

The Spirit of Antichrist 1 John 4:1-4

We would like to encourage you, no matter what you may be going through, keep your eyes on our Lord Jesus. Stay in His word, and remember it's God and His word that's going to change your life. In times like today we need more than ever the clear unpolluted teaching of God's word.

The texts that we are going to study have become greatly overlooked in many churches today. The prevailing trend and clarion call is to put away differences and come together in unity—even unity at the abandonment to compromise. It's a synergism to accomplish man made goals by compromising on essentials and non-essentials alike.

To "try the spirits" is a practice that is almost condemned in many churches today. God places this command in the Scriptures for the Church's protection. We need this kind of God centered testing in our day as we are bombarded by all kinds of false doctrines, religions, and corrupt teachings.

The false premise that if you just "name Jesus" you're fine doctrinally, and that could not be farther from the truth. God gives us the entire Bible to use as a proof to check against false doctrine and to protect true doctrine. There are many individuals today that say "doctrine divides" or "why argue over doctrine" these folks don't have a clue as to God and His glory.

A text like 1 John 4:1-4 is so very vital to us today—that we may be aware of those that would bring in destructive and dangerous teachings. Therefore it is essential that the word of God be our final authority!

Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. (1 John 4:1)

Notice here that John is addressing us—the church. He does this by the use of the word beloved this is a term that carries the meaning of "being close to ones heart." So if you don't mind I would like to address you as beloved. Beloved, understand that the Lord Jesus loves you so much, and that you are close to His heart as well so much so that He instructs John to address you this way. Which is really Jesus speaking to us, but He used John to write His word to us.

John touches on apologetics in this letter towards the Gnostics—a first century sect that believed knowledge was the way to salvation. Of anyone John was a staunch tester of the spirits.

We're told to believe not every spirit. When we think of the word believe we think in terms of being convinced of someone or something. However, the Greek usage of the word believe (pisteuo) means to have faith in, entrust, or to trust in. It's the same Greek word used always in the context of us believing in Christ, God, or His word. What God is communicating here is that we are not to "trust" in every spirit as we would in Christ.

Not everything that comes wrapped in a "Christian package" is true Christianity. This is an area where much of the body of Christ has based (lowered) itself. Regrettably, the church gets tricked and led astray because it's afraid to test the spirits that come to her. Do you think the enemy is going to sit by and let the body of Christ grow and function in the guidelines and dictates of God's word? No. The enemy will do everything he can to pollute and derail the church. We're not to trust every spirit, yet, there are many today that come and say, "the spirit told me, I had a vision, or I have this prophecy." We must be very, very careful for there are false spirits and false prophets in our midst today (2 Peter 2:1-2).

We are not to trust every spirit! I cannot express to you how much I grieve for so many brothers and sisters that choose not to understand this. When the Scriptures talk about spirits it does so in three ways. One, that of angels and fallen angels. Two, that of man. Three, of the soul of a person i.e. "they thought it was a spirit (ghost). In this context it's talking about spirits (the person) of men possessed by antichrist.

So now we know who and what not to believe, but how do that? We are to try the spirits the Greek word try (dokimadzo) means to discern, examine, prove, or to test. Equipment has tests run on them to see if something is wrong or needs to be fixed. So it is with the spirits we are to examine any spirit (person, message, teaching, etc.) to see if it contains error.

Some might ask did Jesus ever tell us to test the spirits? Yes, He did.

"Then Jesus said unto them, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees. And they reasoned among themselves, saying, [It is] because we have taken no bread. [Which] when Jesus perceived, he said unto them, O ye of little faith, why reason ye among yourselves, because ye have brought no bread? Do ye not yet understand,

neither remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets ye took up? Neither the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many baskets ye took up? How is it that ye do not understand that I spake [it] not to you concerning bread, that ye should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees? Then understood they how that he bade [them] not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees." (Matthew 16:6-12)

See also: Matthew 24:5; Jeremiah 14:14; Deuteronomy 13.

Our Lord Jesus wants you to watch out for false prophets and false doctrine. He desires that you guard the truth and protect the church with the system of tests and checks designed to expose those that would attempt to subvert His Holy program.

The main assessment of the testing is to see whether they are of God. Notice, not if they are apart of a denomination, Bible school, ordained or not, etc., but if they are of God. It makes no difference how well your Bible teaching may be, or how colorful your sermons are, and so on; if they aren't from God the implication is to reject them. Why? Because many false prophets are gone out into the world. The spirit of antichrist works in men—in individuals, and is manifested through their teachings or writings (which we will see later). Satan's prime target is Christians this is why the use of false prophets are employed by him.

Do you know what a false prophet is? Have you ever encountered one? Would you know one if they came to your fellowship?

False prophet (pseudoprophetes) is a compound word pseudo meaning false, and prophetes meaning prophet. Literally, it is a spurious prophet, pretender, or religious impostor. Pseudo means false, deception, or lies. A prophet is not always what we believe them to be—someone that comes and gives instructions regarding future events, or instructions from God directly or from His word. We conclude that these false prophets come speaking falsehoods, as it were from God, twisting God's word while trying to pass it off as truth. Note the warning, many false prophets are gone out into the world. Not a few but many, and where have they gone? Out into the world to deceive the unbeliever and the believer alike.

"Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my

departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock." (Acts 20:28,29)

"Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron." (1 Timothy 4:1,2)

Take heed and be not deceived by so-called teachers, prophets, pastors, ministers, and false brethren which carefully and test them with God's truth and His word.

Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God. (1 John 4:2)

In this verse we find that God gives us the first of two proof texts for testing the spirits. He first gives the positive phrase, hereby know ye the Spirit of God. The word know [Gk. ginosko] which means to perceive, understand, or come to know indicates the manner in which we can check the spirits—we will know the true God first. The verse continues every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God.

We are to know the true spirit of God in individuals by the confession of Jesus Christ and His incarnation. Confession is to acknowledge or profess, either by words, letters, actions, feelings, or thoughts and beliefs. One professes what one believes "... for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh." (Luke 6:45).

Notice Jesus' full title is spoken of here "Jesus Christ" not just Jesus but Jesus Christ. The key that ties this verse together is, Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God. This is really important. Many today attempt to say Jesus came in a spirit or a ghost but not in the flesh. When we say Jesus is the Christ (christos) the Messiah, the Anointed One we're affirming what the Bible teaches that in the clearest way professing that Jesus is the Messiah of God, God the son in human flesh—the eternal God manifested in Jesus of Nazareth (see John 8:24, 58; Colossians 1:14-19; 2:9; Hebrews 1:2,3).

To confess Jesus is one thing, but to confess Him as eternal God Jesus Christ is another (1 Corinthians 12:3). Verse two is one of the tests to see whether one is from God or not. God says you are either in or out based on your confession of His son—Jesus Christ and that it is a proper, accurate, and true confession.

Some might say of us "many of the groups or religions you classify as 'not of God' do confess Jesus is Christ." These groups may do that on the surface, but as we will see later it's a hollow confession made only to silence the critics and cover up their deception.

And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that [spirit] of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world. (1 John 4:3)

The conjunction "and" joins verse one and two. In other words, the one is built on the truth of the other. This is the negative opposite of verse two. This is the second part of the proof verses. The error of others is exposed by their denial of Jesus Christ and Him coming in the flesh.

It's simple really, if they do not confess Him as come in the flesh they're not of God. A word of caution to you my brethren, not all confessions of who Jesus is are genuine. Remember, we are to test the spirits for the reasons I pointed out at the beginning of the study.

If you were to ask someone, that professes to be a Christian, does he believe that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh and they said yes, but later you saw them many, many times fall down a worship an idol what would you think? Are they a true believer? There must be much more than just responding "yes" to Jesus. Ultimately, institutions and individuals must be examined by conduct. The Israelites of old believed in God, but the Bible says they served their idols to (2 Kings 17:33).

The Jews at the time of Christ saw Him, heard Him, even touched Him, but did not at all believe Him. Many of His disciples, not the twelve, believed Him, but later we see them shouting for His crucifixion. Jesus said, "by their fruits you will know them." Paul said, there are false brethren we must be on guard for these people. He says that if they don't confess, really not at all believing Jesus is come in the flesh, to be true then they have the spirit of the antichrist. Antichrist (antichristos) simply means instead of, or opposed to Christ. He did not say "the antichrist" but the spirit of the antichrist.

John tells us, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world. When did we hear this? From our Master in Matthew 24:5. We should not be surprised that antichrists are all around us because Jesus said they would come. The word "already" is in the present tense—meaning at the time John wrote this, and to us now in this age antichrists are here. However, we have weapons to test them for genuineness.

Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world. (1 John 4:4)

Here in this verse the truth is evident—if we confess and believe that Jesus is the Christ and is come in the flesh we are of God. And if so we and have overcome them overcome means to conquer, get the victory, or prevail. We prevail over those that do not believe He is come in the flesh, not physical victory, but in spiritual matters (Romans 8:37). To know that we have overcome them because we are of God is a wonderful promise, and is reserved for those who rightly believe. Do you believe? Do you overcome them, or are joined with those that don't believe?

What's the reason we have overcome? Because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world. We have overcome not by anything we do, but because of Jesus Christ in us! Beloved, to have the God of the universe, the Lord of Heaven, God the Holy Spirit in you is truly a beautiful reality. Do you have Him? Does He live in you? Do you really know Him? If not you should plead for God's mercy to fall on you, and ask Jesus to forgive you and make you a Christian. If you can answer yes to the above question rejoice that your name is written in the book of life.

If you're in spiritual struggles right now take this verse into your spirit and meditate on it, and call on God to help you. There's a lot of talk about overcoming now a days, but most of it leads you to believe "you" need to do something instead of letting Jesus do it for you. The favorite passage people use is.

"To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." (Revelation 3:21)

If we note the word overcome, both here and in the 1 John 4:4 passage, it's in the past tense, which means we have already overcome because of our faith in Christ Jesus. We overcome by having Him in us and obeying Him.

Who or what is he that is in the world? The devil of course, given the context it's the antichrist spirit that disbelieves God and our Lord Jesus Christ. Beloved, keep the faith and hold fast to Him.

We believe we are in the last days, and the times are becoming worse and worse. It's imperative that we make every effort to stay in the study of the

Scriptures, reading, and praying. Remember, it's God and His word that is going to change you.

Christians come out from compromise, sleep, and laziness leave the world and its things behind. Forsake the world and worldly things, and consecrate yourself to the Lord Jesus always!

Amen?