

The Spirit Test
1 John 4:1 – 6
The Laurel Center
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Main Idea: Not only can we know the allegiance of each spirit but we also have power over evil spirit.

Introduction

Every horror movie and film is designed to scare the living daylights out of each of us. Hollywood tries its hardest to scare us to death. Most of the time when I watch a horror movie, because I know that they're trying to scare me, I am too prepared and end up laughing at most of their accounts. But I assure you if you are in a spiritual battle and you ever meet someone who was demon possessed, it will be quite frank.

But when we do spiritual warfare it takes on several forms. It is not always the kind of fight that you see depicted in exorcisms. Spiritual warfare includes fighting for the truth of the gospel and dealing with false teachings and false prophets. Evil spirits are not just out to seize control of people but also to destroy the Christian faith. The spirit of the teaching is that the forefront of John's teaching and testing the spirits. We are testing the heart of what we hear when a person teaches about God.

Text – 1 John 4:1–6 (ESV) — **1** Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world. **2** By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, **3** 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. **4** Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. **5** They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them. **6** 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.

- I.** We test every spirit to see where it is from (vv. 1 – 3).
 - A** Any spirit that confesses Jesus is from God.
 - 1** John immediately ties spiritual warfare to understanding the teaching false teachers as an evil spirit's attempt to destroy the Christian faith. Evil spirits are using false teachers to mislead God's people.
 - 2** We are taught to challenge these evil spirits and their doctrines. We are not to accept every teaching that we hear and church. We must look in the

Scriptures and make sure that it not only follows every word of God's word but also the spirit of the word of God.

- 3 **Illustration:** there is an historical account in the book of Acts where Paul showed up in a town called Beria and began to teach the people about the word of God and the new understanding of Jesus the Messiah. But the people in that town did not just take polls word for it. They listen to what he said and then looked it up in the Scriptures. They wanted to confront every word that Paul spoke about God and his word. The researchers of the Bible. They teach us that we need to know God's word so that we can defend ourselves against false teaching.
- 4 We do not have to accept every teaching that we here in the church. It must pass the rigorous test of researching his word and placing it against the whole counsel of God's word.
- 5 Only if the teaching matches God's word must we accept it with gladness. We have the power and the responsibility to test everything that we hear in church. We must have it approved by the word and spirit of God's word.
- 6 Not only do we have God's word in front of us that we can research, but we also have the testimony of the Holy Spirit in our hearts. John has already talked about this when he addressed the Antichrist and false teachers of our day in chapter 2.
- 7 The Holy Spirit directs our hearts to understand when a teaching is false. He helps us to see even internally that this teaching does not pass the sniff test. The teaching feels awkward to our hearts.
- 8 False prophecy and teaching is tied to evil spirits. What better way for the devil to get control of the church then to mix worldliness and paganism with godly teaching?
- 9 **Application:** use the word of God like Jesus did in the wilderness and listen to the Holy Spirit's leading and prompting inside of you. When you hear teaching that seems un-biblical or wrong in any way, do not ignore the alarms going off in your heart. Seek God and his word and search out the Scriptures so that you know the truth. The best way to know the truth is to be the memories God's word. Having his word inside of you helps you to know the false teaching from true teaching.

B Any spirit that does not confess Christ is antichrist.

- 1 We are not left to her own devices to try to figure out which teaching and spirit is of God and which is of the devil. John leaves us some key teaching on how to know for sure.
- 2 He gives us a sort of "cheat sheet" on knowing which ones are accurate to the word and which ones are accurate to the devil's influence. The key to

knowing truth is seeing what the teacher affirms that agrees with what we already know about God's work.

- 3 It cannot be stressed enough that we must know God's word, the true word of God and the foundation for our beliefs, to recognize false teaching. We must know the real deal so that we can see the fake one.
- 4 In John's day, the Gnostics were the false teachers that were infiltrating the church. They would mix Greek philosophy and myth with what the Bible and the apostles taught.
- 5 John has started out his letter by addressing the issues with the Gnostics. They taught that Jesus was only a spirit and not physical. John started out by talking about Jesus in his physical incarnation and about his humanity and divinity together.
- 6 The witness of the Gospels and the apostles matched each other. But the Gnostics taught false teaching along with good teaching. They prefer to God's word by mixing it so that it was an impure teaching.
- 7 So John makes the litmus test for true doctrine in his day focus on the fact that Jesus is real: human and divine. However, everyone the false teaching is aimed at the dining or challenging what God has told us is true.
- 8 **Illustration:** this is one of the oldest tricks in the book for Satan. In the very beginning he challenged Eve when she told him what God had said. The devil stood in the face of God's words and asked, "did God really say?" False teaching and teaching of the Antichrist challenges God by deconstructing his words. Instead of accepting them at face value with faith, false teaching and the spirit of the antichrist challenge every word and looked for ways to split hairs.
- 9 **Application:** false teaching is all around us today. There are so many forms of it that it is hard to list all of the teachings going on. It is clear that the spirit of antichrist has been raining on this earth for over 2000 years. John dealt with certain false teachers in the church at that time, but false teaching in the spirit of antichrist is not only alive and well in the world but it has infiltrated the church even today. When we hear false teaching we must not just lay down and take it. We must stand up and defend the truth of God's word.

II. We have God's power to defeat evil spirits (vv. 4 – 6).

A Jesus has greater power than evil spirits.

- 1 One of the greatest truths of the New Testament is found in 1 John 4:4. The power that Jesus has given to us when he left this earth withstands any attack of the devil weathered his doctrinal, physical, or spiritual.

- 2 The power within us that overcomes the world is know ourselves, but the Holy Spirit who indwells our hearts. The Holy Spirit not only teaches us, he convicts us of sin, guides us in wisdom, and empowers us to speak boldly for Christ.
- 3 The Holy Spirit always speaks about and points to Christ. This power to always know the living word and his spoken word, the written word, overpowers any scheme of the devil.
- 4 When Jesus left in his ascension, he gave us the promise of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit who dwells inside of us helps us to understand the things of God in a real relational way. It is not just a download from heaven but a person dwelling inside of us and giving us the immediate access to God's glory and wisdom.
- 5 Because God is greater than Satan, and it is nowhere near close, his Holy Spirit who resides in us gives us greater power than anything and anyone we will face on this planet.
- 6 Satan made right now is the prince of the power of the air, but the one who allotted him a little bit of power for now dwells inside of us. We have the greater power of God's Spirit inside of us. He trumps everything that the devil can throw at us. He is the "checkmate" to the devil's "check."
- 7 We have the victory in Jesus Christ. There is no evil spirit that even comes close to having the power of God. We had made the mistake of believing that the Bible teaches dualism.
- 8 Dualism teaches that the power of evil and the power of good are at odds with one another but are equal powers. One cannot win over the other so they exist together forever.
- 9 But when we read the Bible we find out that the very clear message of Scripture is that Satan and his minions are under the power of God. There is no question throughout all of Scripture that Jesus has the victory in the past, present and future.
- 10 **Application:** never allow anyone to tell you any different than God holding power over all things. God is completely sovereign and all-powerful. At no time in any part of human history did Satan ever beat God. Rather, God allows Satan to have limited power only on this earth. This power is also limited in its time factor. Anything that Satan can do with power God has permitted. We are the vectors along with Jesus. Live your life as a victorious one, as in overcomer. Don't give the devil an inch. Don't let him pervert the word of God!

B Each spirit is known by its audience.

- 1 False doctrine is at the forefront of spiritual warfare. Everyone must understand that we are not just living in the physical world. There is a spiritual plane of existence that overlaps this world.
- 2 We are in a fight for souls and lives of people who are not even aware that they were already in the grass of the enemy. Every person who follows the world will be lost at the end of time.
- 3 Because the church is God's representation of his body are on this earth, the devil will do everything in his power to attack it. One of his greatest weapons in his arsenal is to infiltrate the church and lead astray those who should know the word of God.
- 4 That's the world, Satan's current kingdom, is pitted against the church and the battle of all time. On the front of teaching and doctrine, the church must not give ground to false teaching because as it infiltrates the church it leads many astray.
- 5 Not even seasoned believers are free from the devil's influence when we allow false teaching into the church. The battlefield is lost when the church gives into the devil and the world.
- 6 John makes a monumental lying in the sand between the church and the world. The spirit of antichrist follows the world and is of the world. It smells like worldliness. It acts like worldliness. And the only way to allow this brazen enemy to infiltrate the church is true false teaching that says it's okay.
- 7 The world listens to the false doctrines of antichrist and its spirit. This teaching is palatable to the mouth as it is spoken and itches the ears of comfortable saints.
- 8 But godly teaching students the years in mind and heart of the children of God. Those who were truly born of God and not one of the world know godly teaching and Scripture. It is their environments and surrounds them.
- 9 Just like a fish would die outside of water, the teaching of the Holy Spirit and the holy Scriptures brings life to the child of God. Hearing false teaching is like being a fish gasping for water.
- 10 **Application:** we know false teaching almost intuitively and internally. False teaching grades against our ears and sounds foreign to us. Some of us may wish to listen to this comforting news and the is contradictory and desirable teachings. It would be so easy to believe the lies the enemy and relax our guard. But we must stand firm all the more. We must study to show ourselves approved. We must stand and defend the truth of God's word. We must never given to false teaching no matter how close it sounds to the word of God.

Conclusion

in this world, there are all kinds of snares and traps for the believer in God. Every child of God is in danger because of Satan's flaming arrows of deceit and malice. The children of God if they do not defend themselves by listening to the Holy Spirit and the written word of God will fall prey to these snares. John teaches us that we know the truth and we can defend it. But we must be studied up and prayed up to commit to spiritual warfare. Will you get comfortable with the world or will you stand and didn't know when you see.. Test the spirits. Check to see every wind of teaching to make sure that it is biblical. Do not give up.