

John's Warning

1 John 4:1-6

John begins this chapter with a Divine method by which we may determine whether we have the Spirit of God **or** the spirit of delusion. The believer is sure and assured that God dwells in him by the Spirit that God gives him at the very moment of new birth. John warns us that we cannot believe every spirit, for even Satan and his ministers can profess to be true to the Word of God (2 Corinthians 11:13-15). Satan can quote more Bible than most church members, and most teachers of error know more about the Bible than most born again believers. So, we find that it is especially important to be able to distinguish between the Spirit of God and the spirit of error. The key to the whole matter is, again, the Holy Spirit of God. He readily confesses that Christ Jesus came in the flesh, was born of a virgin, and was Himself God incarnate. The spirit of error cannot and will not confess the same thing.

I. WARNING AGAINST FALSE TEACHERS

Vs. 1

(a) **Because:** Friends, don't believe everything that you hear, try the spirits! John plainly warns his brothers and sisters of Asia Minor that false prophets and false doctrine is everywhere.

1. The word 'try' (*dokimazo*) means "to check out by fixed pattern or a standard that does not change". Vs. 1a

From the darkness round the cross there rings out this voice so sure that God is love. In him there is no caprice (impulse; TDC) and no changeableness. Do what you will to him, however you may hurt and disappoint him and break his heart, you cannot alter his essential nature.

Arthur John Gossip

Hebrews 13:8 *Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.*

a. A consistent pattern found in both Old and New Testaments is that God does not change. Christ does not change. The Holy Ghost does not change. Things of this world change because of updates or improvements or societal preferences of that time.

b. But the Godhead does not change so that we have a Gospel that is not and does not spawn confusion.

1 Peter 2:6 Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded.

Once, while riding in the country, I saw on a farmer's barn a weathervane on the arrow of which was inscribed these words: "God is Love." I turned in at the gate and asked the farmer, "What do you mean by that? Do you think God's love is changeable; that it veers about as that arrow turns in the winds?" The farmer said, "Oh, no! I mean that whichever way the wind blows, God is still Love."

Charles H. Spurgeon

2. The reason for the trial is that there are some liars out there in the world. (Gr. *pseudo-prophetes*) means "imposter" and is used for both words; false – prophets; both are imposters. Vs. 1b

Matthew 24:4-5 And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. 5 For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many...11 And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.

II. BIRTHMARKS OF THE FALSE TEACHER

Vss. 2-3

(a) **The Truth**: Have you ever heard the old saying that a baby's birthmark will be shaped in the form of whatever the mother craved when she was pregnant? The true worshipers of God couldn't wait for Messiah to come because He would bear the birthmarks of the Father that sent Him. Vs. 2

1. His coming was prophesied in the O.T. There would be visible signs of Who and What He was and where He came from. There would be nothing 'pseudo' but True and real.

Isaiah 7:14 Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

Isaiah 9:6 *For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.*

2. His coming became reality in the N.T. On earth and walking among men was the Incarnate (clothed with flesh) God of Glory Himself in the form of a Man named Jesus.

Hebrews 2:14 *Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things...* (ESV)

(b) **The Lie**: For anyone to say otherwise is to stand against Christ. Now notice that John says emphatically, “*This is that spirit of anti-christ...*”. He does not say ‘this could be’ or ‘This might be’ but THIS IS! Vs. 3

- You have heard that this lying spirit was coming
- You know this lying spirit is here

2 Corinthians 11:13-15 *For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. 14 And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. 15 Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.*

If Jesus was not the Divine Son of God, then He was history's greatest hoax, the world's greatest impostor, the biggest liar who ever lived, and we the largest gathering of fools. He would have committed the single largest act of blasphemy because He made Himself to be from God, equal with God, the only begotten Son of God. So, Jesus had to be who He said He was, or He was the greatest counterfeit who had ever lived.

(Anonymous Quotation based on C.S. Lewis “Liar, Lord or Lunatic Argument”)

III. BELIEVERS VERSUS NON-BELIEVERS Vss. 4-6

(a) **True Proclamation**: “*Ye are of God...*”. “*We are of God...*”. John says, “You are of the Truth; you are of God. It is because of this that you are overcomers and He that lives in you, the Truth, is far greater than the one that lives and rules out in this world.” “We, his true preachers, are of God and true believers hear us.” Vss. 4 & 6 a&b&d

1. The fact that ‘*you are of God*’ gives the true believer a discerning ear; they can recognize truth from lies.

Ecclesiastes 5:1 *Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they consider not that they do evil.*

Unbelievers do not hear nor respect God's preacher. That is why we have so many fusses and church divisions today. When God's man preaches God's whole counsel of the word from the pulpit, you may rest assured that there will be friction in the pew. Unbelievers and hypocrites cannot endure sound doctrine but for a short time. Before long, the demons within them will declare war on God's preacher. Workers of darkness hate the light and anyone that exposes their wicked works to the Light (John 3:20).

But the real man of God will not let this cause him to pack up and leave town. He'll tighten up his belt, roll up his sleeves, and in humble submission to God pray, "Lord, you load my Gospel guns, and I'll pull the trigger!" Jesus Christ was the greatest divider of men that ever walked the earth. Some said, "He is of God", some said that "He has a devil". Some said that His miracles "came through the power of God", while others said that "He did it through the power of Beelzebub". Some said that "Surely this is the Son of God", while others said that "He is the product of fornication". Some believed Him and loved Him, others despised Him and hated the very breath that filled His lungs. Jesus said that, "If they hated me, they will hate those who follow after me." So, you can rest on this fact, that if the Son of God cannot please everybody, God's preacher cannot please them all either. True believers love the Light and come into light because it exposes their righteous works (John 3:21). They love God's Word! They love God's people! They will love God's preacher! Why? It's because 'Ye are of God' and what God loves you will love!

(b) **Lies Exposed**: False teachers are branded with the world's branding iron. But the world listens to them with itching ears ready to hear more! Vss. 5 & 6 c&e

Romans 16:17 *Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.*

- Some will say, "We miss you." I don't! That may sound mean or unforgiving, but it's not. Actually, as Paul wrote, it's Biblical. Do I miss the person; yes. Do I miss the foul spirit in that person? Absolutely not!

2 Timothy 4:3 *For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;*

If you are of the truth, if you have learned the truth, if you see the sanctity of the truth, then speak truth. We are not called to be deceivers or liars. God is a God of truth, and His people are called to have an enormously high standard of truth.

R.C. Sproul