

July 17, 2022

## Lesson 25 – 1 John 4:1-6

Recap: In 1 John 3:24, John introduces the Holy Spirit in conjunction with assurance; he will now help them know the marks of the true Holy Spirit

What does John mean by “test the spirits”?  
What are these spirits?

Unembodied auras or disturbances in the force?

Internally-sensed spirits contending within the heart of the reader?

The most straightforward understanding of the text is that these are spirits driving and reflected in the teaching of the false teachers referenced earlier.

### Distinctions between the Holy Spirit & the spirit of the world

1. The Holy Spirit confesses the person and work of Jesus Christ; the spirit of the world denies Him

v. 2 – By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already.

This seems to refer to the apostates’ heresy regarding Christ’s incarnation

“Although John does employ the combined name ‘Jesus Christ’, to speak of ‘Jesus Christ’ as having ‘come in the flesh’ would be a strange ‘theological anachronism’, since it was not until after the incarnation that he was called ‘Jesus’. This being so, we should probably adopt the alternative double accusative, namely to acknowledge ‘Jesus’ as ‘Christ come in the flesh’, or ‘the Christ incarnate’.” – John Stott, *The Letters of John*

John 15:26 – But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me.

John 16:15 – He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

Any teaching that diminishes Christ's person and work is a false teaching from a false spirit

## 2. The Holy Spirit empowers steadfastness; the spirit of the world drives men away from God

v. 1 – 'many false prophets have gone out into the world'

Perhaps the clearest indication that John is talking about the spirit behind various teachings, and particular those of the apostates

The phrase 'have gone out into the world' seems to indicate the departure of individuals who purportedly were part of the church

v. 4 – 'you are from God and have overcome them'

The readers' greatest proof of their 'overcoming' the apostates is found in their faithfulness

This 'overcoming' is the work of God in the believer, and is grounded in the same truth that defends against our own condemning hearts (see v. 3:20):  
**the 'greater'ness of God**

John 16:33 – In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world

3. The Holy Spirit tunes the heart towards the truth; the spirit of the world tunes the heart towards the world's lies

vv. 5-6 – They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them. We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know **the Spirit of truth** and the **spirit of error**.

Error – (Gk. *planēs*) – To mislead people as to proper views which they should have; may often be expressed idiomatically... 'to twist people's thoughts,' 'to cause what is false to seem like what is true,' 'to make a lie appear true,' 'to dig away the truth,' or 'to cover the eyes with lies.'

Elsewhere, this word is translated:  
*fraud, deceit, delusion, wandering*; in short, this is not a morally neutral word

John 14:16-17 – And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even **the Spirit of truth**, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.

The factual knowledge of the truth is an outgrowth of a prerequisite relational knowledge of the Holy Spirit of God

The proof of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is an affirmation of apostolic teaching regarding the divine nature, incarnation, and saving death and resurrection of Jesus Christ – **for us, this has been canonized in Scripture!**

Does the teaching that resonates with your spirit proceed from and conform to the truth about Jesus Christ as revealed in Scripture?