

## The Four Who Entered *Pardes*

“Four men entered *pardes* (“the orchard” [Paradise])— Ben Azzai, Ben Zoma, *Acher* (Elisha ben Abuyah, lit. “the other”), and Akiba. Ben Azzai gazed at the Divine Presence) and died; Ben Zoma gazed and went mad; *Acher* destroyed the plants (became an apostate); Akiba alone entered in peace and departed in peace.”

*Babylonian Talmud Hagigah 14b*

## *Merkavah* (Chariot) Mysticism

- Earliest documented form of Jewish mysticism (from c. 100 B.C.E.)
- Aim: to experience a vision of the Chariot Throne of God
  - **Key Text—*Ezekiel 1*** (compare *Isaiah 6:1-8*; *Exodus 25:17-22*)
  - Ascent through levels of the heavens and heavenly chambers
  - Each level had angelic guardians
- Method: Meditation
  - Meditations on Divine Name(s)
  - “Mirror” meditation (gazing at a pool of water)
  - Often in periods of prolonged, severe fasting
  - In-body or out-of-body?
- Restrictions:
  - Not to be taught in public—one on one initiation
  - Only by/to exemplary *Torah* scholars
  - Who are of a mature age (40)
- Apocalyptic parallels:
  - Daniel 7:9-10
  - Revelation 1:9-20

## Was Paul a Chariot Mystic?

### ➤ **Key text: 2 Corinthians 12:1-6**

- According to Alan F. Segal, fits the pattern
- BUT—Paul described in the NT as a prophet
- Chronology:
  - 2 Corinthians written 55-56 C.E.
  - 14 years before that—*after* his conversion
  - Paul in Tarsus, before being brought to Antioch by Barnabas
  - Thus *cannot* be the “revelation of Jesus Christ” referred to in Galatians 1:12
- Would Paul have *continued* to practice the Chariot *after* his conversion?
- No evidence Paul ever initiated any, even of his closest disciples

### ➤ God’s response to Paul’s experience: 2 *Corinthians 12:7-10*

### ➤ **The Clincher: Colossians 2:8-23**

# TESTING THE SPIRITS

DOCTRINAL TESTS FOR DISCERNING THE SPIRITS ACCORDING TO THE APOSTLE JOHN

"BELOVED, DO NOT BELIEVE EVERY SPIRIT, BUT TEST THE SPIRITS TO DETERMINE IF THEY ARE OF GOD, BECAUSE MANY FALSE PROPHETS HAVE GONE INTO THE WORLD"

(I JOHN 4:1)

## THE PERSON OF JESUS

1) Do they confess Jesus as the **MESSIAH (CHRIST)**, Messiah as defined by the Bible?  
(1 John 2:22, 5:1)

2) Do they confess the **HUMAN INCARNATION OF JESUS**, confessing that Jesus is God in human flesh?  
(1 John 1:1-2; 4:2)

3) Do they confess Jesus as **THE SON OF GOD, MEANING, THE DEITY OF JESUS**  
(1 John 4:15, 5:5, 5:13, 5:20, 1:1)

**THE GOD-MAN, THE PROMISED MESSIAH**

## THE WORK OF JESUS

1) Do they confess Jesus as **THE SAVIOR OF THE WORLD**,, not "a savior," but **THE SAVIOR?**  
(1 John 4:14)

2) Do they confess the **PROPITIATORY SACRIFICE OF CHRIST ON THE CROSS FOR THE SINS OF THE WORLD**, meaning, do they teach that the blood sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, His death, is the only means by which our sins can be forgiven and removed?  
(1 John 1:7-9, 2:1-2, 3:16, 4:9-10, 5:6-9)

**THE LAMB OF GOD, SLAIN FOR OUR SINS**

## FELLOWSHIP TESTS

1) ARE THEY IN FELLOWSHIP (I.E., DOCTRINAL AGREEMENT AND ACTIVE PARTICIPATION) WITH THE HISTORIC, ORTHODOX, CHRISTIAN FAITH (WHAT THE APOSTLES TAUGHT AS THE CHRISTIAN FAITH, ACTS 2:42, EPH. 2:19-22, THE NEW TESTAMENT) AND WHAT CHRISTIANS EVERYWHERE HAVE BELIEVED AND TAUGHT FOR THE LAST 1960 YEARS (THE SUBSEQUENT CREEDS & COUNCILS OF THE CHURCH BASED ON THE NEW TESTAMENT)?  
(1 John 2:18-27, esp. 2:18-19)

2) WHAT IS THE **SOURCE** OF THEIR MESSAGE, THE **"WORLD"** AND ITS CONCEPTS (SEE 1 JOHN 2:15-17) OR THE **HISTORIC, ORTHODOX, CHRISTIAN FAITH?**  
(1 John 4:5)

3) WHO IS THEIR **AUDIENCE**, THE **"WORLD"** (WORLDLY PEOPLE), OR THE **HISTORIC, ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS WHO COMPRISE THE TRUE CHURCH?**  
(1 John 4:5-6)

*Ezra Enterprises / John David Greb*

**BIBLICAL DISCERNMENT: TESTS & TOOLS TO DISCERN ORTHODOXY AND ORTHOPRAXIS**

SOURCES	TESTS OF DISCERNMENT	TOOLS FOR DISCERNMENT
OLDER Testament	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>Love &amp; Worship of the God of the Bible</i> (Deut 13)</li> <li>2. <i>100% Prophetic Accuracy</i> (Deut 18:14-22; Jer 27--28; I Kings 22)</li> <li>3. <i>Agreement with the Written Words of God</i> (Isa. 8:11-22; Jer 18, 23; Ezk 37; Ezra 7)</li> </ol>	<p>Biblical Knowledge of God's Personality as described in The Bible</p> <p>Ability to test the prophecy, meaning, are their prophecies specific enough to be found either true or false (falsibility principle)</p> <p>Knowledge of the Contents of the Bible</p>
JESUS	<p><i>Fruit</i>, fruit being defined as:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. <i>Consistent practice of Sacrificial Love</i> (John 13:34-35)</li> <li>5. <i>Obedience to the revealed Words of God</i> (Matt 7:15-27)</li> <li>6. <i>Obedience to the revealed Will of God</i> (Matt 7:15-27)</li> <li>7. <i>The Holy Spirit Glorification of the Christ described in the Bible, not the Christ of human imagination.</i> (John 16:13-15)</li> </ol>	<p>Knowledge of undeniable "biblical fruit"</p> <p>Knowledge of the words of God</p> <p>Knowledge of &amp; obedience to the <i>will of god</i></p> <p>Knowledge &amp; practice of "<i>agape</i>" love as defined by Jesus and his example.</p> <p>Anointing of &amp; responsiveness to the Holy Spirit's ministries as described in the Bible, not to his ministry as described by human imagination.</p>
JOHN	<p>The <i>Doctrine of Jesus Christ</i>, defined by John as confessing Jesus as</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8. <i>Messiah</i> (I John 2:22, 5:1)</li> <li>9. <i>Truly God</i> (I John 1:1, 4:15, 5:5, 5:13, 5:20)</li> <li>10. <i>Truly Human</i> (I John 1:1-2, 4:2)</li> <li>11. <i>The Savior, His sacrificial death for our sins</i> (I John 1:7-9, 2:1-2, 3:16, 4:4-10, 4:14, 5:6-9)</li> <li>12. <i>Lifestyle test of Light (Holiness)</i> (I John 1:5--2:2, 2:28--3:10)</li> <li>13. <i>Lifestyle test of Love (Agape Love)</i> (I John 2:7-11, 3:11-18, 4:7-21)</li> </ol>	<p>A thorough knowledge of biblically defined <b>Christology</b>, the doctrine of the person &amp; work of Jesus Christ.</p> <p>Knowledge &amp; practice of biblically defined <i>holiness</i></p> <p>Knowledge &amp; practice of <i>agape</i> love.</p>
PAUL	<p>The <i>Doctrines</i> of (2 Corinthians 11:1-15)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>14. <i>Jesus,</i></li> <li>15. <i>the Gospel,</i></li> <li>16. <i>the Holy Spirit</i></li> <li>17. <i>Lifestyle tests of Holiness &amp; Love</i> as defined by the Bible, not human definitions of these subjects adjusted to human behavior (Gal 5, Eph 4--6, Col. 3 etc.).</li> </ol>	<p><i>Scripture</i> (I Tim 4, 2 Tim 2:15--4:5)</p> <p><i>Christ Centered Renewal</i> (Col 3:1-17)</p> <p><i>Spiritual Weapons</i> (Eph 6:10-20, I Thess 5:1-11)</p> <p><i>The Gift of Discernment</i> (I Cor 14:10)</p>
PETER	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>18. <i>Message(s): Orthodox or Heretical?</i> (2 Peter 2:1-3)</li> <li>19. <i>Morals: Orthopraxic or immoral?</i> (2 Pet 2:2, 2:10, 2:13-14, 2:18-19)</li> <li>20. <i>Monetary Practices: Worthy or Greedy?</i> (2 Pet 2:3, 2:13-15)</li> </ol>	<p><i>Knowledge of Scripture</i> (2 Pet 1:16-21, 3:1-2, 3:15-17)</p> <p><i>Practice of Biblical Holiness</i> (2 Pet 1:3-11, 3:11-18)</p> <p><i>Motivations: Servant Leadership</i> (1 Pet 5:1-4)</p>