

# 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

#### 164. Testing the Spirits- Part 15

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WAOY Friday/Monday 03/07-10/08

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 I want to look at verse 3 again:

**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 what we have here is John telling us that those who believe and teach that Jesus Christ was not a real human being are not saved- but are antichrists. And as we saw last time- that is true- even if those people have a morality about them that is good and it is true even if those people may agree with us about the cultural issues of our day.

For example- an antichrist may well be against abortion. He may well be against homosexual marriages. He may want conservative Supreme Court judges.

And so because this person may agree with us on the social and cultural issues of our day- we may be tempted to think that this person is saved; that is a brother in Christ or that he is a believer and a Christian. And that temptation would be even greater if that person talked about God all the time and he fully accepted without any reservation the Deity of Jesus Christ.

But I beg you to hear me about this. Even though we may be in agreement with many groups about very important subjects- we must hold to a Biblical definition of what a Christian is and if, in fact, that person denies that Jesus was a real human being- the inspired, inerrant, and infallible Word of God written here by the Apostle John declares very clearly that this person is not a believer; he is not a Christian; he is not a brother in Christ and he is not saved. In fact, the Bible says here that this person is an antichrist.

So while we can certainly join with these people in our cultural war- and we can stand side by side with them concerning the great social issues of our day- we must be very careful to draw the line and be very clear and faithful about this- a genuine Christian accepts all that Scripture reveals about the Person of Jesus Christ and for anyone to alter or change or take away or add to anything that Scripture says about Jesus absolutely affects whether or not this person is saved.

Now many today would say that this is nonsense- that as long as a person loves Jesus- that whatever else a person believes doesn't matter. The people who think like this place a higher value on getting along with people than they do with being faithful to Scriptural Truth. And all I can say is that I would agree with them if John had not written what he wrote here.

But John *did* write this and God the Holy Spirit inspired these Words that say:

**... 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.**

So as good as some of these arguments may sound- the Apostle John didn't agree with that line of thinking. So if I have a choice of who I am going to be at odds with- you or John- I may well love you very much- but it really isn't any contest- John wins every time.

And these are the hard choices that believers have had to make since day one. It has never been popular to be a Christian. It has always divided people. The Gospel is now and has always been patently offensive and foolish to the lost and so there is a natural barrier between those who are children of light and those who are children of darkness.

And we have two choices. We be faithful to Jesus and we can stand on the Word of God and we can refuse to be ashamed of the Gospel and we can resist the pressure to cave in to the demands of a pagan culture or we can be unfaithful to Jesus and we can be embarrassed at the demands that the Gospel makes on us and we refuse to stand on the Word of God and we can be very popular with the world- but we can't do both.

But understand this, dear friends. If you choose to be faithful to Jesus- you will be persecuted; you will be talked about; people will call you everything but a Christian- including people who are in the Church; you will be maligned and laughed at, and Jesus will stand by your side.

And so the fact that Jesus is pleased with you has got to matter more to you than what anybody else thinks or you will never stand for very long.

It is embarrassing to me to hear Christians invent a new term to

describe those who agree with Scripture about the social issues of our day and yet deny the Person of Jesus Christ when they call these people, “people of faith”. What in the world does that term mean?

When you call someone a “person of faith” simply because they agree with Scripture about abortion or family values- but at the same time they absolutely disagree with Scripture about either the Deity or the Humanity of Jesus- when you call those people “people of faith” aren’t you giving the idea that these people are saved?

Don’t we run the risk over time of coming to believe that as long as someone is a conservative or a Republican or as long as they get their information from Fox News or as long as they love their wife and are against homosexual marriage and as long as they are helping poor people and doing good works that that is the same thing as being born again?

And then when somebody like John begins to teach **1John 4:3**- you turn them off or push them aside or reject what they are teaching or you call them divisive or mean spirited or unloving or legalistic because who cares about theology when our culture is at war? I mean who cares about the Person of Jesus if we can save our nation?

Well evidently God cares. And evidently the Holy Spirit cares and evidently this stuff really does matter- because the Apostle John wrote it as the Holy Spirit moved upon him.

Well, brother Blair are you saying that believing correctly about the Person of Jesus is more important than getting conservative judges on the Supreme Court? No, I am saying that the Apostle John said that it was more important. Listen I love my country very much and I grieve along with all of you that our culture is sliding down into the pit. But I care more where a person is going to spend eternity- and so did John and so should we all.

Now please don’t get out of this that I am saying that we should not fight against the dismantling of our civilization- I do fight and I believe that we should. All I am saying is that simply because a person is right politically and even socially is not enough- they must be saved- or they are not a Christian.

So whatever is important to God and whatever was important enough for God the Holy Spirit to inspire – as I see it- ought to be important to us. And the divisions that God made are the very same divisions that we should make and what God emphasizes- we should

emphasize and what God didn't talk a lot about- we don't need to talk a lot about.

The point here is that what a person believes and what a person teaches- especially about Jesus and God and Grace was viewed as being way more important to the men who wrote the Bible than it seems to be important to us today and that is not a good thing.

And because we don't place a very high premium on Scriptural integrity like they did back then- we are all too often eager to throw Doctrine aside in the name of "unity" or in the name of "love"- and that course of action has proven itself to be very unwise.

Now just what did John mean 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.**

Many times today when anyone hears the word, "antichrist" they immediately think about that "**man of sin**" that Paul talked about in **2Thessalonians 2** who will rise up at some point in the future. So let's read **2Thessalonians 2:3&4** to see what Paul actually said:

**3 Let no one in any way deceive you, for *it will not come* unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, 4 who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God.**

Now most people today believe that this person- whoever he is- will at some point in the future go into the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem and blaspheme God. And most people label this man of sin as being "The Antichrist". And I agree that this man will be antichrist for sure- but when we label the man of sin that is described here in **2Thessalonians** as being "The" antichrist- we run the risk that we may tend to believe that there will be only one antichrist and that there have not been any antichrists until this man rises up and that is not true. Read with me **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.

Now in these two verses- John tells us several things. First of all- John says that over 1900 years ago when he wrote this- that there were already what he called, “**many antichrists**” already in the world. So by this we can see that the man of sin of **2Thessalonians** - as bad as he will be- is not the *only* antichrist and is not even the *first* antichrist.

Now John tells us the very same thing here that he said in **1John 4:3**- that those to whom John wrote this Epistle had already heard earlier that antichrists were coming- and Lord willing, on the next broadcast- we will explore what this means as we continue our journey through the Epistle of **1John**. May God help us all.

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