

~ 1 John ~

Lesson 30- Do not believe every spirit

We are continuing our study of 1 John and today we begin chapter 4, and we will be looking specifically at verses **1 John 4:1-6**.

Last week we spoke about the assurance of Love and that we have the greatest assurance of Everlasting Life living inside us. That is the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Father has given us the Spirit of Truth who bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God and the Spirit is leading and guiding us into all Truth. And because we have the Spirit of Truth abiding in us, we have the discernment to know the Truth from Error.

One of the reasons John is writing this letter is because he wants us to know those who are trying to deceive us, 1 John 2:26, John gives us another Test of Truth in chapter 4 so we can test the spirits and know those who are of God. This is the test to know and prove those who are of the Spirit of Truth versus those who are of the spirit of error. That is what Truth does, it exposes darkness, it convicts sinners, and it assures believers of Everlasting Life in Christ.

Let's read verse 1 again to look at this test...

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| <p>1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.</p> | <p>¹ Ἀγαπητοί, μὴ παντὶ πνεύματι πιστεύετε, ἀλλὰ δοκιμάζετε τὰ πνεύματα, εἰ ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐστίν· ὅτι πολλοὶ ψευδοπροφῆται ἐξεληλύθασιν εἰς τὸν κόσμον.</p> |
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John begins verse 1 by saying, “**Beloved...**”- Agapetoi, Ἀγαπητοί- “those loved of God”. This is a letter to believers, the little children...

“**do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits whether they are of God...**”- This is the root of spiritual warfare. It's the war for the Truth and the battle to guard the Truth from error. And because of this, John gives us another imperative command, “**...test the spirits whether they are of God...**”

This word, “**test**” is dokimazo, δοκιμάζω- “to prove or examine something to be genuine”. We as faithful believers cannot believe everything we hear, especially if it is coming from a so-called prophet. So, John tells us to examine everything they say through Scripture. This is the Berean heart, Acts 17:10-11.

This word dokimazo, δοκιμάζω, “**test**”, has the sense of purification by fire. This word is used in the process of purifying gold or silver by fire, Proverbs 17:3 LXX- “*Just as silver and gold are tested, dokimazo, δοκιμάζω, in a furnace, so hearts are selected by the Lord.*” Ps 65:10; Zech 13:9; Jer 6:27. This is how we are selected by the Lord as vessels of honor, sanctified and useful for the Master. This is how we are proven genuine. And in the same way we must “**...test, dokimazo, δοκιμάζω, prove whether the spirits are genuine, whether they are of God...**” and we do this by the Truth, Phil 1:10; Rom 12:2; 1 Thess 5:21; Eph 5:8-13.

The phrase “**...of God...**” is ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ ...out from God. Six times in these six verses, 1 John 4:1-6, John uses this phrase, ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ, out from God. The Truth exposes the liars, so when we test the spirits, when we dokimazo, δοκιμάζω the spirits by the purifying Truth, it exposes the false prophets in their lies and hypocrisy.

John continues in verse 1, “**because many false prophets have gone out into the world...**”

“**false prophets**”- pseudo-prophetes, ψευδοπροφήτης- false prophets, those who confess falsely on behalf of God. Jesus speaks of these pseudo-prophets in **Matt 7:15**. These false prophets pretend to be one of the flock, they infiltrate into the church, but they are really ravenous wolves and they speak lies trying to draw people away from the Truth.

This is what Satan has done from the beginning. Satan is a liar, and he is the father of lies and from the beginning Satan has declared war on the Truth. Remember in the garden he said to Eve, “Has God really said?”... “You will not surely die...”, Gen 3:1-7. Satan and all his demons are liars, so as a result they distort the Truth and try to entice unstable souls to doubt the Word and sway them away from the Truth, **2 Pet 2:1-2, 14**. It's the battle for the Truth.

The topic of false teachers is a major thread through this epistle and as John circles around to discuss this again, he tells us the source of deception is the spirit of error. These are the deceiving spirits and doctrine of demons that Paul spoke about in [1 Timothy 4:1-2](#).

This is a major topic not only in 1 John, but in the entire New Testament. Paul, in every one of his epistles, warns us to guard against error... Jesus warned us of false prophets and in the epistles of Revelation, Jesus warns of apostasy and error... Peter speaks of this... Jude... James... and here we see it in John. Every book of the New Testament has something to say about guarding Truth and staying away from error. This is a bid deal, and this is why the walk of Sanctification and guarding the Truth is so crucial.

John continues in verses 2 and 3...

2 By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God,

3 and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world.

² ἐν τούτῳ γινώσκετε τὸ Πνεῦμα τοῦ Θεοῦ· πᾶν πνεῦμα ὃ ὁμολογεῖ Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν ἐν σαρκὶ ἐληλυθότα, ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐστι·

³ καὶ πᾶν πνεῦμα ὃ μὴ ὁμολογεῖ τὸν Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν ἐν σαρκὶ ἐληλυθότα, ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ οὐκ ἔστι· καὶ τοῦτο ἐστὶ τὸ τοῦ ἀντιχρίστου, ὃ ἀκηκόατε ὅτι ἔρχεται, καὶ νῦν ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ ἐστὶν ἤδη.

In John's day he was battling a major deceptive attack on Christianity and that was Gnosticism. The false idea that one could attain to eternal life by knowing the secret knowledge of the gods. Not by faith in Jesus Christ, but by elevating yourself to a higher secret knowledge. And a major heresy they had was that they denied Jesus as the Christ who came in the flesh as a man, that He died as our Propitiation for sin as a man and as the Christ, and they deny that He rose again on the third day as a man and as the Christ, Son of God and Son of Man, fully God and fully Man. This is what it means that Jesus is the Christ, and the Gnostics denied this. They claimed that Jesus only came in the appearance of a man and didn't actually put on human flesh. They said he was only an apparition, a ghost that came to bring the "spark of knowledge", not die for our sins. This is why John, throughout the entire epistle, has been proclaiming Jesus as come in the flesh. That He is the Son of God, fully God and fully man in the flesh.

In verses 2 and 3 John tells us how we test, dokimazo, δοκιμάζω the spirits if they are of God, and we can know this by their confession of Jesus Christ. By their homologeō, ὁμολογέω, of Christ. Do they say the same thing that God says about Jesus Christ? Do they confess that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God who came in the flesh, died as our Propitiation for sin and was risen from the dead? That's the test. And when a spirit doesn't confess this, we know that spirit is not of God.

The Gnostics didn't confess this... Jehovah's Witness don't... Mormons don't... Christian Science... Progressive Christianity... Postmodern Christianity... Ecumenism... all these are pseudo-Christians, false Christians trying to deceive and confessing a false Christ. And the way the enemy tries to deceive is by distorting Truth. They try to get us to doubt God's Word that is Truth, and doubt Jesus Christ who is The Truth. And the Gnostics did this in the first few centuries when they rewrote the New Testament to fit their own agenda. Irenaeus, who was in the 2nd century, speaks extensively of these distortions in his book, "Against Heresies", which details and uncovers the hidden agenda of the Gnostics in that day...

Book 1- Preface: 1. INASMVCH as certain men have set the truth aside, and bring in lying words and vain genealogies, which, as the apostle says, 2 "minister questions rather than godly edifying which is in faith," and by means of their craftily-constructed plausibilities draw away the minds of the inexperienced and take them captive, [I have felt constrained, my dear friend, to compose the following treatise in order to expose and counteract their machinations.] These men falsify the oracles of God, and prove themselves evil interpreters of the good word of revelation. They also overthrow the faith of many, by drawing them away, under a pretense of [superior] knowledge,... By means of specious and plausible words, they cunningly allure the simple-minded to inquire into their system; but they nevertheless clumsily destroy them, while they initiate them into their blasphemous and impious opinions...

Book 1- 3:6: ...striving, as they do, to adapt the good words of revelation to their own wicked inventions. And it is not only from the writings of the evangelists and the apostles that they endeavour to derive proofs for their opinions by means of perverse interpretations and deceitful expositions: they deal in the same way with the law and the prophets,... And others of them, with great craftiness, adapted such parts of Scripture to their own figments, lead away captive from the truth those who do not retain a steadfast faith in one God, the Father Almighty, and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Book 1- 6:1-2: At the same time, they deny that He (Jesus Christ) assumed anything material [into His nature], since indeed matter is incapable of salvation. They further hold that the consummation of all things will take place when all that is spiritual has been formed and perfected by Gnosis (knowledge); and by this they mean spiritual men who have attained to the perfect knowledge of God...

Book 1- 8:1: In like manner do these persons patch together old wives' fables, and then endeavour, by violently drawing away from their proper connection, words, expressions, and parables whenever found, to adapt the oracles of God to their baseless fictions.

The Gnostics were violently drawing away words... to adapt them to their baseless fictions. They were corrupting the Bible with their false doctrine and rewriting scripture to fit their agenda. We have all heard of the missing verses in the Bible, but many don't know why they are missing. There are over 40 missing portions of Scripture, between verses and large portions of verses that are missing in all the modern translations except in the KJV and the NKJV. And the reason for this is from Gnostics trying to corrupt the Bible. Just as Irenaeus said, they "adapt the good words of revelation to their own wicked inventions". And this resulted in what we know today as the Alexandrian Codices. These are the oldest manuscripts discovered of the Greek NT, but just because they are the oldest, doesn't mean they are the best. Far from it. And unfortunately the enemy has deceived the world into thinking these are the best manuscripts most closely resemble the original autographs of the New Testament, and so now these manuscripts are the bases of all our modern translations today, except for the KJV and the NKJV. But what the majority of scholars don't realize is these Alexandrian manuscripts are the work of these Gnostics from the first few centuries trying to destroy the Bible.

In addition to the 40+ missing verses, there are another 24 verses that are noted in the margins of the modern Bibles as not being in these oldest manuscripts, these are the last 12 verses of the Gospel of Mark and 12 verses in John chapter 8. Additionally, 62 times the Gnostics removed the name of Jesus and 38 times when they removed the word Christ from these Bibles.

And in fact, there is an example of this distortion in our text we are studying today in 1 John 4:3. There is a missing phrase in verse 3 that the Gnostics removed...

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| <p>³ and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world.</p> | <p>³ καὶ πᾶν πνεῦμα ὃ μὴ ὁμολογεῖ τὸν Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν ἐν σαρκὶ ἐληλυθότα, ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ οὐκ ἔστι· καὶ τοῦτό ἐστι τὸ τοῦ ἀντιχρίστου, ὃ ἀκηκόατε ὅτι ἔρχεται, καὶ νῦν ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ ἐστὶν ἤδη.</p> |
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Notice the words they took out... **Christ has come in the flesh** These Gnostics accepted Jesus, but denied Him as coming in the flesh, so in 1 John 4:3, they took out the very thing that John was making the point to show... this is how you know the spirit of Antichrist, that Jesus Christ came in the flesh. This is just one example of literally thousands of places in the New Testament where the Gnostics have changed the NT.