

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

165. Testing the Spirits- Part 16

WAOY Tuesday 03/11/08

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 just what John meant when he wrote 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.

Now as we saw last time- it is common today for people to think today that there is only one antichrist and he is that "**man of sin**" that the Apostle Paul talked about in **2Thessalonians 2**- that is going to sit down

in the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem at some point in the future after the Jews rebuild their Temple.

But as we saw last time- John taught that there are actually many antichrists and those many antichrists were alive and doing their evil work 1900 years ago when John wrote this Epistle. To clarify this- let's read again **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 we must remember, beloved that anytime a Biblical writer is talking about that period of time called, "the last time" or "the last days" he is referring to that time frame that is between the Ascension of Jesus Christ and His Second Coming. So this is the Church Age and is now entering its third millennia.

So John is saying here in verse 18 that at the time that he wrote this Epistle- around A.D 96-98- that there were at that time many antichrists- not one or two- but *many* antichrists already on the earth- actively trying to deceive the people and to teach false doctrine in order to tear up the Church.

Now again an antichrist is not somebody that didn't like John or someone with whom John didn't care about. This wasn't a name calling contest here. No, John was accurately labeling those people who had crept into the Church to deceive the simple and to bring in false doctrine. And John said that there were many of them during his day.

Now notice what he said in verse 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 again we need to know that this was not a squabble over personalities or personal preferences. The antichrists are unsaved

people who infiltrated the Church for the express purpose of destroying it through the insertion of bad and wrong and evil doctrine.

In his Epistle, Jude says that these ungodly men crept into the Church to bring in damnable heresy concerning three areas of Christianity:

1. The Grace of God
2. The Character and Nature of God the Father
3. The Person of Jesus Christ

Notice that John says in verse 19 that these antichrists went out from us. Now as you study Church history- you learn that the reason that these evil people went out from the Church is because the leaders of the Church exposed them and held what they taught accountable to Scripture and they tested the spirits of these men and found them to be not of God and they exposed the falsehood of their teachings and when the heretics refused two separate times to repent- they were excommunicated from the Christian Church.

Now I know that that sounds very harsh and unloving to us today. But it really isn't. It is being faithful to Jesus and it is a demonstration of godly love by the leaders of the Church toward those sheep who don't want to be deceived.

In fact- it is only in our day when this action has become rare. All throughout the 2,000 year history of the Christian Church- this action has had to be taken periodically due to the stark reality that there are many false prophets and antichrists alive and well and very seriously trying to destroy the Faith.

And this action of exposing and excommunicating heretics is perfectly in accord with what the Apostles taught and practiced. For example, let's read **Titus 3:10**:

Reject a factious man after a first and second warning,

Not only that- but the Apostle Paul thought it wise to name the names of these antichrists and to let other Churches know exactly who fit this bill- so that if these heretics came to their Church- they wouldn't be able to enter in and destroy it. Let's read **1Timothy 1:18-20**:

18 This command I entrust to you, Timothy, *my* son, in accordance with the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you fight the good fight,

19 keeping faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith.

20 Among these are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan, so that they will be taught not to blaspheme.

Now when Paul says here that he delivered these two men over to satan- Paul was talking about them being excommunicated from the Church. And of course the prayer is that when this happens- God will use this action to bring these men to repentance.

The point here is that even though many of us today look at this action by Paul as being barbaric and cruel and completely unchristian- the men whom God used to establish Christianity clearly taught that this action was not only *allowed*- but it was *mandatory* when heretics or antichrists were involved.

If Biblical Truth matters at all- then any attack against it in any way by anyone- is very, very serious- especially if we are dealing with an area of Truth that is essential for Salvation- like the Person of Jesus Christ.

So it is not about personal preferences or things that don't matter- no one should go through this action over things like that. We are to love one another and be merciful and longsuffering about issues of personal preference.

But when we are dealing with serious issues of eternal consequences- we not only have the right- but we have the duty and the obligation to hold what people believe and what they teach and what they confess accountable to Scripture not only for their sake but for the sake of the Church as well.

So part of what John was talking about in Chapter 4 when he said that the people had already been warned about the fact that antichrists were coming was fulfilled here in chapter 2- but John was not alone in faithfully warning the Church to be on guard against the antichrists.
Read with me **2Peter 2:**

1 But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies,

even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves.

2 Many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned;

3 and in *their* greed they will exploit you with false words; their judgment from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.

4 For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment;

5 and did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a preacher of righteousness, with seven others, when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly;

6 and *if* He condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to destruction by reducing *them* to ashes, having made them an example to those who would live ungodly *lives* thereafter;

7 and *if* He rescued righteous Lot, oppressed by the sensual conduct of unprincipled men

8 (for by what he saw and heard *that* righteous man, while living among them, felt *his* righteous soul tormented day after day by *their* lawless deeds),

9 *then* the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment,

10 and especially those who indulge the flesh in *its* corrupt desires and despise authority. Daring, self-willed, they do not tremble when they revile angelic majesties,

11 whereas angels who are greater in might and power do not bring a reviling judgment against them before the Lord.

12 But these, like unreasoning animals, born as creatures of instinct to be captured and killed, reviling where they have no knowledge, will in the destruction of those creatures also be destroyed,

13 suffering wrong as the wages of doing wrong. They count it a pleasure to revel in the daytime. They are stains and blemishes, reveling in their deceptions, as they carouse with you,

14 having eyes full of adultery that never cease from sin, enticing unstable souls, having a heart trained in greed, accursed children;

15 forsaking the right way, they have gone astray, having followed the way of Balaam, the *son* of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness;

16 but he received a rebuke for his own transgression, *for* a mute donkey, speaking with a voice of a man, restrained the madness of the prophet.

17 These are springs without water and mists driven by a storm, for whom the black darkness has been reserved.

18 For speaking out arrogant *words* of vanity they entice by fleshly desires, by sensuality, those who barely escape from the ones who live in error,

19 promising them freedom while they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by what a man is overcome, by this he is enslaved.

20 For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first.

21 For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment handed on to them.

22 It has happened to them according to the true proverb, "A *DOG RETURNS TO ITS OWN VOMIT*," and, "A sow, after washing, *returns to wallowing in the mire*."

Now Peter wrote this second Epistle around A.D. 68- some thirty years before John wrote his Epistle and just a few years before Jude wrote his Epistle. So the Christians of the first century had been taught for over thirty years by Peter's Epistle that these antichrists and false prophets were coming at some future date. Peter's use of the future tense in his writings show us that these evil men had not yet been manifested in his day- but that they were sure to come. John and Jude tell us very clearly in their Books, "*They're here!*"

Well, I have to stop right here, but please join me on the next broadcast as we continue our journey through the Epistle of **1John**. May God help us all.

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