

Be on Guard for Yourselves and For all the Flock

4- The Danger of the Heresy of Gnosticism

January 24, 2021

1 John 4:1-6

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 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.

To the Glory of God

Jesus is the Treasure of the Universe and has been loved by more people throughout History than any other Person. The 66 Books of the Holy Bible make utterly fantastic claims about this Man, Who lived and died, and rose again; and it teaches an almost endless list of very clear and very precise Attributes about Him. Yet, over the Centuries, more *wrong* things have been taught and believed about Jesus than any other Person in History.

Jesus spoke with clarity and yet He is misquoted all the time. Jesus spoke with Authority and yet He is ignored by more people than anyone else. Jesus is God's Love personified- and yet as of this morning- *nobody* has been more hated than Jesus. You would think that, with all of our technological advancements- we would pay little or no attention to an itinerant Preacher from an obscure country, who only lived 33-1/2 years- over two millennia ago. Yet more will be said about Jesus this morning by the almost 2 billion believers around the world than anyone else.

Throughout History, the smartest people in the room believed in Him. Jesus has guided the lives of scientists and Presidents and Kings and He has transformed the lives of millions of evil men, who gladly bow their knees before Him. Those who love Jesus speak of Him all the time- He is the topic of conversation more often by more people than anyone else. And yet, this morning there is no one more controversial than Jesus, the Christ.

The Scriptures teach that no one can be saved unless they confess openly and unashamedly that Jesus is God. That we actually need to say that- a lot- out loud- and publicly. Why? Because the Bible says that Jesus is God. So, Jesus doesn't just talk *about* God- no, the Bible says Jesus IS God Almighty in human flesh. That BEFORE He was born- He was *with* God and *was* God. And these are staggering and breathtaking things to expect us mortals to believe. And so, to help us to trust that what the Bible teaches about Jesus' full Deity is true- we have numerous examples that prove to us that Jesus was and is God. And among them are:

- Jesus commanded the fish- and they gathered together under Peter's boat
- Jesus spoke to the wind and the waves- and they obeyed
- Jesus predicted the future with spectacular accuracy
- Jesus healed the sick; raised the dead; and cast out demons
- Jesus opened blind eyes; and cursed the fig tree
- Jesus healed the issue of blood; and walked on water
- Jesus forgave Sin
- Jesus pardoned Iniquity
- Jesus saved sinners

... and ten thousand other things that prove to any honest person that Jesus was and is *exactly* what the Bible says that He is.

But the sad reality is that, after the Church being on the earth for 2,000 years- far too many people, who say they are saved- struggle mightily with the idea that Jesus is God. And so, they hedge a little when talking about this. Most of them will easily and quickly and correctly affirm that Jesus is the "*Son of God*". But when asked if they believe that Jesus IS God- many will hesitate. So, if asked if there are two or three different gods- they will quickly and correctly say, "*No, there is only one God*". And when asked if they *worship* Jesus- most will not hesitate and say, "*Yes! Absolutely!*". But then when questioned again if Jesus is fully Deity- they begin to grow strangely quiet.

Now since the Bible itself is not hesitant at all about this Issue- and clearly and repeatedly gives Testimony as to the full Deity of Jesus- there are really only a few possible explanations for this kind of hedging:

- ✓ Very shallow; poor; or non-existent Teaching
- ✓ These people may not actually be saved

.. and both of these are real bad.

The Truth is that a lot of people in the 21st Century have a problem with the concept that we worship a supernatural and miraculous and invisible God- Who does supernatural and miraculous things- many of them invisible to us. Yet many of these same people have little or no problem with UFO's; or Magic; or the idea of angels and even demons. But talk about the Deity of Jesus and they quickly change the subject.

And yet, believing in the Deity of Jesus is a *requirement* for Salvation. It is part of "Essential Truth". Nobody can have their Sins forgiven and be made Righteous unless they believe in the full Deity of Jesus. But why would God pick a Subject that is so fantastic and so hard to comprehend- and make that- a requirement for Redemption? If you were starting a new Religion- wouldn't you make it *easier* for people to believe? Wouldn't you want MORE people to join your new Religion? So, why make it harder? You certainly wouldn't make it *impossible* to believe without your Help- unless you actually *wanted* to make it impossible to believe- without your Help. And that would give you all the Glory when sinners DO believe.

So, if we were satan- we probably would attack the fledgling Church of the 1st Century along the lines of what is the *hardest* and the most *difficult* to believe, right? I mean, since the notion that Jesus is actually God- is so amazing and so breathtaking and so supernatural and so miraculous and so above the thinking of most people- we would probably create a Heresy very early on- that would attack this Issue, right?

Well, the Jews did that. And the Romans did too. But they did that while Jesus was still alive. For example, the Jews thought Jesus was guilty of Blasphemy when He said,

John 8:51b-59

... if anyone keeps My word he will never see death." The Jews said to Him, "Now we know that You have a demon. Abraham died, and the prophets also; and You say, 'If anyone keeps My word, he will never taste of death.' Surely You are not greater than our father Abraham, who died? The prophets died too; whom do You make Yourself out to be? "Jesus answered, "If I glorify Myself, My glory is nothing; it is My Father who glorifies Me, of whom you say, 'He is our God'; and you have not come to know Him, but I know Him;

and if I say that I do not know Him, I will be a liar like you, but I do know Him and keep His word. Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad." So the Jews said to Him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?" Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am." Therefore they picked up stones to throw at Him, but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple.

But after Jesus rose from the dead and then bodily ascended up into Heaven- in front of 500 witnesses- it was much harder for anyone to deny Jesus's full Deity. Now it wasn't impossible- as we find out from people like Thomas Jefferson, who wrote the Declaration of Independence and much of the Constitution. Many people, today, still find it simply *impossible* for Jesus to be God and so, they simply reject it.

But then we need to also comprehend that, in addition to Jesus being God- that He is *still* God. Jesus' Deity- is *eternal*. So, Jesus WAS God- before He was born; He WAS God- the entire time He was on earth; but Jesus is STILL God- right now- as He sits at the "Right Hand" of the Majesty on High- making constant Intercession for us.

Yet, surprisingly, what happened very early on- as the New Testament was still being written- a Heresy was developed, by evil men, that attacked the very Person of Jesus. But this early Heresy did NOT deny Jesus' full Deity- in fact, it actually *confirmed* it. No, this early Heresy, surprisingly, launched an all-out assault against Jesus' full *Humanity*. And this wicked Heresy is now known as the Heresy of Gnosticism.

Now as I told you last time, God has burdened my heart to take a short "vacation" from our "journey" through the **Epistle of James** to begin this new year by preaching through a series of Sermons on the Danger of Heresies. And we see the great Danger of Heresies because of what Jude wrote:

Jude 3-4

Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints.

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.

Now as we discovered, Heresy attacks the "Essential Truth" of the Bible. And so, the Danger of Heresy is that, if a person *understands* the Heresy and

believes it- that person is NOT saved. Because every individual, who is genuinely saved, MUST understand and agree with- Essential Truth. And this is what Jude was talking about when he wrote about the “**Common Salvation**” in verse 3. All, who are genuinely saved- MUST be in “one mind and one accord” with Essential Truth.

And then, we also discovered that Heresy can’t be killed. It is a Belief; a Teaching- and so, even though the Christian Church SHOULD confront it; defeat it; and cast it out- sadly, Heresy will simply go somewhere else; and deceive somebody else. And so, we must be ever vigilant in equipping the saints of each succeeding generation- about the Dangers of Heresy.

Now by what Jude wrote in verse 4- we see that there always have been and there always will be, “**certain persons**”, who will creep into the Church “**unnoticed**”; who have been “**long beforehand marked out for this Condemnation**”. And these certain persons will be “**ungodly persons**”, who attack the Orthodoxy of biblical Christianity along three main lines:

1. The Grace of God
2. The Person of Jesus- in either His full Deity or His full Humanity
3. The finished Work of Jesus Christ

Now even though there are literally *hundreds* of Heresies on the earth today- there are really only seven major “roots” or “origins” of all the False Teachings that exist today. And those seven major roots are:

1. Legalism
2. Lawlessness (Antinomianism)
3. Gnosticism
4. Modalism
5. Arianism
6. Pelagianism
7. Socinianism

... and interestingly enough- all seven of these major Roots- attack either the Grace of God or the Person and Work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now we have already been over the first two Heresies and today, I want to look at the third major Root of modern-day Heresy by looking at the Heresy of the Gnostics.

Now the Gnostics were a group of people, who were deceived about Issues like:

- How humans come to understand Divine Truth (Knowledge)

➤ The Division between the Flesh and the Spirit

... and they focused their false Teaching on one particular point: the full Humanity of Jesus. So, these people weren't content to simply be deceived about these Issues themselves. They then went about to deceive others also. And they did this- through their Teaching. And so, the Church- through the Apostles- had to *confront* this Heresy; *expose* it; and then *defeat* it- so that others would be warned about the great Danger of the Heresy of Gnosticism.

Now the Gnostics got their name from the Greek word, "*Gnosis*", which has to do with "Divine Truth" or "Knowledge" about Divine things. But they taught that this "Knowledge" was secret and could only be given to special people by other Gnostics- by a very secret and supposedly "spiritual" way. So, the Gnostics taught that "Divine Truth" was NOT acquired by reading and understanding the Scriptures- but by a supernatural or spiritual method that only the Gnostics knew about.

Now Gnosticism itself is like a slippery bar of wet soap- it's hard to get a firm handle of just what it actually is. So, the best I can do- is to say that Gnosticism is a hodge- podge collection of very strange and weird Teachings- that sound very spiritual to many people- but which are, in reality, just nonsense. For example, one very famous Gnostic statement is the example of "*One hand-clapping*". And many shallow minded people think this statement is so spiritual; and so amazing; and they just swoon when they read things like this. But in reality- statements like that are NOT spiritual- they're just silly and absurd.

We need to always understand that the one, true, God, Who created all things for His Own Glory- is not silly or absurd. So, even though God IS absolutely supernatural (meaning "above or better than the natural")- He is NOT silly or absurd. God is Wise. And so, He doesn't make ridiculous statements that have no real meaning.

The basic premise of Gnosticism is that everything pertaining to the "Spiritual World" is "Good" while everything pertaining to the "Fleshly" or the "Natural World"- is "Bad". So, God, to a Gnostic- is "Good" because He is pure Spirit with no material or fleshly body. And so, Gnosticism teaches that everything on this earth- *including* our bodies; our thoughts; our actions; and all created natural things like trees and animals and grass and rocks; along with all that Man has made like houses and cars and buildings are all "Bad". And they are so Bad- that they CANNOT be redeemed. And so, by acquiring "Divine Knowledge" (that only other Gnostics can give) we will be empowered to "escape" all that is "Natural" or "Earthly" or "Fleshly" and live ONLY in the Spiritual World.

Now just HOW human beings were supposed to live on this earth and still “escape” it- was never made clear to the ancient Gnostics. And so, there is contradictory and confusing Teachings concerning how we were supposed to accomplish this. The clarity of how we are supposed to live in this world and still escape all that the world is and has- was developed over the Centuries and “perfected” by the modern Cults of the Jehovah’s Witnesses; the Mormons; the Christian Science Practitioners; and sadly, by many within the Word of Faith Movement. These groups all have many fundamental Teachings that originated from the ancient Heresy of Gnosticism.

For example, “Christian Science” (which is neither “Christian” nor “Science”) teaches that all that pertains to the flesh and the earth and this world- is “BAD” and therefore, is “of” the Devil. And since only God is true and real- therefore- all that is NOT God- like ANY BAD thing- like Sin or War or Disease- simply DOES NOT EXIST. All those things are, by definition to someone deceived by Gnosticism- a lie- a figment of our imagination and false. So, the Way these groups teach that we may “escape” all the BAD- is to simply refuse to acknowledge them; and to speak in accord with “Divine Knowledge”.

So, in Christian Science- when you break your leg, and the bone is sticking out- you should simply CONFESS that your broken leg isn’t true. The bone sticking out of your leg is nothing but a lie from satan; and the pain you’re feeling is nothing more than a figment of your carnal imagination that has been fashioned by this fallen world and enslaved to satan. But as you receive “Divine Knowledge” you speak a Confession that now agrees with God and God’s Will. And God then honors you- by literally *transforming* your Confession into Reality.

And the result is- IF you have received enough “Divine Knowledge”; and IF your Confession is in agreement with God- you will be healed. But if you are NOT healed- then you either haven’t received enough “Knowledge” or you are still trapped by satan into believing that what is BAD (your broken leg) is real. And so, you need to simply go back and begin to believe that the bone sticking out of your leg is a lie from satan and not Reality.

Now the terrible news is that this is EXACTLY what the Word of Faith Movement teaches about Bad things being from the devil and how “speaking the creative Word” or “making a positive Confession” will actually CREATE a new Reality; and bring physical healing; financial and material prosperity; and give you absolute Victory over every Problem in this life.

Now I realize that not everybody, who is a part of this wayward Movement believes these heretical Teachings. And I praise God for that. But that is why we must constantly affirm that only God is the Creator. Man does not and cannot Create *anything*. So, you can speak whatever you want to. And you can speak it

“in the Name of the Lord”. But if it is NOT God’s Will at that time for you- God will NOT honor it- no matter how much Faith you think you have.

Not being healed or NOT being financially prosperous has infinitely more to do with what is God’s Will at that time for you- than it does with how much Faith you might have. The Bible teaches clearly and repeatedly that it is NOT always God’s Will to heal us; or to bless us; or to even deliver us out of all of our troubles- simply because we want Him to. The Truth is that God uses Suffering and Hardship in the lives of believers for His Glory- many times- to do something infinitely BETTER than to merely heal or bless us.

So, all that Man or satan can do- is to take what God has already created- and pervert it or tear it up. But to teach that fallen Man has creative ability- to actually create Reality by our Confession- is NOT a Christian Teaching. It is, in fact- blasphemy. And even though many within the Word of Faith Movement do NOT accept this Teaching- nevertheless, this Teaching was borrowed directly from the ancient heresy of Gnosticism; and it is alive and well; and is being taught and believed by literally millions of people- all over the world today.

Now according to History- the ancient Gnostics also promoted Female Leadership and even Female Worship, in some cases. Gnostics taught that Females were inherently *easier* to become “spiritual” than Males. And, interestingly, they used Eve’s deception by satan, in the Garden as “proof” that Women were more inclined to be “spiritual” than Men. This is in direct contrast to what the Apostle Paul taught about a Woman’s increased propensity to be deceived- quicker and easier than Men- and why Women need godly and loving Men to protect them:

1Corinthians 11:8&9

For man does not originate from woman, but woman from man; for indeed man was not created for the woman's sake, but woman for the man's sake.

1Timothy 2:12-15

But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet. For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve. And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression. But women will be preserved through the bearing of children if they continue in faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint.

Yet, according to the so-called “pioneers” of the modern Feminist Movement (i.e. Betty Freidan; Gloria Steinem, etc.) and what was originally written in the “Feminist Manifesto” outlining what “Feminism” was supposed to be all about- they actually quote ancient Gnostic writings to supposedly justify their positions.

Now, the focal point of Gnosticism- was their denial of the full *Humanity* of Jesus Christ. And so, Gnostics taught that there were actually two different people. The fleshly, carnal, earthly “Jesus”, who was enslaved by the “Bad” world- who died on the Cross; and the spiritual “Christ”- Who rose above the Crucifixion and remained pure spirit- like God. So, “Jesus” was “Bad” because He was Human and Christ was “Good” because he was pure Spirit.

So, as they began to teach this Heresy- God primarily used the Apostle John to refute their False Teaching and defeat it. Look what John wrote again in **1John 4:1**:

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.

Now when I was a new convert, I thought that what John was talking about here were either angels or demons- because he used the word, “**spirit**” in this Passage. But as I began to study the Bible more carefully, I realized that, most of the time- neither angels nor demons actually speak to anyone. Calling human Teachers- who teach spiritual things with Authority, “spirits” was not uncommon back in the 1st Century.

But we should also realize that satan does NOT want to be exposed. And so, satan usually operates behind the scenes. The only time demons actually spoke out audibly- was when Jesus confronted them during His earthly Ministry. And that was to prove His Deity in showing His complete Dominion over them. And even though Hollywood and the Roman religious system has, through the years, portrayed demons as turning little girl’s heads around and causing them to vomit green bile- the overwhelming way that demons operate in the earth- is in the *creation* and in the propagation of False Teaching. And this is why the New Testament calls all False Teaching,

“Doctrines of Demons” (1Timothy 4:1)

By satan or demons being publicly exposed or by them openly manifesting evil supernatural signs and wonders would alert most people as to the wickedness of these fallen angels. So, in order to stay secure- so they can continue to keep lost people- lost; and to trouble saved people- demons and satan himself prefers to stay hidden- so he can create more and more False Teaching; and make that Teaching- more and more attractive for people to believe.

So, for example, back in the 7th Century, satan possessed a lost man, named Mohamed; gave him supernatural signs to further deceive him; so that he would write down a patently false “gospel” that is in direct competition with

Christianity. And that Heresy has deceived over 1 billion people in the world today. Yet not a single Sin can be forgiven and not a single soul is saved through the false doctrine of demons called, "Islam". And yet, people are more than willing to give their lives in accord with what it teaches and to kill those who disagree with them. It is hard to imagine anything being more Evil than that.

Now even though almost all of the false Religions of the world agree with Gnosticism that all Spirit is "Good" and all Flesh is "Bad"- Christianity doesn't. Christianity teaches that all that God created was "very Good". And Christianity goes on to teach that the fullness of true godly "spirituality" is when the human body is finally *glorified* and *re- united* with the saved soul.

So, for example, when a saved person dies today- his fleshly body goes back to dust- but his spirit (soul) immediately goes to Heaven to be in the very Presence of the Lord. Now it's hard to even imagine anything being better than that. At death- our saved soul is in the Presence of Almighty God- 24 hours every day and 7 days every week. And our soul NEVER leaves the Shekinah Glory of God!

And yet the Bible teaches that even then- our Salvation is NOT finished! There is one more Step, in the Order of Salvation (the Ordo Salutis) that is yet to occur. At some point, after we die, and our soul goes to Heaven- there will be a Resurrection of our dead bodies. And our bodies will experience a "glorification". And this is what the Apostle Paul was talking about when he wrote this in **1Corinthians 15:39-57:**

39 All flesh is not the same flesh, but there is one flesh of men, and another flesh of beasts, and another flesh of birds, and another of fish.

40 There are also heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is one, and the glory of the earthly is another.

41 There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory.

42 So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown a perishable body, it is raised an imperishable body;

43 it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power;

44 it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.

45 So also it is written, "The first MAN, Adam, BECAME A LIVING SOUL." The last Adam became a life-giving spirit.

46 However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural; then the spiritual.

47 The first man is from the earth, earthy; the second man is from heaven.

48 As is the earthy, so also are those who are earthy; and as is the heavenly, so also are those who are heavenly.

49 Just as we have borne the image of the earthy, we will also bear the image of the heavenly.

50 Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

51 Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed,

52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.

53 For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality.

54 But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, "DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP in victory.

55 "O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING?"

56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law;

57 but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

So, at the Resurrection- our now glorified bodies will be *re-united* with our saved souls (that may have already been in the Presence of God for centuries). And only *then* will our Salvation be complete! But until the re-uniting of our saved soul and our now glorified bodies occurs- the overall “process” of Salvation is NOT finished. And this Truth separates Christianity from all false Religions- and Heresies- *especially* Gnosticism.

So, when John spoke of “spirits” here in **1John 4:1**- he was talking about people, who go, “in the Name of the Lord”; and who hold themselves out as being “spiritual men”- in other words, “godly men”- who Teach about spiritual matters. And John warned us about these people and said,

... do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God,

Now *why* did John see the Need to warn us to not just believe everything that these people teach- but to test them to see if they are indeed “from God”? Now, by the way- the fact that John told us to test these “spirits” to see if they are from God- proves that he was talking about human beings and not angels or demons- because we have no way to test an angel or a demon. But why did John tell us to do this?

... because many false prophets have gone out into the world

Again, by equating “false prophets” with these “spirits” we know that John was referring to human beings, who teach “spiritual things”.

So, because there were “many false prophets” who have gone out into the world- 2,000 years ago- John lovingly warned the people of the church to test them to prove their genuineness.

Okay, so how did John tell us to test these Teachers?

1 John 4:2&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; 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 please notice that the Issue by which we are to test the *genuineness* of the men, who teach us spiritual things- is NOT the full *Deity* of Jesus- but rather His full *Humanity*. John said,

... every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; and every spirit that does not confess Jesus [has come in the flesh] is not from God (context added)

Now the main reason we know that John was speaking almost *exclusively* about the Heresy of Gnosticism here- is because there are MANY other things that we need to know about those who teach us- than simply if they believe that Jesus was fully human. There are several lists in the New Testament that give us both the moral and the theological qualifications of those who stand to teach God’s people- that have nothing to do with them believing in Jesus’ full Humanity.

Yet here- John not only says that Teachers MUST believe in Jesus’ full Humanity- but then he teaches very strongly about who these people, who reject Christ’s full Humanity really are:

... every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the spirit of the antichrist ...

Now, you really can’t get any more Evil than being an antichrist. But John equates *any* Teacher, who rejects the full Humanity of Jesus- with being an antichrist. Now we know that, at the time that John wrote this Epistle- the only

people, who were actively *denying* Jesus' full Humanity- were the Gnostics. The Jews and the pagans denied Jesus' full *Deity*- but they were more than willing to believe and accept that Jesus was a Man. The Gnostics were alone in attacking the Person of Jesus by denying His full Humanity.

Now I realize that it is popular today to look forward to the time when there will come "THE" Antichrist- who will supposedly fulfill all the terrible things that people are saying will happen at some point in our future. But look what John infallibly wrote here about that:

... 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

2,000 years ago- the Apostle John said that the antichrist, that the saved people of the Church, who were alive at that time, had previously been taught was coming at some future point- was, "**already in the world**"- at the time he wrote this Epistle! In fact, John taught that ANYONE who denied Jesus' full Humanity was of the "spirit of the antichrist". And to verify this- look what else John wrote earlier in this same Epistle:

1John 2:18&19

18 Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have appeared; from this we know that it is the last hour.

19 They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us.

Phrases and words like "**Many antichrists have [already] appeared**"; and "**They**" show that John did NOT believe that one single antichrist would appear just before Jesus comes back- but that, from the very beginning of the Church Age- MANY antichrists would periodically rise up- and trouble the Church.

And it is also clear that John taught that these "many" antichrists would be people, who at one time were *inside* the Church- representing themselves as genuinely saved people. I see nothing like that- in the description of the one single man- that people refer to as "THE" Antichrist from the **Book of the Revelation**. That guy is always shown to be *external* to the Church.

The reality is that ALL heretics are "antichrists"- which comes from a Greek word meaning "against Christ". So, real heretics CAN'T ever be forgiven or saved.

Now another aspect of the Gnostics is that many people were afraid of them. These heretics held themselves out as having special, and secret “Knowledge” of God and the things of God. They taught and spoke very eloquently- and they were of above average intelligence. So, they, naturally commanded respect. And so, many people, back then, were afraid to cross them or to denounce them- or even put them to the test- fearing that they might be attacking real men of God. And John knew this. And so, he wrote this to comfort the people:

1John 4:4-6

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 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, I realize that the end of verse 4 is quoted by people all the time to talk about any number of Issues. But the correct context of what John meant when he told believers,

... greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.

... had to do with their inherent fear in denouncing the Gnostics (or any other false Teacher/antichrist) back in the 1st Century. And so, here John was giving the people of the Church- the courage to go ahead and test the men, who teach, courage to go ahead and test those who teach and to reject the Gnostics- when it is made clear that they do not believe in the full Humanity of Jesus.

Now the “**us**” in verse 6 refers to the Apostles. And so, John said that *anyone*- who does not “listen” to the Apostles- is NOT from God. And that was fairly easy- 2,000 years ago- because you could literally listen to the Apostles. But the Apostles are all dead now. So, how do we “listen” to the Apostles in our day? By listening; and by believing; and by striving to obey- what the Apostles infallibly taught in the 27 Books of the New Testament. And then John said,

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

By what? What is the “**this**” that John is referring to at the end of verse 6? By whether or not people are *listening* to the Apostles (or what the Apostles wrote). So, it doesn’t matter how spiritual a Teaching may appear to be. It doesn’t matter how many people agree with a particular Teaching. And it doesn’t matter

how long people have believed a certain Teaching. Heresy is just as ancient as Divine Truth. All that matters is whether that Teacher is “listening” to the Apostles.

And if he is *genuinely* trying to “listen” to the 27 Books of the New Testament- then that Teacher is “from” God- even if he is wrong or contradictory or inconsistent about second or third tier Issues. But even then- that person should NOT be allowed to teach- until he can be lovingly shepherded into more clarity.

But if what his Teaching involves an absolute rejection or an inherent rebellion against “Essential Truth”? That person may well be a modern-day Heretic and an antichrist and should be *immediately* questioned. And if his Heresy is confirmed- he should be *immediately* denounced and cast out of the Church.

Now you would think that after all that John wrote- that the heresy of Gnosticism would have been totally defeated and is no longer an Issue with us today. But like all Beliefs- even false ones- you can’t kill a Belief. It never dies. It simply goes somewhere else to deceive others.

So, today, there are many more people, alive on the earth, who have bought into parts of Gnosticism; or who have fully embraced all of it- then there were in John’s day. Literally millions of souls- all over the world- are part of “religious Movements” that adhere to fundamental portions of the ancient Heresy of Gnosticism. And today- those include people who not only reject Jesus’ full Humanity- but who also reject His full Deity.

The ancient Heresy of Gnosticism has actually become “mainstream” in some areas. For example, every ten years or so, there is a “revival” of what are termed, the “Lost Books of the Bible”¹. Now the reality is that the people who produce these books are misleading the public on two fronts:

- These books were never “lost”
- These books were never part of the Bible

The Truth is that these books are ancient Gnostic writings that were inspected and completely condemned very early on. So, they were never “lost”- they were completely rejected as having any Divine origin. And it really isn’t hard at all to see that these Books do not belong in the Canon of Scripture.

But that didn’t stop a fiction writer by the name of Dan Brown. Brown wrote a series of books² that were partially based on ancient Gnostic lies. And when the former child-star and director, Ron Howard, discovered these books- he quickly made them into several movies. And when Howard and his main star-

¹ There are around 92 Gnostic books, writings, or fragments that have been recovered and reprinted.

² Angels and Demons (2000); The DaVinci Code (2003); The Lost Symbol (2009); Inferno (2013); and Origin (2017)

Tom Hanks, were asked why they made a movie that was based on Gnostic falsehoods- they both said that it was important to get the information out to the American people. So, in effect, both Howard and Hanks are modern-day “evangelists” for the Heresy of Gnosticism.

Now most people today, who have become deceived by Gnosticism don’t call themselves, “Gnostics”. They may call themselves “Latter- Day Saints” or they may call themselves, “Witnesses” of Jehovah. They may call themselves, “Christian Science Practitioners” or adherents of the “Word of Faith Movement”. They may even call themselves followers of “Kabbalah”; or those who accept “New Age Philosophy”.

And even though Gnosticism is still like a wet bar of soap and hard to fully define- there is one common denominator among all of them:

They do NOT accept what the Bible teaches about Who Jesus is in His full Deity and full Humanity

.. and whether they deny His full Humanity or His full Deity; or whether they actually try to compliment Jesus by calling Him a “great Teacher” or the “best Moral Leader”: or a “wonderful Humanitarian” or a “Prophet”- unless they agree with the Divine Revelation that God the Father sovereignly gave to Peter,

You are the Christ, the Son of the living God (Matthew 16:16)

... they are NOT saved; they have NOT been born again; and they are NOT Christians.

So, may God grant that we are ever vigilant to guard the Church against the Heresy of Gnosticism and maintain the Purity of the glorious Gospel that will save to the uttermost!

Amen. Let’s pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.