

Lessons From I John

Test The Spirits

(I Jn 4:1-6)

INTRODUCTION

1. Good Morning,
 - a. Greeting...
2. Series of "Lessons From I John."
 - a.

I. Why Test The Spirits? (1)

- A. Because you cannot believe every spirit
 1. In other words you can't simply believe everything someone says, just because they say they are teach God's Word.
 2. It would "seem" that this would be obvious but it isn't unfortunately.
 - i. Denominationalism is great proof of not doing this.
 - ii. How many times have I heard "Let me go talk with my preacher/pastor about this or that, or my preacher/pastor says the Bible means this or that."
 3. People all to often have itching ears.
 - i. **II Ti 4:3** "For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions"¹
- B. Because we must know if they are from God or not
 1. The word test here is "δοκιμάζω" or "doe-ki-mazo."
 - i. "to prove with a view to approving" (Vine, W. E., Unger, M. F., & White, W., Jr. (1996). Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words. Nashville, TN: T. Nelson.)
 - ii. "to test, examine, prove, scrutinize" & "to recognize as genuine after examination, to approve, deem worthy" (Thayer, J. H. (1889). A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: Being Grimm's Wilke's Clavis Novi Testamenti (154). New York: Harper & Brothers.)
 2. In other words don't just except what some "teacher" or "preacher" says but examine it to see if it is true.
 - i. **Ac 17:11** "Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so."
 - ii. **Rv 2:2** "I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false."

¹ All Scriptures are taken from the ESV unless otherwise noted. If other translations are used this is not necessarily an endorsement of the translation.

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- C. Because many false prophets have gone out into the world.
 - 1. Here we have the "crux" of the matter so to speak.
 - 2. This has been a warning from many others as well.
 - i. Jesus **Mt 7:15**
 - ii. Peter **II Pt 2:1-3**
 - iii. Paul **II Co 11:13-15**
 - 3. There simply are those that do not teach truth.
- D. Thus we must examine, prove, and scrutinize those who teach us
 - 1. Even though some teachers might consider this insubordination.
 - 2. Even through some might not like the possible "controversy" it could cause.
 - 3. Whether one teaches in our classes, pulpits, radio, newspapers...test the spirits.

II. How Do We Test The Spirits? (2-3, 6)

- A. Do they confess Jesus Christ has come in the flesh (2-3)
 - 1. Remember part of the reason for the writing of this letter.
 - i. Gnosticism was becoming a more popular teaching.
 - a. Some denied Jesus actually even came in the flesh.
 - 1. **II Jn 7** "For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. Such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist."
 - 2. Those that would teach such are not lead by the Spirit or Word of God but rather their own teachings and because such are, as seen, the antichrist.
- B. Do they listen to the apostles of Christ (6)
 - 1. This is how every person can "know" if someone is teaching the truth or error.
 - i. Those that truly know God will listen to the apostles ie God's Word.
 - ii. Those who are not of God will reject their teachings.
 - 2. The question that is always before the listener is thusly...is what the preacher saying in accordance to what the apostles taught?
 - i. Jesus said those that received them received Him.
 - a. **Jn 13:20** "Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever receives the one I send receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me."
 - ii. This is why it is said that the early church...
 - a. **Ac 2:42** "...devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.
 - iii. Why because they realized their words were from the Lord.
 - a. **I Co 14:37** "If anyone thinks that he is a prophet, or spiritual, he should acknowledge that the things I am writing to you are a command of the Lord."

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- iv. Even the apostles recognized their fellow apostles teachings as "from God."
 - a. **II Pt 3:15-16** "And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, 16 as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures."
3. This is the same test we can apply on every issue today.
 - i. It implies that we have a knowledge and understanding of the apostles teachings though.
 - ii. That shouldn't be a problem if we are following the example of the early church however (**Ac 2:42**).

III. The Dangers Of Not Testing The Spirits (4-5)

- A. First you might find out you never had Christ
 1. So many today say they are Christians and yet just because one says they are a Christian doesn't make them one.
 - i. **Mt 7:21** "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven."
 2. You have to obey the will of the Father to have Christ in you, which begins with obeying God's plan of salvation.
 - i. Studying God's Word **Ro 10:17**
 - ii. Having faith in Jesus **Jn 3:16; 14:15**
 - iii. Giving your life over in repentance **Ac 2:38; 17:30**
 - iv. Confessing Jesus as the Son of God **Mt 10:32; Ro 10:9**
 - v. Being baptized for the remission of sins **Ac 22:16; I Pt 3:21**
 - vi. Striving to be perfect by walking in the light **Mt 5:48; I Jn 1:7**
- B. Second you might find out you lost Christ
 1. We can drift away from God & His Word.
 - i. **He 2:1** "Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it."
 2. We can have our lamp stand removed and fall from God's grace.
 - i. **Rv 2:5** "Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent."
 - ii. **Ga 5:4** "You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace."
 - a. Remember, you have to have had Christ to be severed from Him.

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- C. Testing the spirits allows us to make sure we have Christ and aren't of the world
 - 1. There is nothing good about being "of the world."
 - i. **Ja 4:4** "You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.
 - ii. **Ro 8:7** "For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot."

CONCLUSION

- 1. Testing the spirits is not only something we "need" to do it is something that is "vital" to our walk with God.
 - a. Let it never be said of us that we were lazy in testing the spirits or that we allowed ourselves to become enamored with anyone other than God.
- 2. Brothers & sisters make sure you never take my word, because my word is not worth anything unless it is completely and utterly backed up by God's Word.
 - a. I will strive to preach the truth but always make sure I am correct and always correct me if I ever teach something not accurate with God's most precious and truthful Word.
- 3. Question: Am I constantly scrutinizing those that that teach and myself to make sure I know the truth?
- 4. Invitation
 - a. For those that are Christians but are not living for Christ repent by confessing your sins to God that He may forgive you and dedicate your life/time back to Him.
 - i. **I Jn 1:7, 9** "But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin...9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."
 - b. For those that are not Christians or for those that think they are Christians and want to know for sure notice what is required to become a child of God or Christian according to God and God only.
 - i. Hear/Study **Rom 10:17; II Tim 2:15**
 - ii. Believe Jesus Is The Christ **Jn 3:16; 8:24**
 - iii. Repent/Turn To God **Ac 17:30; Lk 24:47**
 - iv. Confess Jesus As Lord **Mt 10:32; Rom 10:9**
 - v. Immersed For The Forgiveness of Sins **Ac 2:38; 22:16; I Pt 3:21**
 - vi. Live A Faithful Life **I Jn 1:7; Eph 5:8**