

## *Discerning between Truth and Error*

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

*“Some statements of Scripture haunt me. If I were to dwell on them too long, meditate on them too deeply, or obsess over them too frequently, they would keep me awake at night. They warn of impending trouble for believers and alarming developments for the church. These passages together paint a pretty bleak picture of the deteriorating world around us.*

- *‘You will be hated by all nations because of My name.’ (Matt. 24:9)*
- *‘Many false prophets will arise and mislead many.’ (Matt. 24:11)*
- *‘Because lawlessness is increased, most people’s love will grow cold.’ (Matt. 24:12)*
- *‘False Christs and false prophets will arise and show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect.’ (Matt. 24:24)*
- *‘An hour is coming for everyone who kills you to think that he is offering service to God.’ (John 16:2)*
- *‘In the world you will have tribulation.’ (John 16:33)*
- *‘The Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons.’ (1 Tim. 4:1)*
- *‘The time will come when people will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths.’ (2 Tim. 4:3-4)*
- *‘Do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you.’ (1 Peter 4:21)*

*I’m often asked by believers who are alarmed at the spiritual, moral, and cultural decline today, ‘What in the world is going on? What’s happening to our families? To our churches? To our schools... our country... our world?’ In light of those haunting Scriptures, I have a quick and simple answer: exactly what was predicted. Swindoll*

- We now come to an important doctrinal section of 1 John. The apostle wanted to be sure his readers understood that love must be grounded in truth, so he encouraged them to be discerning about what they believe, especially regarding spiritual things. Love not based on the truth of God’s Word comes from the world (1Jn. 2:15-17).

**4:1a** The teachings of the false teachers, whether in John’s day or ours, find their basis in the world’s system of belief. All **false cults** and **heresies** originate in the mind of natural, fallen man who is controlled by a sin nature dominated by Satan.

- The truth of Christianity comes from Scripture alone, anything else must be tested by the Word of God. Because the spirit of evil and error permeates the world, Christians must always be on guard. That is why we are commanded to test the spirits.

**2 Peter 1:20** *Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation. For prophecy never has its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.*

**1 Jn. 3:24b** *And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us.*

**1 Cor. 3:12** *What we have received is not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may understand what God has freely given us.*

- Though the spirit of the antichrist controls the world (1 Jn. 5:19), believers have been enabled to overcome his evil influence through the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit. (1 Jn. 3:24). Therefore, through the Spirit, we are we are to make sure that those who claim to be speaking for God are from God.
- We are to test them by **the truth of God's inerrant Word**. When we chose to do that, we are seen as **noble** (*"well born" in the Greek*)

**Acts 17:11** *Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.*

- Believers are commanded to *test and discern* between truth and falsehood to protect the church from wandering from the truth of God's Word, they are given the responsibility of making sure that the resources and teachers they embrace are scripturally sound.

**1 Thess. 5:21** *Do not despise prophecies, 21 but test everything; hold fast what is good.*

- Cults are insidious, false teachers are insidious, and when we see someone caught up in their falsehood it grieves us, especially when they refuse to see it. False spirits wield their power to deceive for the sole purpose of leading people away from the truth while convincing them that what they've embraced is truth.

**Deut. 13:1-3** *"If a prophet or a dreamer of dreams arises among you and gives you a sign or a wonder, 2 and the sign or wonder that he tells you comes to pass, and if he says, 'Let us go after other gods,' which you have not known, 'and let us serve them,' 3 you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams. For the Lord your God is testing you, to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul.*

- There is a heavy, heavy emphasis in the New Testament warning believers about error.
- God reveals the truth to the world and Satan counters with lies.
- Spiritual warfare is a battle between truth and error, which calls for discernment.
- Satan's strategy of deceiving Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, God's perfect environment, hasn't changed. He attacked the truth of God's Word.

**1<sup>st</sup>** he caused Eve to doubt the Word of God.

**Gen. 3:1** *...He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden?'"*

- Satan attacks the Word of God by getting someone to doubt its truth.
- He gets believers to doubt,
  1. That It will help them solve their emotional, spiritual, relational problems.
  2. That God cares for them and loves them. *Cast all your care on him because he cares for you.*

3. That they are truly saved.
4. That they don't have to read Scripture or participate in the body of Christ. **Satan loves ignorance** (the misinformed or uninformed believer can be easily led astray).

**2<sup>nd</sup>** The second thing Satan loves to do is to get people to distort or twist the truth.

- Eve responds by saying, “*You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it (Gen. 3:2) Gen. 2:17 “but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.”*”

**How does that work today?** You can't possibly apply the moral absolutes of the Old Testament to today because we live in an age of grace and love. Even those things in Scripture that were written two thousand years ago don't apply because they are outdated and irrelevant. We are a changing culture and all we really need to do is be kind and nice to one another. To love like Christ loved is to accept all lifestyles without speaking out against whatever that may be, even if it is a clear violation of the moral absolutes of God's Word.

**3<sup>rd</sup>** The third way Satan works is through denial by getting people to flatly deny that the Word of God is valid at all.

**Gen. 3:2** ‘*You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.*’

- Refers to both spiritual and physical death. How does Satan respond? **Gen. 3:4** “*You will not surely die,*”
- These are the strategies he uses. He gets people to **doubt**, **distort** and **deny** God's truth. That is why he is called a liar and deceiver.

**John 8:44** *You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies.*

**2 Cor. 11:3** *But I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ.*

**Rev. 12:9** *And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.*

- The most important thing that must happen in the true church, the body of Christ, is the proclamation of God's truth.
- We are commanded **to have discernment**, *do not believe every spirit*. We are **to test** what we hear to determine whether it comes from the Spirit of God or from the demonic spirits.

**dokimazo** - *to test, examine, prove, scrutinise (to see whether a thing is genuine or not), as metals, to recognise as genuine after examination, to approve, deem worthy. Strong's Concordance*

- To put everything to the test should be a continuing practice of every believer.

**4:1b** The standard that a believer is to use to test and discern between truth and falsehood is God's Word. If what is said, written, or taught deviates from the truth of God's Word, then it is from a false prophet.

- Satan wants **to confuse** the true church of God. He doesn't want to come out as anti-Christ meaning against Christ. Instead, he wants to be seen as pro-Christ or in place of Christ. We as true believers must test the spirits, their teachings, books, those on television and in the pulpit by judging them against the truth of the Word of God (**Matt. 7:15-21**).

**2 Cor. 11:13-15** *13 For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. 14 And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. 15 So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds.*

- Every believer can recognize the Spirit of God in others by what they say about Jesus, by how they live before Jesus (Lordship), and by their commitment to the whole counsel of God's Word.
- John gives us **three ways** we can do that. This is how we can determine falsehood.

**4:2-3** **1<sup>st</sup>**, anyone who fully acknowledges the incarnation of Christ is from God. Anyone who adds to or takes away from the full meaning of His incarnation is an antichrist.

**ἀντίχριστος** Antichrist: can mean either "against Christ" or "instead of Christ," or perhaps, combining the two, "one who, assuming the guise of Christ, opposes Christ" (Westcott). The word is found only in John's epistles, Strong's Concordance

- What do they say about the divinity of Jesus Christ? Do they know His purpose for coming in the flesh? Do they recognize His deity, His sinlessness, and the reason for His willing sacrifice? Do they say and teach that faith in Him alone is the only way that a person can be forgiven and saved? Do they add or detract from what He has done? Do they add works to grace?

*"Jesus is the **litmus test** of reality for people. You have the right view of Jesus; you have a right beginning."* MacArthur

**4:4** **2<sup>nd</sup>**, anyone who shows clear evidence (fruit) of living a Spirit filled life under the Lordship of Jesus Christ is from God.

- Do they have the right kind of relationship with Jesus? Do they show the fruit of righteousness? Is there Lordship? Do they show self-sacrificing agape love? When we test the spirits, we are to look at their lives. What are they saying and emphasizing?

**4:5** **3<sup>rd</sup>**, anyone who is committed to God's Word, and derives their teaching strictly from God's Word, is of God. If they detract in any way from having a biblical worldview, then they are of the world.

**4:6** *"...there is an affinity between God's word and God's people. Jesus himself said, 'My sheep know my voice, and I know them, and they follow me' (John 10:27). True believers, enabled by the Spirit to understand and believe, embrace the true Jesus and therefore fellowship with his true followers."* Swindoll

“What cults and other religions say about Jesus Christ and who He is, is very different than what the Bible states about Him. While cults and other religions have differing views about His Divinity, the Bible states He is God.

Proverbs 14:12 There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.

Matthew 16:13-16 When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, “Who do people say the Son of Man is?” They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” “But what about you?” He asked. “Who do you say I am?” Simon Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

Galatians 1:6-9 I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.

Colossians 1:15-20 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together... For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. (Also John 5:18, 10:30-33, 20:28)

NOTE: This is not an in-depth study on the beliefs of other religions. This is simply a list and very brief statements about a few of the cult view of Jesus Christ. Please see the link at the end of this post which provides a resource of modern day religions and cults.

Jehovah’s Witness – Jesus is not Jehovah God. He was the first son that Jehovah God brought forth. He is the first creation by God. Michael the archangel is no other than the only-begotten Son of God, now Jesus Christ.

Mormonism – “Among the spirit children of Elohim, the first born was and is Jehovah or Jesus Christ, to whom all others are juniors.” (Joseph Smith) Jesus Christ was the executive in the work of creation, aided by Michael (or Adam), Enock, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Peter, James, John, Joseph Smith and others.

Christian Science – Life, Truth and Love constitute the triune Person called God — God the Father/Mother; Christ, the spiritual idea of sonship; Divine Science or the Holy Comforter. Jesus is the human man and Christ is the divine idea. Jesus was the offspring of Mary’s self-conscious communion with God.

Unity – The Krishna of the Hindu is the same as the Christos of the Greeks and the Messiah of the Hebrews. This same Christ lives within all of us that lived in Jesus. There is no need for a Savior.

Spiritualism – (The science, philosophy and religion based upon communication by means of a medium to those who live in the spirit world) Christ himself was nothing more than a medium of high order. He is now an advanced spirit in the sixth sphere.

New Age – The New Age Movement does not acknowledge sin or sin nature and eliminates the need for a Savior. All one needs to do is realize their own divine nature. Jesus is a man upon whom the Christ Spirit came at baptism and departed at the cross.

Eastern Mysticism – God is omnipresent and almighty, and is in the hearts of everyone (Transcendental meditation). Christ is considered one of a long line of divinely realized masters. All religions are just different branches of the main trunk of the eternal religions represented by the Vedas (oldest scriptural texts of Hinduism)

Islam – Jesus is neither God nor the Son of God, but merely a prophet to Israel and a lesser prophet than Muhammad.

Hinduism – Jesus attained God-realization and was thus an enlightened guru (teacher). He was not a Savior, nor the Son of God, nor did He rise from the dead.

Buddhism – Jesus was an enlightened master.

Taoism – There is no personal Creator-God in philosophical Taoism. The Tao (the way) is viewed as an impersonal absolute.

Wicca – Jesus is not discussed as deity. Rather, “The Goddess and God are seen as the manifestation of the feminine and masculine forces of nature.

HOWEVER, the Bible states that...

Jesus Christ is God. Colossians 1:15-20

Jesus Christ is the Christ. Mark 14:61-62

Jesus Christ is the Messiah. John 4:25-26

Jesus Christ is fully God and fully man. Philippians 2:5-11

Jesus Christ came from the Father. John 16:28

Jesus Christ is One with the Father. John 10:30

Jesus Christ forgives sin. Mark 2:10

Jesus Christ performed miracles. John 10:32, 20:30-31

Jesus Christ came to bring life. John 10:10

Jesus Christ gives Eternal Life. John 3:16-17, 10:28a

Jesus Christ paid for our sin through His death on the cross. Matthew 20:28

Jesus Christ died for us while we were still sinners. Romans 5:8

Jesus Christ gives us the right to become children of God. John 1:12

Jesus Christ has the power to keep us. John 10:28b

Jesus Christ rose from the dead. Matthew 28:6; Mark 16:6; Luke 24:6; Acts 2:24

Jesus Christ ascended into Heaven with Power. Ephesians 1:20-23

Jesus Christ sent the Holy Spirit as our Comforter and Power to be His witnesses. Acts 2”

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