

I John 4:1-6 - Testing the Spirits

EMC Wednesday Night Bible Study - 8-7-19

An Elaboration of the Doctrinal Test: Belief

Recalling and elaborating on 2:18-27

Mirror reading the historical context: an abundance of _____

- V. 1 - "do not believe every spirit" → competing messages and the temptation to accept
 - Cf. I Cor. 12 & 14
- John's exhortation: investigate the _____ of every claim of inspired utterance
 - Cf. Deut. 13:1-5; Jer. 23:9ff.

The Content of the Teaching (vv. 1-3)

Christian loving and believing must _____

- 2:7-11 - love the brothers and sisters → 2:15 - do not love the world nor the things in the world
- 3:23a - believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ → 4:1 - do not believe every spirit
 - True faith examines its _____

V. 1 - "test the spirits to see whether they are from God"

- Every prophet is the _____ of some spirit
 - True prophets are of the "Spirit of God" (v. 2), who is the "Spirit of Truth" (v. 6b)
 - False prophets are of the "spirit of the antichrist" (v. 3), or "spirit of error" (v. 6b)
- Before a prophet can be trusted, he must be _____ (cf. I Thess. 5:19-22)

V. 1b - the reason for the need to test: "many false prophets"

- The "many antichrists" (2:18-19) on a missionary expedition
- Cf. warnings from Jesus (Matt. 7:15; Mark 13:22-23), Paul (Acts 20:28-30), and Peter (II Pet. 1:1)

V. 2 - how to conduct the test: "By this you know the Spirit of God"

- The origin is discerned by the _____
- "every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God"
 - Recognition + profession (Mark 1:24; 3:11; 5:7-8; cf. Acts 19:15)
 - The Spirit of God always _____ the Son of God (John 15:26; 16:13-15; I Cor. 12:3b)
- Precise words should read: "Jesus is the Christ come in the flesh"
 - Cerinthus: the "Christ" came upon Jesus temporarily
 - ἐληλυθότα ("elēlythota") - come, Gk. perfect = the flesh assumed by the Son in the incarnation has become his _____ possession

Arius and the response of Nicea (325 AD)

- **Claim:** Son of God was a _____ being of a different substance (heteroousios) than the Father
- **Response:** Son of God was _____ with the Father of the same substance (homoousios)

Apollinaris and the response of Constantinople (381 AD)

- **Claim:** Jesus had a human body but a divine mind and will (half human)
- **Response:** partial humanity of Christ results in a partial _____

Nestorius and the response of Ephesus (431 AD)

- **Claim:** Jesus was ___ persons, the man Jesus and the divine Son of God
- **Response:** Jesus was ___ person (hypostasis) with human & divine natures (hypostatic union)

Eutyches and the response of Chalcedon (451 AD)

- **Claim:** Christ was "a fusion of human and divine elements" → monophysitism (single nature)
- **Response:** Christ is truly God and truly man.
 - See **Appendix I - The Chalcedonian Definition**

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- He became what he was not, and stayed what he became → *theanthropos*, the God-man

V. 3 - the contrary is also true: "every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God"

- "confess(ing) Jesus" = confess him as Christ come in the flesh
- Denial reveals the origin/working of the "spirit of the antichrist"
- Compare/contrast w/ 2:18-23
 - Ch. 2 - confession/denial of the Son determines _____ of the Father
 - V. 23 - "the one who confesses the Son has the Father also"
 - Ch. 4 - confession/denial of the Son indicates _____ by the HS
 - Those who deny Jesus have neither the Father nor the Spirit

The Character of the Audience (vv. 4-6)

Emphatic pronouns: v. 4 - "you" (Christians); v. 5 - "they" (false teachers); v. 6 - "we" (apostolic witness)

V. 4

- Nature of their overcoming = _____
- Source of their overcoming = _____ himself
 - The "Spirit of Truth" (v. 6); the "anointing" that "abides" in them (2:20, 27)
 - Cf. 2:18-27 - Word and Spirit, the objective and subjective safeguards against deception

V. 5 - Speak from viewpoint of the world, explaining their _____ (John 3:19; II Tim. 4:3)

- The world honors and magnifies the apostate

V. 6a - "We are from God"

- V. 4 = divine origin of their new life in Christ vs. v. 6 = contrast to false teachers
- Vv. 1-3 - doctrinal acknowledgement V. 6a - acceptance by Christians, rejection by the world
- The affinity between the God's word and God's people (John 8:47; 10:4-5, 8, 16, 26-27; 18:37)
 - The Spirit enabling the speaking _____ with the Spirit enabling the listening

V. 6b - We test the spirits by examining the message proclaimed and character of the listening audience

Appendix I - The Chalcedonian Definition

We, then, following the holy Fathers, all with one consent, teach men to confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the same perfect in Godhead and also perfect in manhood; truly God and truly man, of a reasonable [rational] soul and body; consubstantial [coessential] with the Father according to the Godhead, and consubstantial with us according to the Manhood; in all things like unto us, without sin; begotten before all ages of the Father according to the Godhead, and in these latter days, for us and for our salvation, born of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, according to the Manhood; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, to be acknowledged in two natures, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation; the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved, and concurring in one Person and one Subsistence, not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son, and only begotten, God the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ, as the prophets from the beginning [have declared] concerning him, and the Lord Jesus Christ himself has taught us, and the Creed of the holy Fathers has handed down to us.