

So That You May Know

An Expository Study of the Epistle of **1 John**

Chapter 16- The Spirit of Truth and the Spirit of Error

163. Testing the Spirits- Part 14

WAOY Thursday 03/06/08

Welcome again, my beloved in Jesus Christ. We're continuing our verse by verse "journey" through the Epistle of **1John**, and today I want to continue to examine what John taught about "Testing the Spirits". So, let's open our Bibles and read **1John 4: 1-6**- again together:

1 Beloved, 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.

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

3 and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the *spirit* of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world.

4 You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.

5 They are from the world; therefore they speak *as* from the world, and the world listens to them.

6 We are from God; he who knows God listens to us; he who is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

Now on the last broadcast, we were looking at the fact that John wrote this passage to deal with the Gnostic heresy that had attacked the Church late in the first century over the issue of the Person of Jesus Christ. Unlike many other false religions- the Gnostics- you will remember- fully accepted the Deity of Jesus Christ- but they rejected His Humanity. The Gnostics believed that Christ was a spiritual *concept*- but not a literal human being. These heretics believed that God only *appeared* to be human- but that it was only an illusion.

Now I want to go over very carefully what John taught here so that we can get the impact of what John was talking about. So let's look again very closely at verse 2 and the first part of verse 3:

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

3 and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God...

Now in the last part of verse 6, John tells us why all of this is important when he said,

... By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

So John is teaching here that knowing; believing; and confessing that Jesus Christ was both God and Man is mandatory for believers. So whether we are comfortable talking about this or not is really not the issue. The Holy Ghost thought enough about making this clear distinction about the Person of Jesus Christ in the mind and hearts of God's people to move upon John to pen down inspired, inerrant, and infallible Words that clearly teach that this issue is the deciding factor between truth and error.

And notice also that John places this in a very high order. John says in verse 3:

and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God

John said here, "**every spirit**". Every single spirit for whatever reason and in whatever way denies the humanity of Jesus Christ- that spirit- that man is not of God. Now when John wrote this phrase, "**is not from God**" here- he was not saying that the person who teaches this is simply wrong about *this* issue whereas he may well be right about *another* issue. No, John was teaching here that the spirit *itself*; or in other words- the person *himself* is not of God. And we need to understand this beloved because if the man is off base about something so essential and so eternal as the Person of Jesus Christ- he has proven to be unreliable and untrustworthy about other issues that are not as vital as this is.

But on close examination- we can see that John goes even further than this. When John uses the phrase to describe those who deny the humanity of Jesus Christ and says that they are “not of God” that really means something. For this Apostle to say that these people are not of God is not to simply say that they are wrong about some obscure theological point- no, John is telling us here that the people who do not accept or who do not believe or who do not confess or teach that Jesus Christ was a real live human being do not belong to God; they are not *from* God; they have not been born of God- or in other words- John is saying here that they are not saved.

Salvation, you see is not just about believing that some man named Jesus died on the Cross or that there is a Supreme Being somewhere out there named God.

No, Salvation requires that those who are born again must understand and believe and accept and even confess certain very specific and important aspects about God and Jesus Christ. To look at just what is required- let’s read **Romans 10:9&10**, which says:

9 that if you confess with your mouth Jesus *as* Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved;

10 for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.

The Apostle Paul teaches here that unless you confess with your mouth that Jesus Christ is Lord- you cannot be saved. Now what Paul is teaching here, of course, goes way beyond simply repeating the phrase- “Jesus is Lord”.

To confess something is the language of the writers of Scripture means that first you have to understand the issue. Secondly, you have to fully and without any reservation believe it with all your heart. And then thirdly- you must publicly speak it and adhere to it and stand by it- especially when there is a price to pay for doing so.

Just saying, “*Jesus is Lord*” while not understanding that Jesus was God is not obeying **Romans 10:9**. Simply repeating the phrase, “*Jesus is Lord*” without believing fully and without any reservation that God became a man is not obeying **Romans 10:9**. Speaking the words, “*Jesus is Lord*” while continuing to live as you choose- without bowing

your knees and submitting your life to this Lord is not obeying **Romans 10:9**.

The concept that Paul is speaking about in **Romans 10:9** about Jesus being Lord is not complicated, brothers and sisters- but it is profound. If Jesus is Lord- then you're not. If Jesus is Lord- then He is in charge of every area of your life. If Jesus is Lord- then it is not about God fulfilling our desires- it is about us fulfilling God's desires. If Jesus is Lord- then we are slaves. If Jesus is Lord- then the prayer is not "What God can do for me?" the prayer is "Not my will but Thine be done."

When you study Scripture- you can clearly see that those whom God used to write the Bible taught that coming to Jesus meant that we die- we die to self; we die to sin; we die to our own ambitions; our own agendas; our own purpose; and our own ways- and we live the remainder of our lives to the Glory of God- period.

Genuine Biblical Christianity has never and will never teach anything else but that. And anyone who attempts to change that message is in alignment with those heretics and false teachers that John is talking about here.

But there's more. Paul also taught in **Romans 10:9** that a requirement for Salvation was understanding and honestly believing and verbally confessing that God physically and literally raised Jesus Christ from the dead.

And again- there are all kinds of powerful and life changing implications that the Resurrection of Jesus imposes upon those who genuinely believe it. For example- Paul also taught that it is impossible for those who honestly believe that God raised Jesus from the dead to continue to live as though they don't believe it when he said in **Romans 6:4**:

Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

So John is saying that all of this is real important and we are really doing great harm to the Gospel, beloved, to think or to teach that all of this is just peripheral stuff that only theologians are interested in.

And the seriousness by which John approached this comes out when we read the last part of verse 3 which says:

... this is the *spirit* of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world.

Now *what* is the spirit of the antichrist? John said that the spirit of antichrist was those who teach that Jesus is not a real live human being; or in other words- those who reject *part* of the Biblical teaching of the Person of Jesus Christ- even if they accept the other parts.

Now please remember, dear friends, that it was God the Holy Spirit that moved upon this Apostle of Love to get him to write down these inspired Words here. John didn't say that the Gnostics were nice and sincere people who did many good and noble things in the community but were just a little off base about a particular point of Doctrine that really doesn't matter anyway- did he?

No John said that *any* spirit; *any* man; *any* women; *any* church; *any* group; or *any* organization that teaches that Jesus Christ is not come in the flesh is not *of* God; they are not *from* God; they are not born of God; they do not belong to God- but they are in fact antichrist.

Now you are free to look this up-because I have. The Apostle John never said one good thing about the Gnostics. Not one word. Ever. John never complimented the Gnostics about anything that they did. And from this- we might be tempted to think that the Gnostics were child molesters or cannibals or rapists or ugly monsters- but we would be wrong if we thought that.

According to history- the Gnostics did a whole lot of good for their communities. For example- they had orphanages; they fed hungry people; they took in widows; they cared for mentally handicapped people; and they assisted the poor. And while they were doing all of these noble and good things- they were also perverting the Gospel of Jesus and John said that these people were antichrists.

Now we can come to one of two opinions about this. Either John was a hard and mean spirited man or perhaps he just had a bone to pick with the Gnostics and John really needed to lighten up and revise his comments about these good and noble people. Maybe if the local ministerial association could just go to brother John and talk to him- we might be able to convince him to tone down his rhetoric- because after

all- Rome is persecuting the Church petty heavily these days and we need to be in unity and we all just need to love one another and not be so divisive.

And I give you a dollar to a donut that if some of the leaders of the modern Church would have lived back then- that is exactly what they would have done- because that is exactly what they are doing today.

But there's another choice here. We might say that John was right as rain. And we might say that the *eternal* things are way more important than the *temporal* things. And we might say that John was an Apostle of Jesus Christ- handpicked and chosen to formulate and establish the Christian Church. And we might say that God the Holy Spirit inspired every single Word that John wrote here. And we might say that neither the Judaizers nor the Antinomians nor the Gnostics nor anyone else has the right or the power to preach another Gospel that Jesus has not authorized. And we might say that to deceive souls is evil. And we might say that to lead people astray is wicked. And we might say that to teach things contrary to Divine Truth is blasphemy.

What do you say?

May God help us all.

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