlling and enabling proclamation of sound doctrine, specifically the truth about Jesus Christ. If a preacher or teacher is truly of the Spirit of God, he must accept both the full Deity and full Humanity both existing at the same time in the Person of Jesus Christ. As an aside, this underscores the importance of all preachers of God's truth to be empowered by the Spirit of Truth! The preacher is to be a vessel of honor, but not the one who receives the glory. I am reminded of stories I have received of pastors who are preaching almost verbatim the words of other men! While they are not preaching false doctrines, they could hardly be preaching under the influence of the Spirit of God in their "plagiarized preaching!"

Every spirit - That is, this test is to be universally applied, so that all are either approved or rejected on the basis of this test. One wonders if modern leaders ever apply this test to those that are teaching under them? I have been a teacher for over 30 years and no one has ever specifically given me this test. I once attended a church where I was suspicious of the teachings of a seminary trained man and shortly after I begin attending his class (one that he knew I would not normally attend), he moved on within a few weeks to another local church! I did not even have to directly test him!

Vine on **every spirit** - The phrase **every spirit** does not refer to other beings than human, but to the person whose spirit is acted upon by the Holy Spirit, through whose instrumentality he confesses the truth. ([The Collected Writings of W. E. Vine](#))

Confesses is in the **present tense** which means this is not just a one time confession, but is their continual confession.

William MacDonald - It is not so much the **confession of the historical fact**, namely that Jesus was born into the world in a

human body, but rather it is the ***confession of a living Person***, Jesus Christ come in the flesh. It is the confession that acknowledges Jesus as the Christ Incarnate. And confessing Him means bowing to Him as Lord of one's life. Now if you ever hear a person presenting the Lord Jesus as the true Christ of God, you will know that he is speaking by the Spirit of God. The Spirit of God calls on men to acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord and to commit their lives to Him. The Holy Spirit always glorifies Jesus. ([Believer's Bible Commentary- recommended commentary on the entire Bible](#)) (Bold italics added)

Steven Cole on **confesses** - To **confess** that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh means to agree with that statement, but it also means something more. The demons all agree that Jesus Christ is the Son of God who has come in the flesh (Mk 1:24; 3:11; 5:7). To **confess** this truth about Jesus implies submitting your life to Him as Lord (Ro. 10:9-10). ([Spiritual Discernment 1 John 4:1-6](#))

Ray Stedman adds that **confession** means that "There must be a commitment of the life to this truth. This is what the word confess means here. It is more than a mere acknowledgment or a profession that this is true; it is a commitment. It means to actually trust this great declared fact and this great historic person. Anyone who does not actually trust it, and live by it, do not listen to them either. They may acknowledge it, but they must also confess it, that is the important thing. Remember that back in the Gospel accounts there were demons that acknowledged the deity of the Lord Jesus? When he appeared before them they said, "We know who you are, the Holy One of God," Mark 1:24, Luke 4:34). They acknowledged what the Jews were too blind to see, the full deity of Jesus Christ, as well as his humanity. But, though demons acknowledged this, they never confessed it. They never trusted him. They did not commit themselves to him, they did not live by this truth. Through the course of history there have been many religious leaders, popes, priests, and many others, Protestant and Catholic alike, who have acknowledged the deity of the Lord Jesus and his humanity, but they have never trusted it, they have never committed themselves to it, they have never confessed it. Therefore, even though acknowledgment is there, there is failure, and it is the spirit of error that prevails... That question ought to be asked of every religious teacher, everywhere. Then: Do you follow him? Do you live by this? Are you committed to him -- is he your Lord, your strength, and everything you need? How many would fail if we gave that test? How many fail, even at the first question? ([When Unbelief is Right - 1 John 4:1-3](#))

John Piper - What Does "Confess" Mean? But this creates a problem for us. We know that there are people who can say true things about Jesus who are not in fact born of God or indwelt by the Holy Spirit. If we paid him enough, we could call someone off the street and get him to make any confession we wanted here in front of the whole church, and it would be no evidence at all of his belonging to God. And Jesus said, "Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 7:21). In other words, merely saying right things about Jesus is no sign of the Holy Spirit's presence... Signs of the Spirit's Reality - My conclusion is that what 1Jn 4:2 means is this: "By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit which sincerely confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh and which has a corresponding disposition of loving reverence and submission to Jesus Christ, is of God." So the sign of the Spirit's reality is not merely the truth of the words coming out of the mouth of a prophet, but also the disposition corresponding to that truth.

A T Robertson on **confesses** - describes Jesus as already come in the flesh (his actual humanity, not a phantom body as the Docetic Gnostics held [[What is Docetism?](#)]). See this same idiom in 2 John 1:7 with *erchomenon* (coming). A like test is proposed by Paul for confessing the deity of Jesus Christ in 1Corinthians 12:3 and for the Incarnation and Resurrection of Jesus in Ro 10:6-10. ([Word Pictures](#))

Related Resources:

- [What is Christian Gnosticism?](#)
- [What is the definition of the term Gnostic?](#)
- [What is Docetism?](#)

Confesses (acknowledges) ([3670](#))(**homologeō** from **homos** = one and the same or together with+ **legō** = to say; confess from **con** = together, **fateōr** = to say) literally means to say the same thing as another and so to agree with another's statements. As discussed above (see especially Ray Stedman's remarks), this confess is not merely a verbal acknowledgement.

Marvin Vincent on **homologeō** - The fundamental idea of confess is that of saying the same thing as another; while profess (*pro* = forth, *fateōr* = to say) is to declare openly. Hence, to profess Christ is to declare Him publicly as our Lord: to confess Christ is to declare agreement with all that He says. When Christ confesses His followers before the world, He makes a declaration in agreement with what is in His heart concerning them. Similarly, when He declares to the wicked "I never knew you" ("then will I profess"), a similar agreement between His thought and His declaration is implied. The two ideas run into each other, and the Rev. is right in the few cases in which it retains *profess*, since *confess* would be ambiguous. See, for example, Titus 1:16-**note**.

NIDNTT notes that in the secular use of **homologeō** "The legal connotation is dominant. A man agrees with another's statement, concedes or confesses something (e.g. his guilt before a judge), agrees to something (e.g. another's wish) and so promises. This agreement expresses itself in an act of commitment, promise, or confession in a court or legal contract. The religious use of the

words is probably derived primarily from their use in the language of treaties and the law-courts. The man who binds himself by an oath (homologeō) enters into a treaty relationship with the deity. This concept was then transferred from the solemn confession of wrong-doing before a court of law to the confession of sin to the deity. These concepts were used especially in the oriental cults, as may be seen from Lydian and Phrygian expiatory inscriptions. In modern Gk. the concept has come to mean sacramental confession to a priest: exomologeomai, I make my confession; oēxomologe, I hear a confession. ([Brown, Colin, Editor. New International Dictionary of NT Theology. 1986. Zondervan](#))

Vine makes a point that in John's day most did not have access to the full canon of Scripture so that "believers were encouraged, by the promised guidance of the Holy Spirit, John 16:13, to compare utterances claiming to be spiritual, 1Corinthians 2:13-**note**, and so to test the prophecy and the spirit that prompted it, 1Cor 14:29; 1 John 4:6; Revelation 2:2." ([The Collected Writings of W.E. Vine](#))

Pilate asked the correct question "What is truth?" but failed to see and confess that Jesus is the Christ the very personification of Truth.

Jesus Christ (6x in 6v in every chapter - 1Jn 1:3, 2:1, 3:23, 4:2, 5:6, 5:20 [cp 2Jn 1:3, 7], twice John uses the phrase "Jesus is the Christ" - 1Jn 2:22, 5:1) - **Jesus** emphasizes His humanity and **Christ** His deity.

Jesus ([2424](#))(**lesous** is [transliteration](#) of the Greek **lesous**, which in turn is the transliteration of the Hebrew name [Jehoshua](#) ([Yehoshua](#)) or [Jeshua](#) ([Yeshua](#)) which mean *Jehovah is help* or *Jehovah is salvation*. Stated another way the Greek **lesous** corresponds to the OT [Jehoshua](#) ([Yehoshua](#)) which is contracted as [Jeshua](#) ([Yeshua](#)).

Christ ([5547](#))(**Christos** from **chrīo** = to rub or anoint, consecrate to an office) means one who has been anointed, symbolizing appointment to a task. The majority of the NT uses refer to Jesus (exceptions = "false Christs" - Mt 24:24, Mk 13:22).

Wuest adds that "The name "**Jesus**" is the English form of the Greek **lēsous**, and this is the Greek form of the Hebrew name "Jehoshua" which means "Jehovah saves." "**Christ**" is from **Christos**, "the Anointed One." ([Word Studies from the Greek New Testament](#))

Jesus Christ has come in the flesh - John's first test of the spirit of a teacher is whether they accept and proclaim the doctrine of the incarnation, God robed in humanity. Fully God and at the same time Fully Man, in a real flesh and blood physical body.

Laurin remarks - Had there been no incarnation, Christ would have been an apotheosis, a man moving toward God. Christianity would have been only another approach toward God. Christ would have been only a godlike man. But there was an incarnation, God moved toward man. Because of that Christianity is in reality God's approach to man. Christ is in fact a manlike God. The incarnation is what makes Christianity distinctly unlike any other system. ([First John- Life at Its Best- Roy L. Laurin](#))

In John 1:1 the apostle writes "In the beginning was the **Word**, and the **Word** was with God, and the **Word was God**." All orthodox writers would agree the Word refers to Jesus Who has always existed and always been God. Then in John 1:14 he writes that "the **Word became flesh**, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth." So in a sentence John sums up the incarnation of the Word. Any spirit which denied (or denies today) the reality of the Incarnation was not of God.

Has come (erchomai) is in the **perfect tense** which signifies the permanent or abiding effect of Jesus having come at a point in time (incarnation) in the flesh. In the Revelation, John uses the perfect tense to describe the Christ "**as if slain**" (Rev 5:6, 12-[note](#)) indicating He continues to bear the scars (immutable marks of the New Covenant-see discussion under **The Oneness of Covenant - Co-mingling of blood**) of Calvary and will do so throughout eternity. In fact it has been said that "the only man-made thing in heaven will be the scars of the Savior!" Hallelujah!

Wuest adds that **has come** is "in the **perfect tense** in the Greek text. From the foregoing it follows that the statement speaks of the God of the Old Testament Who in the Person of His Son became incarnate in human flesh without its sin, died on the Cross to satisfy the just demands of His law which man broke, and raised Himself from the dead in the body in which He died, to become the living Saviour of the sinner who places his faith in Him in view of what He did for him on Calvary's Cross. The person who teaches that, John says, is actuated by the Holy Spirit. Likewise, the teacher who does not agree to that doctrine is not of God. He is actuated by the spirit of Antichrist who denies and is against all that the Bible teaches regarding the person and work of the Lord Jesus. This is Modernism." (See [Discussion of Modernism](#); since "**modernism**" was followed by "postmodernism" see [What is post-modern Christianity?](#) and [What are the dangers of postmodernism?](#))

Vine on in the flesh - As the Gospel states, "the Word became flesh" (Jn 1:14-[note](#)). Christ "was born of the seed of David according to the flesh" (Ro 1:3-[note](#)). Cp. Galatians 4:4. Christ partook of flesh and blood (Heb. 2:14-[note](#))... All the Gnostic sects denied this truth. They maintained a distinction between Christ (whom they called an aeon) and the man Jesus. The apostle maintains the truth that Jesus Christ is one inseparable person and that He has become flesh. Compare Colossians 2:9-[note](#) - "For

in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form." ([The Collected Writings of W. E. Vine](#))

Hiebert observes that "In saying that Jesus Christ came **"in flesh"** (en sarki), rather than **"into flesh"** (eis sarka), John repudiates Cerinthian Gnosticism. Cerinthus (c. A.D. 100), a late contemporary of John the Apostle at Ephesus, separated Jesus from Christ. He taught that the "Christ spirit" came upon the man Jesus, the son of Joseph and Mary, at his baptism and empowered his ministry but left him before his crucifixion; it was only the man Jesus who died and rose again. Cerinthus thus rejected the doctrine of the incarnation and consequently obliterated the Christian doctrine of the atonement... This permanent union of the divine and the human in the person of Jesus Christ qualifies Him to be the mediator between God and men (1Ti 2:5). He is the all-sufficient Saviour. The Apostolic teaching concerning the incarnate Christ "gathers within its total significance the other great doctrinal truths such as the Virgin Birth, the Crucifixion, and the Resurrection. The Incarnation is the essential creed of Christianity; on this doctrine all else which calls itself Christian stands or falls." ([The Epistles of John- An Expository Commentary](#))

Kistemaker - Sixteenth-century German theologian Zacharias Ursinus asked whether these two natures are separated from each other. This is his answer: "Certainly not. For since the divinity is not limited and is present everywhere, it is evident that Christ's divinity is surely beyond the bounds of the humanity he has taken on, but at the same time his divinity is in and remains personally united to his humanity." ([New Testament Commentary - James, Epistles of John, Peter, and Jude](#))

Craig Keener - The issue may be the secessionists' denial that Jesus has come as the Christ (if the opposition is Jewish); more likely it is a Docetic denial that Jesus was actually human and actually died (see introduction), a heresy an eyewitness would be well positioned to refute. It may simply be a relativizing of Jesus' role to the position of a prophet like John the Baptist, which allows enough compromise to avoid persecution. Whatever the error, the secessionists are claiming the authority of inspiration for it, as do some similar cults today. John does not deny the reality of the inspiration; he merely denies that the spirit working in them is God's Spirit. ([The IVP Bible Background Commentary- New Testament](#)) (Bolding added)

MacArthur - John accentuates the crucial importance of sound doctrine expressed in God's Word as the only absolute and trustworthy standard (cf. Isa 8:20). ([MacArthur Study Bible](#))

Ray Stedman - Jesus is his human name. He never was called Jesus when he was the eternal Son of God, before the incarnation. It was only when he was born as a babe in Bethlehem and grew up in Nazareth that he bore the human name of Jesus; Jesus of Nazareth. But the whole teaching of Scripture is that this Jesus of Nazareth, this historical Jesus, this man who grew up and lived and ate and slept and walked with men, who prayed and talked and taught them, is the Messiah of the Old Testament, the predicted One, the Son of God who was to come, the eternal One, God himself, who would come into human history -- they are one and the same. This is the Spirit of truth. Jesus is the Christ, come in the flesh. Jesus of Nazareth is identical with and indivisible from that promised Messiah of the Old Testament. Have you noticed that Jesus makes this claim about himself? In John 10, he says of certain who have gone before him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber [i.e., if someone comes to you by another process than the predicted way, the way that has been announced, he is a thief and a robber; he is a false prophet, he is a false Christ, he is an antichrist]; but he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the gatekeeper opens; the sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out," (John 10:1-3 RSV). Then he says, "I am that good shepherd. I came in the predicted way, the way the prophets announced. I was born in the right place, at the right time, in the right way. I came exactly as it was announced. I am the door; I am the shepherd of the sheep," John 10:14 ff). Now any teacher of spiritual matters who confesses this, John says, is of the truth, is of God. But any teacher who stands up and professes to teach men about God but who does not confess this, is not of God. Do not listen to him, pay no attention to him. Regardless of how beautifully he talks, he is not of God. He is of the spirit of error, the spirit of antichrist, that has already gone out into the world. Plain language, is it not? It is amazing how we have forgotten and neglected it. This is the paramount doctrine which can never be compromised, the divine-human person of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the one thing that is basic and fundamental to all Christian faith. He appeared in the flesh, he came as a man, humbled himself, and became obedient unto the death of the cross... Now, measure some of these voices today: Here is the Christian Scientist, who says that Jesus -- as a man upon whom the Spirit of Christ came -- the Spirit of Christ is the eternal One and he came upon Jesus at his baptism and left him again before he died upon the cross. Jesus, therefore, was born as a mere man and died as a mere man, and the only part of his ministry that is worth anything to us is his public ministry of teaching when he was influenced by the Spirit of Christ. That is not what John says. John says that the spirit which confesses that Jesus is the Christ, that the two are identical, one and the same, never to be separated -- that is the Spirit which is of God. Anything else is the spirit of error and of antichrist. Take the gospel of the Mormons. They say that Jesus never was the eternal unchangeable God, but he was a man who became God and came to show us how we, too, might become gods some day. Is that the gospel? Of course not. It is the spirit of error, of antichrist... There are even many who are orthodox in doctrine and who say, "Yes, of course we believe Jesus is the Christ come in the flesh. We have that in our creed, we can show it to you. It is written in our hymn books. We confess it every Sunday morning when we stand up in church, 'We believe in God the Father Almighty, and in Jesus Christ, His Son, our Lord.'" But do they confess Him, do they live by Him? Have they committed themselves to this One in whom they profess to believe? This is the searching question John asks. If they do not confess Him, if they do not live by Him, then do not follow them, their error is as deadly as those who deny that

he came in the flesh. Many young people are finding today that dead orthodoxy has no more power to deliver than heresy and apostasy has. It is those who live by him, follow him, obey him, live by his life -- these are the ones to follow. If you do not do that you can never be my teacher. I do not want to listen to any voice that professes to talk about the inner things of man's life and his relationship to an eternal God, which does not confess that Jesus is Christ come in the flesh, or who does not demonstrate in his life that he lives by that principle. Test it. ([When Unbelief is Right - 1 John 4:1-3](#))

"What think you of Christ? is the test
To try both your state and your scheme.
You can never think right of the rest
Until you think highly of Him."

As **Paul** wrote

And by common confession great is the mystery (mysterious and even foolish to the unregenerate world and made visible to the eyes of one's heart ONLY be the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit, cp Eph 1:9-**note**) of godliness: **He who was revealed in the flesh**, Was vindicated in the Spirit, Beheld by angels, Proclaimed among the nations, Believed on in the world, Taken up in glory. (1Ti 3:16)

Below is an excerpt from **Dr Wayne Grudem's** outline on the [The Humanity of Christ](#). ([Listen to Dr Grudem's Mp3 for more detailed discussion](#))

The Incarnation: deity and humanity in the one person of Christ

1. Three inadequate views of the person of Christ

a. Apollinarianism (Apollinaris became bishop in Laodicea about A.D. 361)

- (1) Christ had a human body only
- (2) mind and spirit of Christ were from divine nature
- (3) example: meeting "Mickey Mouse" at Disney World (see Fig. 26.1)
- (4) Problem: our minds and spirits need salvation too! (such a Christ: not really true man to represent us)
- (5) Christ had human mind, spirit: Lk 2:52; Jn 12:27; 13:31; Heb 4:15; 5:7, etc.
- (6) Rejected by several church councils (**362-381** = **page location in Grudem's excellent Systematic Theology- An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine**)

b. Nestorianism (Nestorius was a popular preacher at Antioch; after 428: bishop of Constantinople)

- (1) Christ was 2 distinct persons in one body: (a) the human person; (b) the divine person
- (2) Example: circus "horse" (see Fig. 26.2)
- (3) Problem: Gospels show Jesus as "I" not "we"-- never seen as two persons in Gospels
- (4) Nestorius probably never taught the heretical view that goes by his name

c. Monophysitism (Eutychianism) (Greek monos, "one", and physis, "nature") (Eutyches - 378-454) was the leader of a monastery at Constantinople)

- (1) Human nature absorbed into divine nature
- (2) Something entirely new resulted (greater than human, less than divine)
- (3) Example: drop of ink in water (see Fig. 26.3)
- (4) Problem: both humanity and deity are lost!

2. Solution to the controversy: Chalcedonian Creed (see below) (Chalcedon: a city near Constantinople) Affirmed by Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant churches ever since

3. Combining specific texts on Christ's deity and humanity

a. One nature does some things that the other nature does not do ("the property of each nature is preserved" ... see below for Chalcedonian Creed)

- (1) Jesus' human nature ascended to heaven and is no longer in the world, but His divine

nature is everywhere present. (John 16:28; 17:11; Acts 1:9-11; Mt. 28:20; Jn 14:23)

(2) Jesus was 30 years old (Luke 3:23), but also eternally existed (John 1:1-2; 8:58)

(3) Jesus was weak and tired in his human nature (Mt. 4:2; 8:24; Mk 15:21; Jn 4:6), but his divine nature was omnipotent (Mt. 8:26-27, Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3)

(4) While Jesus was asleep in the boat (Mt. 8:24) he was also “continually carrying along all things by his word of power” (Heb. 1:3).

(5) Jesus’ human nature died (Lk 23:46; 1 Cor. 15:3), but his divine nature did not die, but was able to raise himself from the dead (John 2:19; 10:17-18; Heb. 7:16)

b. To preserve the reality of Jesus’ human nature, we must say that Jesus had two wills (a human will and a divine will) and two centers of consciousness (human and divine)

(1) Jesus’ human consciousness did not know the time of his return (Mark 13:32), but his divine consciousness knew all things (John 16:30)

(2) Jesus’ human will was tempted (Heb. 4:15) but his divine will could not be tempted (James 1:13)

4. Anything either nature does, the person of Christ does

Jn 8:58 “Before Abraham was, I am”

Jn 16:28 “I am leaving the world”

Matt 28:20 “I am with you always”

1 Cor. 15:3 “Christ died for our sins”

(Excerpt from [The Humanity of Christ.](#)) ([Listen to Dr Grudem's in depth Mp3](#))

THE CHALCEDONIAN CREED (451 A.D.) “We, then, following the holy Fathers, all with one consent, teach men to confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the same perfect in Godhead and also perfect in manhood; truly God and truly man, of a reasonable soul and body; consubstantial [homoousios-- “same nature”] with the Father according to the Godhead, and consubstantial with us according to the Manhood; in all things like unto us, without sin; begotten before all ages of the Father according to the Godhead, and in these latter days, for us and for our salvation, born of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, according to the Manhood; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, to be acknowledged in two natures, inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably; the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved, and concurring in one Person and one Subsistence, not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son, and only begotten, God the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ, as the prophets from the beginning have declared concerning him, and the Lord Jesus Christ himself has taught us, and the Creed of the holy Fathers has handed down to us.

Related Resources:

- [Is Jesus God in the flesh- Why is it important that Jesus is God in the flesh?](#)
- [Why is the humanity of Jesus important?](#)
- [What is the meaning of the Incarnation of Christ?](#)
- [What does incarnate mean? How was Jesus God incarnate?](#)
- [How can the Incarnation be reconciled with God's immutability?](#)
- [What is the hypostatic union? How can Jesus be both God and man at the same time?](#)
- [Cerinthus - Wikipedia](#)

Steven Cole notes that - John’s test requires believing in the true deity and humanity of Jesus. “Has come” implies His preexistence as the eternal Son of God. Jesus stated His own preexistence when He told the Jews, “Before Abraham was born, I am” (John 8:58). Or, as John begins his gospel (John 1:1), “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

When John states (1John 4:2) that “Jesus Christ has come in the flesh,” he is referring not only to His true deity, but also to His true humanity. The Docetists taught that matter is evil; thus Jesus was only a spirit-being who seemed to be a real man. The Cerinthian Gnostics, whom John was probably combating, taught that Jesus was a mere man, but that “the Christ,” a divine emanation, came upon Him at His baptism, but left just before His crucifixion. John’s test refutes both of these heresies. Jesus is the Christ (the Anointed One, or Messiah) who was conceived supernaturally by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the virgin Mary. He had a human

body, although apart from sin.

To deny that Jesus is true God and at the same time true man is to deny the Christian faith. To deny either Jesus' deity or His humanity is to deny that He is our Savior. If He were not God, He would have been a sinner and His death on the cross could not have atoned for anything beyond His own sins. If He were not man, He could not have assumed our sins on the cross (Heb. 2:14-17). Thus faith in Him to save from sin would be worthless. Thus any teaching that denies that Jesus is true God and true man, that as the second person of the trinity, Jesus took on human flesh in the incarnation, is a doctrine of demons. It is the spirit of antichrist.

Implicit in John's warning here is that the content of our theology matters greatly! The difference between a person in a false cult who is going to hell and a true believer in Jesus Christ, who is going to heaven, is largely one of theology. Cultists are often more zealous and more knowledgeable about what they believe than we are. But, they deny that Jesus is true God in human flesh; we affirm it. John Calvin observes (Calvin's Commentaries [Baker], on 4:2, p. 232), "Yet he only repeats here what we have met with before, that as Christ is the object at which faith aims, so he is the stone at which all heretics stumble. As long then as we abide in Christ, there is safety; but when we depart from him, faith is lost, and all truth is rendered void." So I encourage you to study sound doctrine, especially with regard to the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Thus John has shown us why we must be discerning, because Satan and his forces are actively trying to deceive us on essential biblical truth. He has shown us that the basis for discernment is a person's confession about Jesus Christ as true God and true man. ([Spiritual Discernment 1 John 4:1-6](#))

John MacArthur illustrates the danger of drifting from the solid foundation of the truth about Jesus Christ - "There once was an old church in England. A sign on the front of the building read "We preach Christ crucified." After a time, ivy grew up and obscured the last word... "We preach Christ." The ivy grew some more, and motto read, "We preach." Finally, ivy covered the entire sign, and the church died. Such is the fate of any church that fails to carry out its mission in the world."

William Barclay gives us an interesting historical context for John's warning about the spirit of the world - Behind this warning is a situation of which we in the modern church know little or nothing. In the early church there was a surging life of the Spirit which brought its own perils. There were so many and such diverse spiritual manifestations that some kind of test was necessary. Let us try to think ourselves back into that electric atmosphere.

(i) Even in Old Testament times men realized the perils of false prophets who were men of spiritual power. Deuteronomy 13:1-5 demands that the false prophet who sought to lure men away from the true God should be put to death; but it frankly and freely admits that he may promise signs and wonders and perform them. The spiritual power is there, but it is evil and misdirected.

(ii) In the early church the spiritual world was very near. All the world believed in a universe thronged with demons and spirits. Every rock and tree and river and grove and lake and mountain had its spiritual power; and these spiritual powers were always seeking entry into men's bodies and minds. In the time of the early church all men lived in a haunted world and men were never so conscious of being surrounded by spiritual powers.

(iii) That ancient world was very conscious of a personal power of evil. It did not speculate about its source, but it was sure that it was there and that it was seeking for men who might be its instruments. It follows that not only the universe but also the minds of men provided the battleground on which the power of the light and the power of the dark fought out the issue.

(iv) In the early church the coming of the Spirit was a much more visible phenomenon than is common nowadays. It was usually connected with baptism; and when the Spirit came things happened that anyone could see. The man who received the Spirit was visibly affected. When the apostles came down to Samaria, after the preaching of Philip, and conferred the gift of the Spirit on the new converts, the effects were so startling that the local magician, Simon Magus, wished to buy the power to produce them (Acts 8:17-18). The coming of the Spirit on Cornelius and his people was something which anyone could see (Acts 10:44-45). In the early church there was an ecstatic element in the coming of the Spirit whose effects were violent and obvious.

(v) This had its effect in the congregational life of the early church. The best commentary on this passage of John is, in fact, Corinthians 14:1-40. Because of the power of the Spirit men spoke with tongues. That is to say, they poured out a flood of Spirit-given sounds in no known language, which no one could understand unless there was someone present who had the Spirit-given power to interpret. So extraordinary was this phenomenon that Paul does not hesitate to say that, if a stranger came into a congregation in which it was in action, he would think that he had arrived in an assembly of madmen (1Corinthians 14:2; 1Corinthians 14:23; 1Corinthians 14:27). Even the prophets, who delivered their message in plain language, were a problem. They were so moved by the Spirit that they could not wait for each other to finish and each would leap to his feet determined to shout out his Spirit-given message (1Corinthians 14:26-27; 1Corinthians 14:33). A service of worship in an early Christian congregation was very different from the placidity of most modern church services. So diverse were the manifestations of the Spirit that Paul numbers the discerning of spirits among the spiritual gifts which a Christian might possess (1Corinthians 12:10). We can see what might happen in such a case when Paul speaks of the possibility of a man saying in a spirit that Christ is accursed (1Corinthians 12:3).

When we come further down in Christian history we find the problem still more acute. The Didache, The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles, is the first service order book and is to be dated not long after A.D. 100. It has regulations on how to deal with the wandering apostles and prophets who came and went amongst the Christian congregations. "Not every one who speaks in a spirit is a prophet; he is only a prophet if he walks in the ways of the Lord" (Didache 11 and 12). The matter reached its peak and ne plus ultra when, in the third century, Montanus burst upon the Church with the claim that he was nothing less than the promised Paraclete and that he proposed to tell the Church the things which Christ had said his apostles could not at the moment bear.

The early church was full of this surging life of the Spirit. The exuberance of life had not been organized out of the Church. It was a great age; but its very exuberance had its dangers. If there was a personal power of evil, men could be used by him. If there were evil spirits as well as the Holy Spirit, men could be occupied by them. Men could delude themselves into a quite subjective experience in which they thought--quite honestly--that they had a message from the Spirit.

All this is in John's mind; and it is in face of that surging atmosphere of pulsating spiritual life that he sets out his criteria to judge between the true and the false. We, for our part, may well feel that with all its perils, the exuberant vitality of the early church was a far better thing than the apathetic placidity of so much of the life of the modern church. **It was surely better that men should expect the Spirit everywhere than that they should expect him nowhere.** ([William Barclay's Daily Study Bible](#))

Warren Wiersbe - George Whitefield, the great British evangelist, was speaking to a man about his soul. He asked the man, "Sir, what do you believe?" "I believe what my church believes," the man replied respectfully. "And what does your church believe?" "The same thing I believe." "And what do both of you believe?" the preacher inquired again. "We both believe the same thing!" was the only reply he could get. - A man is not saved by assenting to a church creed. He is saved by trusting Jesus Christ and bearing witness to his faith (Ro 10:9-10). False teachers will often say, "We worship the Father. We believe in God the Father, even though we disagree with you about Jesus Christ." But to deny the Son means to deny the Father also. You cannot separate the Father and the Son, since both are one God. Jesus says, "I and My Father are One" (John 10:30). He also makes it clear that true believers honor both the Father and the Son: "That all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He that honoreth not the Son honoreth not the Father which hath sent Him" (John 5:23). If you say you "worship one God" but leave Jesus Christ out of your worship, you are not worshiping as a true Christian. (Bible Exposition Commentary)