

This epistle, as the one to the Hebrews, does not name its writer nor the ones addressed. From the beginning it has been thought to be a circular letter of John to the churches around Ephesus. John wanted to warn against heresies which later produced a corrupt and paganized form of Christianity.

John, from long held tradition, made Jerusalem his headquarters, caring for Jesus' mother till she died, and after the destruction of Jerusalem made his residence at Ephesus, which by the last of the century had become the geographical and numerical center of Christianity, and here he wrote the five books credited to him.

Christianity had become an important influence in the 60 or 70 years since its establishment and there were all kinds of efforts to blend it with prevailing philosophies.

One of these was a form of Gnosticism which taught that body and spirit were two different entities, that sin affected the body only, and the Spirit could

could be pious, and the body voluptuous and sensual, and such would be consistent. They denied that Christ had come in the flesh (for it would be inconsistent with Christ's perfect life) and taught that he was a Phantom only, a man in appearance only.

To come to the 4th Chapter we find that churches even then were beset by false doctrines.

Verse 1- Man is spirit and is guided by spirits. Spiritual influences may be either good or bad, sorcerers, false prophets, the devil, etc.

How could they tell who had the Spirit of God. Christ had come in the flesh, incarnate. As it was then, so it is today that a comparison of doctrines taught will be the criterion to use. Did the early church have special means by which they judged?

See 1 Cor. 12:10. *believed*
STANDARD: If they taught what God taught in his word, and if their lives met His requirements, and if their doctrines agreed with what the apostles taught.

Verse 2- Christ was REALLY Man

and GOD. Did not just appear to be a man. A new book out claiming that Christ faked his crucifixion, etc. This belief (incarnation) is important for if not a real man, shed real blood on cross, the whole system of atonement for our sins falls apart. This is not so prevalent as it once was, for today disbelievers say He was a MERE man.

DOES THE LATTER PART OF VS 2 MEAN THAT EVERY MAN WHO ACKNOWLEDGES THAT CHRIST CAME IN FLESH IS A CHRISTIAN?

No, it takes more than merely believing a doctrine.

Vs. 3 If Christ did not become real flesh, there was no shedding of blood, no death on cross, no atonement. Only a mere show, an appearance, a vision. WHO IS "HE THAT IS INN THE WORLD?"

Was "antichrist" one real person or a class of persons?

Vs. 4- Ye are of Christ God: of His family, embraced His truth, taken on His Spirit in our lives.

WHO ARE "THEM" IN VS. 4?

The false prophets. Did not overcome alone but bec. God dwelt among them and preserved them

by His Grace. Will Christians today have this same victory if God's Spirit dwells within us?

Vs. 5-HOW CAN WE TELL WHETHER PEOPLE ARE OF THE WORLD TODAY?

They speak of the world and the world hears them. Talk only of worldly things, influenced by love of the world, not by Spirit of God, in the doctrines they taught. They have only worldly plans and expectations.

What do we talk about in ordinary conversation? Can people tell that we are influenced by spiritual things, and making plans to go to a heavenly home?

Matt. 12:34. A person's conversation will show what spirit is within him.

A professed Christian of any station in life may determine much about his evidence of piety by determining what kind of people desire his friendship or seek his companionship.

Vs. 6-How can a person of God or a person of error tell what their true standing is in the world?

By who hears us, seeks us out, willing to hear all that God has taught, or unwilling.

In vs. 7 John returns to his favorite theme, LOVE, He is very insistent that being saved by Grace does not release us from necessity of obeying Christ's commandments. See John 13:34, 35 & 1 Jno. 3:11, 23.

Love is another test of whether or not we have the Spirit of God.

WHOSE SPIRIT DIRECTS: US IF HATE ENVY, WRATH, MALICE ARE IN OUR LIVES?

Are there any restriction on the last part of vs. 7?

It must be understood to refer to the point under discussion. Worldly people love up to a certain point, but John is referring to love of God, Christ, and the children of God.

He that loveth not?

Vs. 8 - Does not have true acquaintance of God, no right feelings toward Him, for God is love, and such cannot pretend to be like Him. See 2 Cor. 13:11

What would this world be like if love and peace ruled? In the world of sin & sorrow we may at times wonder how such can be reconciled with a God of love, but our faith leads us to believe that it is so and it brings consolation to us, especially the gift of His Son)

to give us another chance, with terms easy to comply with. Love always desires our good, and surely that is what God wants for us, and the full meaning of that will be known in heaven. Even sorrows and disappointments here are designed for our welfare, and sometime we "will understand".

Vs. 9 How was the love of God manifested? Sending his only begotten son. Not the only way he shows love, but most prominent. The worth of a single soul makes this the greatest gift, and greatest evidence of His love.

Vs. 10 PROPITIATION: An atoning sacrifice. Not that we were good enough to make Him willing to do this- quite the opposite. If we had loved & obey Him we might suppose he would make such a sacrifice, but we were enemies, alienated from him by sin, & the sacrifice of Christ appeased His anger.

(1)

Vs. 11 God is so exalted above us, & loved those so inferior & unworthy, we ought to love those on a level with us.

(2) Only way we show we have HIS

- Spirit. (3) It is nature of love to seek happiness of all. Much stronger reasons why we should love one another than that God should love us. AN NECESSARY EVIDENCE THAT WE ARE GOD'S CHILDREN.

12. OF ALL THE PHYSICAL SENSES, WHICH ONE GIVES US THE GREATER KNOWLEDGE OF A PERSON? Sight.

We can't obtain knowledge of God through sight- no one has seen Him. We gain this knowledge through love for one another and His Spirit in our hearts.

- HOW DOES GOD DWELL IN US? By the exercise of love in our hearts. The proper carrying out of our love for God is love for fellow man. True love will ^{spread} to all.

13. WHAT EVIDENCE DO WE HAVE THAT WE DWELL IN HIM? If He has imparted the influences of His Spirit. What are they? See Gal. 5:22,23. LOVE, JOY, PEACE, LONG-SUFFERING, GENTLENESS, GOODNESS, FAITH. Christ promised that after He departed He would send the Holy Spirit and one of the clearest evidences that we are children

of God is derived from the influence of that Spirit in our hearts.

Vs. 14- As an apostle, and having spent much time with Christ, John could really give testimony of God's sending Christ to be the Savior of the world. He had seen Him and was an eyewitness.

15. Does this mean that merely mouthing the words of a confession makes one a child of God?

See vs 2 and Rom. 10:10.

Vs. 16. How can we know the love God had toward us? By his wonderful gifts to us, especially redemption.

John dwells on and repeats his thoughts on love. It is told of John that when he was too feeble to walk that he would be carried into church and in speaking would always say "Little children, love one another. It is the Lord's Commandment."

Love will make us more holy, will sustain us in sorrows and trials, in perplexities of life, & in prospect of the next life. Love would remove all evil, crime, jealousy, wars and would make a blissful place of earth.

Vs. 17- WHAT IS MEANT BY OUR LOVE BEING MADE PERFECT?

If our love is what it should be we will be able to appear before the judgment seat with the greatest of confidence, we will have no fear of wrath to come. We will have the same traits of character that the Savior had. If we are like Him we need have no fear of meeting Him then.

18- No fear in love-If a man had perfect love for God, what would he have to fear in facing God and the judgment? He would not fear death, for he would have no dread of what he might find beyond the grave. Guilt brings fear, but the pardon of sins frees us from that.

?Fear is a terrible emotion:

Poverty

Losses

bereavement

sickness

Death.

None of us may reach perfection of love so that we are completely free from these things, but to a great extent, proportionate with our love, we may have these fears cast out.

vs. 19 We love Him because He first loved us."

Love Him not only because we are the recipients of so many blessings and gifts. Gratitude would be reason enough for our love, but that would be selfishness to some extent, and should not be the only reason for our love. The chief reason for our love to God should be the excellence of His character, His worthiness.

Vs. 20- WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THIS VERSE WHEN IT IS BOILED DOWN TO BARE FACTS?

No matter what a man says, or whatever his pretensions of love, he cannot have any true love for God unless he loves his brethren. It is more reasonable to love those whom we have seen and known personally. That is human nature.

A brother should bear the Divine image, and if we cannot love him we cannot love God.

Vs. 21 - Is the command to love a brother as obligatory as the command to love God?

One is just as binding as the other, and is a necessary evidence that he is a true Christian