

“The Spirit of Truth; The Spirit of Error” (1 John 4:1-6)

A - 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.

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

C - 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.

D - 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.

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

B' - We are from God; he who knows God listens to us; he who is not from God does not listen to us.

A' - By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

Analysis of the Text: The possible literary structure of the text indicates that the focus or center of the text is verse 4 [D] and the idea of personal assurance. Discerning the Spirit of truth from the spirit of error therefore become facets of assurance. This discernment turns on two things, the confession of Christ and the reception of others believers making the same confession. It is best to understand the confession (verse 2 [B]) as twofold, that Jesus is the Christ and that He has come in the flesh. Note that verse 3 [C] speaks of the confession of Jesus. How ought we to confess Jesus? He is the promised Messiah, the Christ, or Anointed One. He is the Second Person of the Trinity who came in the flesh. He is the God-Man. This is Peter's declaration on the Day of Pentecost, "God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified" (Acts 2:36). Christ is Lord; He is God (Rom. 10:9). He was openly declared to be Lord and Christ by the resurrection. The spirit of anti-Christ denies that He is the God-man. If you are from God, born again, you maintain this confession and the wider body of believers recognizes you as a fellow Christian.

The Main Point of the Text:

1. What is the text about?

Answer: Discerning God's Spirit of Truth from the anti-Christian spirit of error and knowing you are from God.

2. How do you discern God's Spirit of Truth from the anti-Christian spirit of error and know you are from God?

Answer: By the confession that Jesus is the Christ who came in the flesh and your reception by other believers, but your rejection by the world.

3. Main Point of the Text: Combine the Answers to 1 and 2.

You discern God's Spirit of Truth from the anti-Christian spirit of error and know you are from God by the confession that Jesus Christ who came in the flesh and your reception by other believers, but your rejection by the world.

Main Lesson of the Text:

IF you confess that Jesus is the Christ who came in the flesh and you are received by other believers, but rejected by the world, THEN you know you are born of God.

Food for Thought: The Christian confession John presents is that Jesus is the Christ who has come in the flesh. Paul presents the Christian confession that Jesus is Lord (Rom. 10:9). He further states that no one can sincerely make this confession except by the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:3). Therefore, to sincerely confess Christ you must be born of God (John 3:3). Various cults, such as the Mormons, deny that Jesus is the God-man. They maintain He is a creature. See two things here. Your reception by the visible body of believers is on the basis of a credible confession of faith in Christ. No one can look into your heart to determine infallibly whether or not you are born again. The test is your confession. Key to a sincere confession is personal assurance of your own position before God.