

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

166. Testing the Spirits- Part 17

WAOY Wednesday 03/12/08

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 we are discussing what John meant when he told us to test or try the spirits and on the last broadcast, we were looking at what John meant when he said in verse 3:

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

We saw last time that in **2Peter 2**, the Apostle Peter had warned the Church some 30 years prior to John writing this Epistle and had prophesied that the antichrists were coming at some future date to

creep into the Church bringing in damnable heresies and trying very hard to deceive the sheep.

Late in the first century- both John and Jude said, “They’re here” and they pleaded with those in the Church to earnestly contend for the Faith that was once and for all delivered to the saints.

We know from reading the Book of the Revelation that within just a few years after Jude wrote his Epistle that five of the seven Churches in Asia had been completely overrun with heresy and the Lord of the Church Himself- Jesus Christ- commanded them to repent.

So John is writing here in verse three that the people of God had been warned over and over and now he said- the time of waiting is over- the antichrist are here and now we have to deal with them or we will lose the Church.

Now in verse 4- John gives great comfort to those saved souls that even though the antichrist absolutely mean to tear up the church- that they must not fear- but to realize that Jesus Christ is going to win this battle- so let’s read verse 4 together:

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.

Now the “ye” in this verse that John is referring to are those genuine believers who are faithful to Jesus and the “them” that John says that the genuine believers have overcome are the antichrists. So here John is comforting the Church by reminding them that the Christ Who lives inside them is greater than the devil that is motivating and leading the antichrists.

Now we need to be reminded here that even though this is true- that doesn’t mean that the people of the Church could just sit back and rest on the fact that Jesus is greater than the devil. No, the people of the Church had a real battle of their hands and they had to fight against this attack by the antichrists- even though John says here that the victory is already assured.

Many times today people tend to believe that because Jesus is Lord- that that means that we have no duty or responsibility or obligation to do what the Scriptures command us to do. For example, it is common today to hear people say that due to the fact that they are filled with God’s Spirit- that that infilling absolves them of having to exercise self-

control and study the Scripture to show themselves approved unto God. These people say that they don't have to study the Bible because the Spirit will give them the answers and the correct interpretation without having to go through the discipline of study. Beloved, that is just flat out wrong.

Nothing that Jesus is to us ever removes our responsibility to obey what Scripture teaches. Jesus is Lord to be sure- but not because we made Him to be Lord. You didn't make Jesus to be Lord over anything, dear friends- God made Jesus Lord and since Jesus is Lord- and since we are slaves to this Lord- we must obey what the Lord had said to do.

We must know that the Holy Spirit does not come to us so that we will be disobedient to what the Bible commands and eliminate our requirement to study to show ourselves approved unto God- no, the Spirit comes to empower us so that we may obey and He illuminates our minds- so that as we obey Scripture and study- we will actually learn.

And the same thing is true here. Jesus is the Head of the Church- that is true- but as Head- Jesus has commanded those in the Church to guard the sheep; and to study to show ourselves approved unto God; and to watch and pray; and to try the spirits to see if they are of God and when we find false doctrine being taught- we are commanded by the Lord of the Church to expose it; and we are commanded by the Lord of the Church to confront those who teach it in love; with tears; using all the persuasive means available to us to attempt to reason with them. We are to pray for them and to do everything in our power to show them the error of their way. And if they repent- praise God- we have gained a brother!

But if these antichrists refuse to repent; if they are determined to continue to deceive and subvert the Truth; if they are determined to undermine the Gospel - we are commanded by the very same Lord of the Church to mark them and if they persist in their error- we are to turn them over to satan- so as to preserve the innocence and the integrity of the Gospel and to guard the souls of the sheep.

Now I realize that many today look at what I am talking about and cringe to think that Christians would ever do anything like this. But we have to admit that Paul and John and Peter and even Jesus did indeed confront people just like this and the Scriptures clearly teach that we are to guard the Church against doctrinal deception at all costs. And to abdicate this action in the name of love or in the name of unity

or in some other name is nothing other than a blatant disregard for the Will of the Lord Who died to establish the Church and in Whose glorious Name- we are saved.

And we also need to understand, brothers and sisters, that we are not the only generation who have had to wrestle with these things and so we can look back at Church history and examine just how the fathers of the Church over a span of two thousand years handled such things when they were presented with them to give us a guide on just how we are to follow this Biblical pattern.

Oh how I wish that things like this were never necessary- but how I wish even more than men would serve the Lord and not seek to destroy the Faith that Christ delivered to His Church. Beloved, we have to resolve within our own hearts that antichrists are real and they are a real live problem that has attacked Christianity since the days of the Apostles. And we also have to reconcile that Christ and His Apostles gave us inspired Truth that gives us the pattern to follow when antichrist rear their ugly head in our day.

And if we are tempted to despair- we need to remember John's exhortation here in verse 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.

Antichrists are real; they are alive; they are ungodly men- who fight against the Truth; there are many of them; and they are gone out into the world- but take heart, dear friends- because John says here that we have overcome them and even though they fight and even though we must be vigilant and defend the Faith- they will not win and the reason that we have overcome these evil people is because greater is the Lord Christ Who dwells in our hearts than the devil who is in the world.

Now I know that people quote this statement all the time about a whole hosts of subjects- and that is fine- but in reality John wrote this to specifically encourage those faithful saints who defend the Faith against the antichrists.

Now as we continue on- I want to look very carefully at verse 5- so let's read that verse together:

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

Again, when John uses the term, “**they**” here in verse 5- he is referring specifically to the antichrists who preach and teach false doctrine. And here John says something very interesting and telling about these false prophets called antichrists. John says that those who bring in damnable heresy into the Church are “**from the world**”.

Now for someone to be “**from the world**” in a Biblical sense is to say that they are not saved. In Biblical terminology for someone to be “**from the world**” means that they belong to this earth- as opposed to belonging to Heaven; that they belong to the flesh- but not the spirit; that they belong to the terrestrial- but not the celestial.

For example, earlier in this very Epistle, the Apostle John said this in **1John 2:15-17**:

15 Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.

17 The world is passing away, and *also* its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.

So here John tells us that loving the world and all that is in the world- namely the lust of the flesh; the lust of the eyes; and the pride of life is not of the father but is “**from the world**”.

And the Apostle James also wrote about this term in **James 4:4**, when he said:

You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

And Jesus showed us the great difference between those who are “**from the world**” and the children of the kingdom when He said in **Luke 12:29-31**:

29 "And do not seek what you will eat and what you will drink, and do not

keep worrying.

30 "For all these things the nations of the world eagerly seek; but your Father knows that you need these things.

31 "But seek His kingdom, and these things will be added to you.

So we can see that being **“from the world”** is the very opposite of being saved and so when John tells us that the antichrists are “of the world” here in verse 4- we can know then that John is echoing the words of Jude when he described them in **Jude 4:**

For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

So the Apostle John is teaching that these heretics are “from the world” and they speak about things that are “from the world” and those who are “from the world” like what they say and they hear what they say, and Lord willing, we will get into this in more detail on the next broadcast as we continue our journey through the Epistle of **1John**. May God help us all.

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