



**“TESTING THE SPIRITS”
I JOHN 4: 1-6**

THE GREAT THEME OF THE APOSTLE JOHN IN HIS EPISTLE IS THE FACT OF HAVING JOY IN THIS WORLD, A JOY THAT COMES FROM GOD, IN SPITE OF CIRCUMSTANCES AND CONDITIONS. HE MADE THAT CLEAR IN THE FOURTH VERSE OF THE FIRST CHAPTER: “AND THESE THINGS WRITE WE UNTO YOU, THAT YOUR JOY MAY BE FULL.” IF WE ARE TO HAVE THAT KIND OF JOY, THEN THERE ARE TWO MAIN THINGS, WHICH JOHN REMINDS US OF, TO KEEP IN MIND. THE FIRST IS THAT WE HAVE FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD. WE HAVE FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD THROUGH HIS SON JESUS CHRIST, WALKING WITH HIM EACH DAY. THE SECOND THING IS THAT WE, AS CHILDREN OF GOD, NOT ONLY HAVE FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD, BUT WE ARE ALSO IN THAT RELATIONSHIP WHICH MAKES US CHILDREN.

AS WE NOW COME TO CHAPTER 4 JOHN BRINGS US ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT MATTERS IN THE WHOLE REALM OF OUR CHRISTIAN FAITH. IT IS THE NECESSITY FOR TESTING AND TRYING THE SPIRITS.

LEARNING TO LIVE DISCERNINGLY

BOTH THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS ARE FILLED WITH WARNINGS ABOUT FALSE TEACHERS AND THEIR COUNTERFEIT DOCTRINES. IF WE FAIL TO BE DISCERNING THEN WE WILL NOT ONLY BE CONFUSED AND UNABLE TO DISCERN FOR OURSELVES, BUT WE WILL ALSO BE UNABLE TO ACCURATELY CONVEY THE TRUTH TO OTHERS. SO, WE MUST GUARD THE TRUTH BY KNOWING IT, FIRMLY HOLDING TO IT AS A CONVICTION, AND DISTINGUISHING IT FROM THAT WHICH IS FALSE.

A COMMAND TO TEST

THE DEVIL AND HIS DEMONS ARE EXPERTS IN DECEPTION, THEREFORE CHRISTIANS MUST BE CAREFUL TO CLOSELY EXAMINE EVERY SPIRITUAL MESSAGE THEY ENCOUNTER. JOHN COMMANDS US TO DISCERN WHAT EVERY TEACHER IS ESPOUSING BECAUSE SOME WILL CLAIM TO SPEAK ON GOD’S BEHALF BUT THEIR MESSAGE ORIGINATES FROM A SOURCE OTHER THAN GOD. IF WE DO NOT TEST THE SPIRITS THEN WE CAN BE EASILY LED ASTRAY.

A REASON TO TEST

THE GREEK WORD FOR “TEST” WAS USED TO REFER TO A METALLURGIST’S ASSAYING OF METALS TO TEST THEIR PURITY AND VALUE. JOHN’S USE OF THE WORD INDICATES THAT CHRISTIANS ARE TO CONTINUALLY TEST THE SPIRITS “TO SEE WHETHER THEY ARE FROM GOD.” WE ARE TO EVALUATE WHAT THEY SEE, HEAR, AND READ TO DETERMINE IF IT ORIGINATED FROM THE SPIRIT OF GOD OR FROM SATAN.

THE ONLY RELIABLE WAY TO TEST ANY TEACHING IS TO MEASURE IT AGAINST WHAT GOD HAS REVEALED IN HIS WORD. SATAN WILL MIX TRUTH WITH ERROR AND THAT IS THE REASON WHY WE HAVE TO TEST THE SPIRITS.

GUIDELINES FOR HOW TO TEST

1. THE CONFESSION OF THE DIVINE LORD (VV. 2-3).

THE FIRST TEST IS THEOLOGICAL: WHAT DOES THIS TEACHER TEACH ABOUT JESUS CHRIST? IF ANYTHING THAT IS TAUGHT REFUTES WHAT SCRIPTURES TEACHES ABOUT HIM—THAT HE IS FULLY GOD AND FULLY MAN, AND SINLESS AND ALL-SUFFICIENT— THEN IT IS FALSE.

Presented by Dr. Jimmy Hilton

**SOUTH POINT
BAPTIST CHURCH**

Finding God's Direction for Life



2. A POSSESSION OF THE DIVINE LIFE(VV. 4-5).

AS CHRISTIANS WE HAVE A SECURITY AGAINST FALSE TEACHERS BECAUSE WE HAVE INDWELLING SPIRIT OF GOD, WHICH IS FAR SUPERIOR TO THE SPIRIT OF THE DEVIL. THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL NATURALLY GUIDE US TOWARD THE TRUTH, WHILE SATAN WILL STEER US AWAY FROM THE WORD OF GOD.

3. A PROFESSION OF THE DIVINE LAW (V.6).

TEACHERS WHO ARE FROM GOD WILL PROCLAIM GOD'S WORD AS THE SOURCE OF TRUTH, WHILE FALSE TEACHERS WILL ADD TO OR TAKE AWAY FROM GOD'S WORD. THE BIBLE IS OUR SOLE AUTHORITY.

WE NEED TO BE ON THE ALERT FOR FALSE TEACHERS AND FALSE TEACHING WHICH CAN DISRUPT OUR FELLOWSHIP WITH THE LORD AND WITH FELLOW CHRISTIANS.