

# **DISCERNING THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH AND ERROR**

## **I John 4:1-6**

**Because of the competition and contrasts between truth and error,  
Christians are called to be discerning.**

### **I. THE CALL FOR TESTING** (1)

- What is required for Christians?

#### **A. THE COMMANDS**

1. Stop believing every spirit
  - These believers were guilty of gullibility ... this needed to stop
2. Try the spirits - I Thess. 5:19-22

#### **B. THE CONDITIONS**

1. Naive innocence
  - a. There was a real danger of being confused by crafty men - Eph. 4:14
  - b. Because they weren't testing, they were too trusting.
2. Numerous false prophets
  - a. They on currently on a mission in this world
  - b. Their goal is to ...
    - 1) Deceive - Matt. 7:15
    - 2) Distract - Mark 13:22
    - 3) Destroy - II Peter 2:1

### **II. THE CONFESSION TO TEST** (2-3)

- What do they say about Christ's incarnation?

#### **A. THOSE CONFESSING CHRIST'S INCARNATION** (2)

1. The Formula: By this you know the Spirit of God
2. Their Faith
  - a. They believe that Jesus is the eternal Son of God who came into this world as human flesh
  - b. See John 1:14 and I John 1:1-3
3. Their Foundation - I John 5:1

#### **B. THOSE NOT CONFESSING CHRIST** (3)

1. Their Denial
  - a. They do not acknowledge Christ and thereby refuse Him entirely
  - b. They deny His incarnation - See I John 2:22-23
2. The Difficulty

"If Jesus was not both God and man He could not be our Saviour. In order to die in our place, it was necessary that He become man; in order for His death to have infinite value, He must be from God." [Donald Burdick, "The Epistles of John" – Moody, 1970, pages 68-69]
3. The Discovery
  - What they had heard about antichrist coming has now happened

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### III. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE TESTED (4-5)

- How do they respond to their condition?

#### A. THE GODLY REST (4)

1. They are sourced in God
2. They are situated as family (“little children”)
3. They are successful against the ungodly > Having overcome them
4. They are strengthened by the Holy Spirit

#### B. THE WORLDLY TALK (5)

1. Their Inspiration
  - Their speech is sourced in secular and sinful humanism
2. Their Audience
  - a. Worldly listeners whose interests are aroused by worldly talkers
  - b. See Acts 17:19-21

### IV. THE CONDITION OF THE TESTED (6)

- How do they respond to the Word of God?

#### A. THE GODLY LISTEN TO GOD’S MESSENGERS

- They desire to grow and devote themselves to instructions from God’s messengers

#### B. THE UNGODLY DO NOT LISTEN TO GOD’S MESSENGERS

1. The ungodly do not hear - John 8:47
2. To the non-believing the Word of God is nonsense! - See I Cor. 2:14
3. These turn away from truth - II Tim. 4:3-4

### CONCLUSION:

**By these things we can know the spirit of truth and error (6b)**

1. Those influenced by the Spirit of truth ...
  - a. Test the spirits
  - b. Confess Christ’s incarnation
  - c. Rest in the Spirit’s power
  - d. Listen to God’s messengers
2. Those affected by the spirit of error ...
  - a. Follow falsehood
  - b. Deny Christ’s incarnation
  - c. Listen to empty, worldly dribble
  - d. Do not listen to God’s messengers

**There is truth and error ... and they include discernable differences that we should know.**