

## Discerning Spirit

### 1 John 4:1-4

#### I. Introduction:

##### A. A Warning

1. At the beginning of chapter 4, John warns concerning the problem of false teachers.
2. False teachers, false prophets, & false doctrines have occurred since Garden of Eden.
3. Satan's false doctrine led Eve to doubt God's goodness & disobey Him. (**Genesis 3:1**)
4. Satan cast doubt on veracity of God's word & caused Eve to doubt truth of God's command. Eve fell prey to Satan's deceitfulness & sinned. Adam did likewise & sinned.

##### B. All of Human History

- *All of human history is marked by this continuing conflict between truth & error.*
  1. – Antediluvian
    - a. Before the flood Satan had deceived the majority of humanity into doing what was right in their own eyes. The world followed after Satan such that God destroyed all of humanity except Noah, his 3 sons, & their wives.
  2. – Israel
- *Both godly prophets & false prophets existed during the Old Testament covenant age*
  - (1) Godly Prophets
    - a. Men like Elijah & Elisha, Samuel & Nathan, &/or Ezekiel & Daniel spoke the word of God boldly, rebuking sin. They spoke the truth for all to hear.
  - (2) False Prophets
    - a. Men like Balaam served for money, personal gain & power. Satan raises up false prophets to lead the people astray.
- 3. – Church Age
  - a. Nothing has changed in the church age. Throughout the church age every generation has dealt with false teachers. Satan immediately raised up false teachers, as the church was founded by the Holy Spirit, on the day of Pentecost.
  - b. Satan wants to do two things in the church today.
    - (1) Keep the lost from getting saved
    - (2) Confuse those who are saved

#### II. John's Warning (1 John 4:1)

##### A. Beloved

1. John used the word "**beloved**" because these were fellow Christians.
2. As a pastor John cared for them deeply & didn't want them led astray.
3. Important responsibility of every pastor is protecting God's people from false teaching.

##### B. Test Every Spirit

1. In this context the word "**spirit**" means principles, doctrines, and religious truths.
2. Every man who claims to teach biblical principles, doctrines, & religious truths of God should be tested to see if his teaching is indeed of God.
3. Instrument: The instrument by which we measure a man's teaching is the Bible.
4. Berean Example: Paul & Silas left Thessalonica & went to Berea where they taught in the Jewish synagogue. (**Acts 17:11-12**)
5. The Bereans listened to Paul & then verified his message w/ Old Testament scriptures.
6. Application We should do the same today. We read the Bible for ourselves & compare what we hear to what the Bible says.

7. Earnestness, fervor, gifted oratory skills, or theatrical presentation does not make right.
8. Only that which aligns with the God's word is right.

### **III. Doctrinal Test (1 John 4:2-3)**

#### **A. Incarnation : *The primary doctrinal test is regarding the incarnation of Christ.***

##### **1. – Jesus is the Promised Messiah**

- a. Jesus is the promised King of Israel, deliverer of Israel, & Savior of the world.
- b. Every prophesy of the OT that speaks of a Messiah was pointing to Jesus.

##### **2. – Jesus took on human flesh**

- a. Jesus left heaven and took on humanity. The incarnation means Jesus was God & man simultaneously. Three reasons why this doctrine is essential.

###### **(1) Jesus is our example**

- i. Jesus lived as a real human being in this world & can thus serve as our example of how to live. If He hadn't been 100% human, He couldn't be our example.

###### **(2) A new body is part of our salvation**

- i. Jesus took on flesh, died literal physical death, & arose from the grave in literal physical resurrection body. He made the way possible for us to do the same.
- ii. Jesus saved our eternal soul making the way for us to have a resurrection body.

###### **(3) Jesus is our High Priest**

- i. As our High Priest Jesus opens the way to God the Father.
- ii. To represent us Jesus had to be like us, except sinless. (**Hebrews 4:14-15**)

#### **B. The Test**

1. Teachers who confess that Jesus Christ came in the flesh were and are of God.
2. Teachers who deny Christ literal incarnation aren't of God, they're false teachers.
3. Contemporary Example: Jehovah's Witnesses believe Jesus was created, like angels.
4. They do not believe Jesus is God. They do not believe in the Trinity.
5. They believe Jesus was human when He was here, not God and man at the same time.
6. If we measure this teaching by John's test the Jehovah's Witnesses are false teachers.

#### **C. The Spirit of Antichrist**

1. Teaching that denies Jesus is God, who came here in Human flesh to save us, is of the spirit of antichrist. This phrase, spirit of antichrist, denotes two things.

##### **(1) – Spirit of Antichrist**

- a. This represents all in the world that is opposed to Jesus including Satan's work in opposing Jesus and Jesus' plan to save the lost & build His church.
- b. False teachers are in effect working under spirit of antichrist. They're against Jesus.

##### **(2)– Future Personification**

- a. When the church is raptured & the tribulation begins, resistance of Satan will be personified in a man called the antichrist.

### **IV. No Neutral Ground (1 John 4:4)**

#### **A. Only Two Sides**

1. John identifies 2 sides: those saved by faith in Jesus & those who're part of this world.
2. The 2 groups are in perpetual conflict. Spiritual warfare rages around us. **Eph. 6:12-14**
3. Two things we know about this daily battle:
  - (1) – Daily Victory: We can have daily victory over sin in the Holy Spirit's power.
  - (2) – Ultimate Victory: Jesus won the final victory over Satan and the evil he brings.

#### **B. A Discerning Spirit**

1. You can discern between truth and error by applying God's word.