

1 John 4.1-6 – Test the Spirits

Introduction

1. New Birth Produces the Fruit of the Spirit
 - a. Love for Christ's Commands, Love for Christ's Family, Love for Christ's Truth
2. John's Letter Contrasts these Loves with their Opposites
 - a. Righteousness versus Sinfulness, Love versus Hate
 - b. Today: Truth versus Error
3. The World is Subjected by God to Futility because of Sin
 - a. **See Romans 8:20 and Ecclesiastes 1:2**
 - b. The World has Nothing to Offer the Christian
 - c. This is by God's Design – Judgment upon Sin
 - d. The World is Embroiled in Spiritual Warfare
 - e. How can You Tell What is True and What is False?
 - f. The Spirit of the Age: Listen to your Gut, your Heart, the Inward Voice (Intuition), your Feelings
 - g. The Spirit of the Age: Focuses on Comfort, Self-Growth, and Worldviews apart from God
4. Discernment between Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy

The Chief Aim: Christians need to beware of false philosophy, false religion, false teachers, and worldly man-centered ideas. Only those who profess and submit to Jesus Christ as He is presented in the Scriptures as handed down by His apostles, and are indwelt by the illuminating and conquering Spirit of Truth are those who belong to God.

The Tenet of Spiritual Reality (v 1)

1. The Lord does not want Us Naïve or Gullible
2. *Spirits* = False Prophets, False Teachers – man-centered philosophies, euphoric experiences
 - a. Jesus Warned about these spirits (**Matthew 7:15**)
 - b. Jesus Warned about these Wolves (**Mark 13:22**)
 - c. Paul Battled the Wolves (**2 Corinthians 11:12-15**)
3. The Futile World is Under the Power of the Evil One
 - a. Christians Must Be Critical of the Information coming into Our Minds: Do you believe everything you hear?
 - b. Test the Spirits!
4. An Appeal to Authority – Experience? Feelings? Bible!
 - a. The Bereans were Noble for Sifting Ideas through God's Word (**Acts 17:11-12**)
 - b. Mature Christians do not Submit their Minds and Hearts to Worldly "Truth" without the Scrutiny of God's Word

The Confession of Christ-Centered Truth (vv 2-3)

1. Teaching in Accordance with God's Counsel
2. What does the Teaching/Adherence Say about Jesus Christ
3. The Spirit of Antichrist has its Prophets and Teachers
 - a. Gnosticism (1st Century): Denied the Humanity of Jesus
 - b. Arianism (4th Century): Arius said Jesus was Merely a Creature – "There was a time when he was not..."
 - c. Docetism (4th Century): Appolinarius taught Jesus was a Phantom; Appeared Human – An Apparition
 - d. Nestorianism (5th Century): Nestorius taught Jesus' two natures were actually two persons – Divine Logos/Human
 - e. Islam (7th Century): Mohammed Denied Jesus was the Son of God
 - f. Mormonism (18th Century): Joseph Smith and denied the Deity of Jesus Christ
4. The Apostles: Jesus is God in the Flesh; Two Natures: Divine and Human – Who do you say Jesus Is?
5. Heresy brings Death and Destruction: Truth Brings Life
6. John Sounds Judgmental: Error Must be Called Out for not to do so is Unloving
7. Calling for repentance and faith is loving
8. Christians REJOICE in the Truth – that is Love (**1 Cor 13**)

The Triumph of the Indwelling Spirit (v 4)

1. The Christian Overcomes the Spirit of Antichrist – they Deny the False Teachers
2. The Spirit Indwells and Illuminates the Scriptures
3. The Community of Faith Assists in Sound Doctrine
4. Natural Man will Never Understand Truth (**1 Cor 2:14**)
5. Natural Man is Called to Repent and Believe the Truth

The Testament of True Belief (vv 5-6)

1. Who is the Audience? False Prophets and Teachers are from the World and the World Listens to them
2. What is the Authority? Self-Acclaimed or God & His Word
3. True Belief Conforms to the Word of God
4. False Perspectives Shaped by the Prevailing Ways of the World – feelings of comfort, what is pleasing, what works
5. The worldly audience seeks these things
6. *We* – the Apostles who were Eye-Witnesses to the Majesty of Jesus Christ and carried along by the Spirit to Produce the Word of God (**2 Peter 1:21, 2 Timothy 3:16-17**)
7. Christians listen to the Apostles – they believe the Truth, forsake error, and Safeguards the Purity of God's Truth