

Authentic Faith
The Tests of True Christianity
1 John Overview

It's not easy to spot an angel of light or servant of righteousness *in disguise*! That's why the New Testament abounds with warnings about false teachers. These repeated warnings mean we must be very careful to make sure our Christian faith is true and authentic. We need to know that Christianity is objectively true, that the testimony about Jesus is genuine, and not the work of spiritual con artists. **And**, we need to know that our personal faith in Christ is genuine faith.

Since our eternal destiny is at stake, we need to know we have the real deal! That's what John's 3 letters are about. He warns us to **WATCH OUT for FALSE TEACHERS!** And he repeats it for emphasis! And he tells us we can be assured of the authenticity of our faith if...

we enjoy _____ with God...
based on the _____ about Jesus Christ...
resulting in a lifestyle of _____ and _____.

John begins by asserting he knows what he is talking about because he was _____! Then he moves on to those false teachers. Their purpose was to _____ Christians on important matters of doctrine and practice. (2:26) These false teachers were propagating a **three-fold error**.

1. a _____ error regarding the person of Jesus. (2:22-23; 4:2, 15; 2 Jn.9)
2. an _____ or _____ error. (Chapter 2)
3. a _____ error. (3:16-18).

Who were these false teachers historically? **Cerinthian Gnostics! Gnosticism** was the philosophical thought that all *matter* is evil and *spirit* is good. Since matter is evil, a good God could not have created the material universe. And since matter is evil they could not conceive of how God could take on a human body subject to pain, suffering, and death. So they denied the _____.

Cerinthus was a Gnostic living in Ephesus. He taught Jesus was not born of a virgin, but was the natural son of Joseph and Mary. At His baptism... "*the Christ*" descended on him in the form of a dove. Jesus then proclaimed the unknown Father and performed miracles. At last, "the Christ" departed from Jesus, and the human Jesus suffered, died, and rose again. In essence, Cerinthus separated the man Jesus... from the divine Christ.

The Gnostic beliefs also led to some moral abnormalities. On the one hand, since they thought all matter is evil, some Gnostics practiced abusive of the body. Others reasoned since the enlightened spirit is separate from the evil

body, morality does not matter, so they claimed to be righteous *in spirit*... even while they indulged the flesh.

The other main feature of Gnosticism was their claim the way to salvation was through *secret enlightenment*. Only the initiated were in the light. This exclusive mentality led them to despise unenlightened outsiders.

John's **two-fold purpose** in writing:

- I. **an** _____ **purpose**
to attack and refute the errors of Cerinthian Gnosticism.
- II. **a** _____ **purpose**
 - A. He wanted to *cultivate assurance of who Jesus Christ is, assurance of salvation, genuine fellowship* with God, and with one another.
 - B. He wants his flock to know with assurance who Jesus Christ is... and why He came. He assures them of this truth through three witnesses.
 1. the _____ events
 2. the _____ testimony
 3. the _____
 - C. John also wants to *cultivate assurance about eternal life*. He wants his children to **know** they have eternal life. 5:13
 - D. a forth pastoral purpose was to cultivate genuine fellowship with God and with other believers. He wants them genuinely to love God with all their heart, soul, strength and mind, and to genuinely love one another

Have you bought into true Christianity? Or could your faith be a cheap, phony substitute? To help you answer that... John gives you three test questions:

1. **The doctrinal test:**
Do you believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, come in the flesh?
2. **The ethical test:** Does your life reflect growing obedience to Christ?
3. **The relational test:** Does your life reflect growing, practical love for others?

What I Will Do With This Message: _____
