

# 19. The Epistle of 1 John—4:2-6

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(10/2/19)

Verse 24 of chapter 3 becomes the transition into a warning that John gives to open up *our* chapter 4 (John’s original epistle had no chapter divisions).

## **1 John 3:24 (NKJV)**

<sup>24</sup> Now he who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. And by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.

## **1 John 4:1 (NKJV)**

<sup>1</sup> **Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits...**

When John admonishes us to “**test the spirits**”—he was referring to testing the *teachings* of those professing to be speaking on behalf of God—

One author said with regard to this—

*“The term translated ‘test’ is a present imperative form of the verb dokimazō. The term was used to refer to a metallurgist’s assaying of metals to test their purity and value. John’s use of the present tense indicates that believers are to continually test the spirits to see whether they are from God.”*

## **1 Timothy 4:1 (NKJV)**

<sup>1</sup> Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons,

## **1 John 4:1 (NKJV)**

<sup>1</sup> **Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.**

In saying this, is John referring to those who teach false doctrine in general (false religions, cults, occult etc.)—or is he referring to false teachers who call themselves Christians in particular?

Well, let’s keep reading—

**1 John 4:2-3 (NKJV)**

**<sup>2</sup> By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, <sup>3</sup> and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the *spirit* of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world.**

It seems that, in these verses, John is repeating something he warned his readers about earlier with regard to false teachers—

**1 John 2:19 (NKJV)**

**<sup>19</sup> They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but *they went out* that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us. [They became ‘Christian’ cult leaders...]**

Now, once again, when John says that, “**every spirit (teacher/prophet) that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God**”—he no doubt has in mind those teaching Gnosticism and Docetism.

One author defined Docetism this way—

*“The word Docetism comes from a Greek word dokeo, meaning “to seem,” and it occurs a number of times in the New Testament. Docetism was the doctrine that the Lord Jesus Christ did not actually become flesh, but He merely seemed to be a human being. This was one of the first doctrinal heresies to appear in the history of the church. The first known champion of this heresy was Corinthus (about A.D. 85), who is generally believed to have been an Alexandrian disciple of the Jewish philosopher Philo. He taught that Jesus differed from other people only insofar as He was better and wiser than they, and that the divine “Christ” descended upon Jesus at the Jordan and left Him at the Cross. The net result of this pernicious teaching was to make the Incarnation a lie. John, who had known Jesus nearly all His life (as His cousin), and who had become the Virgin Mary’s guardian from the time of Calvary, knew such teaching to be a lie. John was energized by the Holy Spirit to expose this false teaching, and he bluntly declares that such teaching came from a lying spirit, the very spirit of antichrist. The essence of this heresy seems to have influenced Muhammad and lives on in some Islamic doctrines concerning Jesus. It has its modern counterpart in various cults, such as Christian Science, which considers matter to be essentially evil.”*

And so I believe that John is primarily referring to those who at some point had attended Christian churches and even claimed to be Christians—but were ‘tares’ among the ‘wheat’—or as Paul the apostle described them:

**2 Corinthians 11:13-15 (NKJV)**

<sup>13</sup> For such *are* false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ.  
<sup>14</sup> And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. <sup>15</sup> Therefore *it is* no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.

And this is why we are admonished in the New Testament—

**Philippians 1:9 (NKJV)**

<sup>9</sup> And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge [of God's Word] and all discernment,

**2 Peter 3:17 (NKJV)**

<sup>17</sup> You therefore, beloved, since you know *this* beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked;

**Acts 17:11 (NKJV)**

<sup>11</sup> These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.

**2 John 1:7 (NKJV)**

<sup>7</sup> For many deceivers have gone out into the world ...

These are important warnings (especially for those living in the last days)—too bad so many churches aren't heeding them—why?

Because, they feel it's being judgmental and unloving—and therefore anti-Christian.

But because of that mentality the Body of Christ has given itself a spiritual case of A.I.D.S.—  
(Explain what physical A.I.D.S. is all about)

A healthy body has a strong immune system—in the Body of Christ that immune system is called 'discernment' and 'church discipline'—and it comes from *doctrine*.

**1 John 4:2-3 (NKJV)**

<sup>2</sup> **By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come**

**in the flesh is of God,<sup>3</sup> and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the *spirit of the Antichrist*, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world.**

When John talks about the ‘**spirit of Antichrist**’ (which he already mentioned back in chapter 2:18-23)—he is referring to any teacher and teaching that opposes the *true* Jesus while at the same time offers a *substitute* ‘Jesus’ in His place.

When we think of the prefix ‘**anti**’ we think of the word “*against*”—but the Greek word could also mean “*in the place of*”.

This is the subtlety and cleverness of Satan—he doesn’t try to turn people against Jesus (with some he does like atheists)—he knows that most people have a respect for Jesus Christ and would never turn *against* Him.

So, the devil does the next best thing—he seeks to replace the *true* Jesus in their mind with a *false* Jesus.

In this way they can believe in ‘Jesus’ with all their heart—because he knows a phony Jesus can’t save anybody!

**2 Corinthians 11:1-4 (NKJV)**

<sup>1</sup> Oh, that you would bear with me in a little folly--and indeed you do bear with me. <sup>2</sup> For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. <sup>3</sup> But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. <sup>4</sup> For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or *if* you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted--you may well put up with it!

**“...the spirit of the Antichrist...is now already in the world.”**

Though false christs and false doctrine will reach their climax during the Tribulation Period (Matt.24:4-5, 23-25)—there are plenty of groups and teachers right now in the world promoting a false concept of Jesus Christ (He’s a created being; He’s the brother of Lucifer; He is pro-abortion and pro-Gay etc.).

Satan is behind this, preparing the world to receive the ultimate false christ—the Antichrist!

**1 John 4:4 (NKJV)**

**<sup>4</sup> You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.**

One pastor said—

*“The child of God need not fear the spirit of Antichrist, even though they should be warned of it, because they have the indwelling Spirit of God (1 John 3:24). That indwelling Spirit is greater than he who is in the world—Satan and all of his allies.”*

“**The world**” is a reference to this *fallen world system* that Satan is in control of and uses to promote his antichrist, antichristian lies and agenda (to keep people lost and in darkness).

Of course, the truth of God is more powerful than Satan’s lies and can set people free (John 8:31-32).

Notice, how John places our victory in the ‘past tense’—“**You are of God...and have overcome them...**” (false teachers, false doctrine and the devil himself)—as Christians, we are working from victory not towards victory (Col. 2:13-15).

**1 John 4:4-6 (NKJV)**

**<sup>4</sup> You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. <sup>5</sup> They are of the world. Therefore they speak as of the world, and the world hears them. <sup>6</sup> We are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.**

This is basically what Jesus said to the Pharisees in John 8—

**John 8:43-47 (NKJV)**

<sup>43</sup> Why do you [Pharisees] not understand My speech? Because you are not able to listen to My word. <sup>44</sup> You are of *your* father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and *does not* stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own *resources*, for he is a liar and the father of it. <sup>45</sup> But because I tell the truth, you do not believe Me. <sup>46</sup> Which of you convicts Me of sin? And if I tell the truth, why do you not believe Me? <sup>47</sup> He who is of God hears God's words; therefore you do not hear, because you are not of God."

Understand, when Jesus said these Pharisees were not able to listen to His word, it wasn't that He was trying to keep the truth from them—on the contrary.

God was *speaking* but they weren't *listening* (hearing but not *listening*)—and the reason they weren't listening was because their pride and rebellion had hardened their hearts to the voice of God.

**John 12:37-40 (NKJV)**

<sup>37</sup> But although He had done so many signs before them, they did not believe in Him, <sup>38</sup> that the word of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spoke: "*Lord, who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?*" <sup>39</sup> Therefore they could not believe, because Isaiah said again: <sup>40</sup> "*He has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts, Lest they should see with their eyes, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I should heal them.*"

God in His great love desires for all people to be saved—and will do whatever He has to do to get a person's attention that they would repent and receive Jesus as their Savior.

But the '*day of salvation*' (opportunity) won't go on indefinitely...(blasphemy against the Holy Spirit—Judas, "and it was night")—today is the day of salvation...

**“We are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.” (v.6)**

John is stating a general truth with regard to the people of God and the Word of God—true Christians have the Holy Spirit inside of them and 'hear' God's truth (they believe and receive it), whereas unbelievers embrace Satan's lies (false doctrine, but also—communism, humanism, evolution etc.).