

BIBLE LIFE MESSAGES

How Can You Recognize the Truth?

I John 3:23-4:6

1 In 1977 A Chicago newspaper had an article about the treasure found in King Tut's tomb. Mr. Ali Hassan, curator of the Egyptian Museum in Cairo, made an amazing discovery. Apparently, some of the gems were simply cut glass.

The tomb had been discovered in 1923. For all these years it was assumed that all the gems were genuine. So, how could this have been undetected for so many years?

Mr. Hassam answered, "We were blinded by the gold! We just assumed that real gems and real gold would go hand-in-hand together." The experts were fooled! 2

With so many churches, denominations, and cults around it is hard to know who's teaching the truth. Most of them claim to be Christian, so how can you know who the true and false teachers are?

The following scripture passage will give you some criteria, some evidence, you can use to determine who is right and who is wrong. 3

First John, chapter 3, verse 23 through chapter 4, verse 6 reads, And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us. Those who obey his commands live in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us. ¹ ₄

Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world. ² ₅

You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. They are from the world

¹ | John 3:23-24.

² | John 4:1-3.

and therefore speak from the viewpoint of the world, and the world listens to them. We are from God, and whoever knows God listens to us; but whoever is not from God does not listen to us. This is how we recognize the Spirit of truth and the spirit of falsehood.³₆

The first way to recognize the truth is . . .

I. The Truth Will Be Expressed By the Right Confession - 4:2-3

The truth will be expressed by the right confession.⁷

Putting into words what you believe about Jesus is called “The Good Confession”.⁸ In the New Testament it is a technical phrase occurring in First Timothy, chapter 6, verses 12⁴ through 14,⁵ Hebrews, chapter

³ | John 4:4-6.

⁴ | Timothy 6:12 - Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses. In the original language is a definite article = “the good confession”.

⁵ | Timothy 6:13-14 - - In the sight of God, who gives life to everything, and of Christ Jesus, who while testifying before Pontius Pilate made the good

4, verse 14 ⁶ and Hebrews, chapter 10, verse 23. ⁷ This confession is an expression of the foundation of your faith upon which everything else is based. ⁹

Lord Jesus told a story in the Sermon on the Mount about two men who built their houses upon different foundations.

One built on an easy and plentiful foundation of sand. But when natural disasters happened it collapsed because the foundation of sand wasn't firm enough.

The other found a rock foundation to build his house upon. It withstood all the natural calamities that came along because the rock foundation was firm enough. The Lord said that those who hear His words and put them into practice are like that wise man! ⁸ So it is

confession, I charge you to keep this command without spot or blame until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ.

⁶ Hebrews 4:14 - - Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. In the original language = "the confession of ours".

⁷ Hebrews 10:23 - Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. In the original language = "the confession of our faith".

⁸ Matthew 7:24-27.

with those who stand firm on “The Good Confession”.

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What are the good confessions found in the Bible? ¹¹

The classic one we use the most is **Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God**, found in Matthew, chapter 16, verses 13 through 16. ¹² **When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say the Son of Man is?” They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” “But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?” Simon Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”** ¹³

The Samaritan woman repeated it, **Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?** ⁹ ¹⁴

Martha repeated it, **I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world.** ¹⁰ ¹⁵

⁹ John 4:29.

Nathaniel repeated it, **Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel.** ¹¹ ₁₆

The Ethiopian repeated it, **I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.** ¹² ₁₇

Then, Thomas made this confession in the upper room a week after the Lord's resurrection, **My Lord and my God!** ¹³ ₁₈

Christians' salvation is promised in regard to the confession of **Jesus as Lord**. Romans, chapter 10, verses 9 and 10 state, **If you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.**

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Confessing Lord **Jesus as God** is important as well because many just think of Him as a good man, a

¹⁰ John 11:27.

¹¹ John 1:49.

¹² Acts 8:37.

¹³ John 20:28 - Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!"

prophet or the leader of one of the world's great religions. ²⁰

But Lord Jesus was divine; God in flesh, God in human terms! Notice the following Bible passages. ²¹

John, chapter 1, verses 1 and 14, **In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God . . . The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only.** ²²

John, chapter 10, verse 30, Jesus said of Himself, **I and the Father are one.** ²³

Notice a conversation Lord Jesus once had with His disciples, Philip said, **“Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.”** Jesus answered: **“Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.”** ¹⁴ ²⁴

¹⁴ John 14:8-9.

Then, there are scriptures like Colossians, chapter 2, verse 9 that speak of the Lord, **For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form . . .** ²⁵ and Romans, chapter 9, verse 5, **Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, forever praised.** ²⁶

Lord Jesus said of Himself, **“I tell you the truth,”** Jesus answered, **“before Abraham was born, I am!”** ¹⁵

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The angel told Joseph about the Virgin Mary’s future son, **The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel - which means, “God with us.”** ²⁸

¹⁵ “I AM” is the name God calls Himself in the Old Testament. Exodus 3:13-15 - Moses said to God, “Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ Then what shall I tell them?” God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: ‘I AM has sent me to you.’ ” God also said to Moses, “Say to the Israelites, ‘The LORD, the God of your fathers — the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob — has sent me to you.’ This is my name forever, the name by which I am to be remembered from generation to generation.

Now, for the good confession that we have here in chapter 4, verses 2 and 3, **This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world. Jesus has come in the flesh!** ²⁹

This confession is important because, with the emphasis that Jesus is divine, you may conclude that the Lord was just God with skin on. ³⁰

Lord Jesus was a complete human being! The verb **has come** in the original language, ¹⁶ is in the perfect tense here. It is something that has been completed and affects us now.

Lord Jesus was a man who lived in history and His life is an historical fact! Your faith is based on an historical fact. ³¹

¹⁶ ἔρχομαι.

The second way to recognize the truth . . .

II. The Truth Will Be Empowered

By the Right Spirit - 3:24 & 4:1, 4-5

The truth will be empowered by the right Spirit. ³²

The Holy Spirit has been given to you. Chapter 3, verse 24, **Those who obey his commands live in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us.** ³³

You receive Him when you surrender your life to the Lord. Acts, chapter 2, verse 38, **Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.** ³⁴

The Holy Spirit can be tested to prove His reliability. Chapter 4, verses 1 through 3, **Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that**

acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world. ³⁵

The Spirit of Christ will acknowledge His true nature.
³⁶ **The cults universally deny the deity of Christ!** ³⁷

The Holy Spirit in you is greater than the spirits in the world! Chapter 4, verse 4, **You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.**

The story is told of John Paton, a missionary in the South Sea Islands, who was threatened by three witch doctors. They said they had the power to kill him through their sorcery. All they needed was some left-over food which he had partially eaten. He boldly bit into three plums and handed them to the witch doctors. The next Sunday Paton entered the village with a smile on his face and a spring in his step. The native's sacred men admitted they had tried all night

by their incantations to kill him. They had to admit that Paton's God was stronger than their demons and must have protected him. ¹⁷

You never have to fear the supernatural; the occult, witches, voodoo, ghosts, etc. He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world! ³⁸

The third way to recognize the truth . . .

III. The Truth Will Be Obtained from the Right Source - 4:6

The truth will be obtained from the right source. Chapter 4, verse 6, **We are from God, and whoever knows God listens to us; but whoever is not from God does not listen to us. This is how we recognize the Spirit of truth and the spirit of falsehood.** ³⁹

Listens to us is the message proclaimed by the Apostle Paul and the other apostles. This is the message of the Bible in contrast to the "sacred writings" of the religions. The cults claim to have

¹⁷ The Greater Power, I John 4:1-4, Our Daily Bread.

“inspired” writings in addition to the Bible. In fact, they rely more on these other writings than they do the Bible. ⁴⁰

It is the gospel of the Bible that makes you a child of God! ⁴¹ Romans, chapter 10, verse 17 says, **Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ. ⁴²**

Remember our Lord’s claim, **I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. ¹⁸**

The Bible is our source of truth! Other religious writings must be tested by that standard.

Right or wrong, truth and falsehood are determined by what the Bible says about the Lord and your relationship to Him! ⁴³

Confused about who is right? Who is wrong?

Recognize truth only when it comes from the right confession, the right Spirit and the right source!

¹⁸ John 14:6.

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