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"HOW TO TEST THE DEMON SPIRITS"

I John 4

INTRODUCTION:

The modern church perhaps has today something that they had in their early church. There was a surging life of the spirit which brought with it perils. And the very fact that the early church was vitally alive with an electric atmosphere was a cause of the problems that faced the church in that day. There is the spirit of God and there is also a spirit of error. And this is the spirit which inspires false prophets and hinders the message of men.

Modern men are impatient with talks of demons and of Satan. Now this pleases Satan when people are convinced that he does not exist. How could you today acknowledge that the demons do not exist when we have come through two World Wars and we have all sorts of police actions going on around the world.

Is it a hopeless task to discern the spirits or to distinguish the spirits in this world. In the Old Testament, men realized the pearl of false prophets. Deut. 13:1-5. False prophets who lured men away from God should be put to death. And that passage freely admits that false prophets may offer promises, signs, and wonders - and they perform them. The spiritual power is there but it is an evil and a misdirected power.

The early church had spiritual power and it was very near and close. All the world believed in a universe. And that that universe was strong with demons and spirits -and spiritual powers. Every rock, and tree, and river, and grove, and mountain had its demons. It's spiritual power. And that these powers sought entry into men's bodies and men's minds.

They were also conscious of a personal power of evil. And this was the battle ground of light and darkness.

The coming of the Holy Spirit in the early church was something that happened and all could see it. But when the Apostles came down to Samaria after the preaching of Phillip and conferred the gifts of the spirit on the new converts, there was a local magician, Simon Magus, who wished to buy the power to produce the same effects. Acts 8:17-18.

The coming of the spirit upon Cornelius and his people were something which anybody could see. Acts. 10.

Therefore, Paul does not hesitate to say in his writings that there were other spirits. And should a stranger come within a congregation, that had a spirit of error in it - they were likely to think that they were in an assembly of mad men. And Paul knew that speaks in the spirit is a prophet, but only a prophet if he walks in the ways of the Lord.

If there were evil spirits and well as the Holy Spirit, men could be occupied by these spirits. The true and the false.

John, having spoken of the spirit of God - reminds them that other spirits are broad in the world. And he has a few things to say about how to test and diagnose these demon spirits.

I. DISTINGUISHING SPIRITS - V. 1-6

The need to test the spirits grows out of the fact that many false prophets have gone out into the world.

V. 1 - Beloved believe not every spirit. That is, do not rely upon it. Jesus spoke the same way of believing Moses in John 5:46 and of believing himself. John 5:38,46. Men could believe Moses and Jesus for their message was true. They cannot believe these false prophets, for their message is not true. And John regards these as an evil spirit, in the Christian warfare. There is not only a battle against evil men - but against wicked forces that work through these evil men.

There have been false teachers of religion in the world before and since John's day. And there never was a greater need than there is today for Christ - and for testing the teachers of religion to see whether or not it is true or false.

Paul and Silas, and the girl who had such powers, as they were going to the place of prayer - she had the spirit of divination. And who brought her masters much profit by fortune telling. Acts 16:16. We see that this power, the ability to foretell, was a counterfeit. And Paul describes it - they were servants of the most high God. And this girl mixed with error and truth to proclaim them as a way of salvation. The implication was that Jesus Christ was the way of salvation.

But there were other ways. Now the Scripture, however, is very clear on this - Acts 4:12. She was telling the truth about them in a certain way and then going on into error. Such persistence she continued for many days. So Paul recognized it as Satan's old - if you can't beat them, join them - tactics. And so he had a gift of distinguishing spirits. And he said I command you in the name of Jesus Christ, come out of her.

Any demon activity that has to do with ouigaa boards, cards, horoscopes, crystal balls, palm readings, fortune-tells - makes one open to the influences of demons. We are instructed to resist the Devil and he will flee from us.

How are we going to test and distinguish these spirits today. Such as the late Edgar Cayce - the sleeping prophet who was able to give readings - and has a place and an establishment down at Virginia Beach.

What are we going to say about Jean Dixon - she deals with her own views of Jesus Christ. It is my belief that God has given me a gift of prophecy. She says, for her own reasons. She said, I empty my mind and fill it with the spirit of God. And in my meditations, God talks with me. I feel it - I sense it. I definitely know that this is the wisdom. She claims the future has been shown to her for 2037 A.D. She predicts such things as the anti-Christ, the major world conditions, the second coming of Christ. And some of her prophecies are very close to the Bible. But the whole time table that she gives - does not fit into the Biblical pattern.

Now she is a very charming person and she talks about important issues. And she says that people could find God if they used their talent and their life in the service of humanity. But this is not the Gospel of Jesus Christ. For the Bible declared - for by grace you are saved, through faith, and not of yourselves. It is a gift of God. She shows that if we strive, then we will make it. But she hasn't made clear salvation. And faith. Because the world is not ready for that yet she says.

She has had a lot of failures in her prophecies. She said that World War III would begin in 1958. She said in October, 1968, that Jackie Kennedy is not thinking marriage and the next day she married. And I wonder how she explains these failures. As she predicts horse races, fashions, and a lot of other things that are just as misleading. How are we going to test these spirits. And these false prophets.

- Mormon -
- Jeh. Witness - Knock Door
etc.

V. 2 - John does not leave his readers in the dark - on how they shall test the spirits and distinguish them. Very definitely he says, every spirit which confesses Jesus Christ to having come in the flesh is of God. And every spirit that does not

confess Jesus is not of God.

V. 3 - Any spirit that does not thus confess is a spirit of the anti-Christ.
And that is one who denies that Jesus was the Christ. Denying that Jesus Christ came in the flesh.

Therefore, anyone that denies the incarnation - the virgin birth of Jesus Christ - the denial of this, very fundamental, he says - there is no Christianity left in his belief. He is an anti-Christ, he is a false prophet.

So this text - the word became flesh and dwelt among us, John 1:14. Any spirit that denies the reality of the incarnation is not of God.

For the Spirit to be of God, it must acknowledge that Jesus Christ is the Messiah. As John saw it, to deny that truth, is to deny three things, about Jesus.

First, is to deny that he is the center of history. All of history we read that it was in preparation of his coming. That God had chosen the man Abraham, and the nation Israel, and that in the fullness of time - he would send that one.

The second thing that he denies is the fulfillment of the promise of God. That is the Messiah was promised - and to deny that, that that promise is true.

It is to deny his kinship. Jesus Christ is the only sacrifice. And not only to

accept the cross - but to be found a kingdom.

So, to be of the spirit of God, Jesus came in the flesh. And to say that the incarnation is an impossibility, is an error. You find in the New Testament that everything parallels with the Word - it became flesh. And this is a very timely message for Christmas.

V. 4 John gives hope in the past of distinguishing these spirits. Greater is the one who is in the Christian. That is, God and Christ of the spirit. Than the one that is in the world.

John also infers here one of the great problems. The Christian need not to fear - in Christ, he has the victory over all the powers of evil men. Powers of evil did their worst to Jesus - they put him on a cross. But the problem remains that the false teachers will neither listen too or accept the truth, which the Christian offers. How is this explained.

The world as we have seen is human nature apart from and in opposition to God. Source and origin - God will welcome the truth. The man whose nature and source, and origin is the world - they will reject the truth.

The man whose source and origin is the world is incapable of hearing the truth.

V. 5 - They are of the world. And this is a doctrinal test that had to do with

the mind - being capable of being explained to others. It is a factor of meaning. God in the person of Jesus Christ has come down to man. Now many people rebel to anything like a doctrinal test in religion. But John does not hesitate to put this to the false prophets, of his day. If these prophets do not confess Jesus as come in the flesh, that he is the Lord, coming incarnation, and they said he is not divine.

These false prophets speak of the world and the world hears them.

The incarnation was a message of particular ethical quality. It calls for that kind of response in man and that kind of message does not suit the world. The world is too self-centered and self-regarding to accept such a message.

John Wesley at Altersgate was an untrained man. He had to spell words as he read them. But it was the spirit - where he says my heart was strangely warmed.

When I think of V. 6 - some people get the idea to try and prove it by the Bible. They get an idea in their mind - and then they try and search out Scriptures to prove it by. The way they ought to do it - let the Bible speak for itself to them.

II. DISCERNING LOVE

We next come to - after distinguishing these spirits - it brings a contrast and a discernment that will help you to test all of these demons.

V. 7 - He says the origin of love is of God. This is an outstanding passage on the love of God in the New Testament. It stands up with Paul's tribute in I Cor. 13. This is the mark of the Christian life. And it is capable of opposing evil and error.

He addresses his hearers as beloved - he is appealing to the great example of Christ. He is coming and reminding his readers that love is of God. And this is the truth of the Gospel - without this, it loses its dynamics.

In three ways he says that God - God, the spirit. God the light. And God is love. We must beware of praise - everybody may be going to church, and they may be hearing exactly what they want to hear, and that may leave them comfortable in their paganism. Or we may search an evangelist for his bag of tricks. To see how the crowd is pleased - or whether or not it is of the Gospel.

Now this is what the church is built upon. We must put down an anchor and then stick by it.

He removes the test of the Christian here by saying, you who have been loved - must surely know what love is. It is simply wonderful - God is love. In V. 8. That is not just a statement of God - but it is a touchstone for man's axe and it is a powerful statement to reflect upon.

Our failure to accept this statement is to misunderstand what love is. Even though it seems too good and too great to be true. But this is the thing that holds our faith firm. That God is love.

The meaning of God's love - V. 9 - explains it. In the same way that John 3:16 does. It's expression is the cross - he sends Jesus, the only begotten. Which is proof of God's love.

This is very much like Jehoshaphat, 2 Cor. 20. There was an invading army and victory in the flesh was out of question, this was the first right decision that he made. He chose to get his eyes on the invisible. He proclaimed a fast - he declared himself to prayer, the means of opening this vision that he needed. He said, Lord, we have no power against this great company. What might have happened if the king had kept his eyes upon the problem. As long as we keep our eyes on these problems, we are limited to the visible - but we must turn our eyes to the problem-solver. This is exactly what John is advocating here in his book - that we look to the God of love.

V. 10 - He says that Jesus is the restorer of the lost relationship with God. He is not only the bringer of life, V. 9 - but our relationship with God is restored. Through this love. Everyone that loves has been begotten, born of God, and knows God. That is, God has generated that love. There is no other source from which it could come. No man can love God or know him, except God offer that love to him.

V. 11 - The reason why we love one another is this love. The fact that God sent his son to redeem man.

V. 14 - He is the Saviour of the world. There are those that insist that man is not dependent upon God. Say that the good comes to a man - comes as the result of some good that he has done. And evil comes as a result of some source of his own action. Now a Christian is relying on God rather than self.

V. 17 - Love removes fear in the day of judgement. There will boldness, as you look forward to your confidence in Him. There is no fear in love. So this even coming to the judgement day, is based upon your relationship at this point. And it brings perfect love for this casts out all fear, from a man's heart - V. 18.

The unsettling, and the uprooting of fear - man who puts a Jesus sticker, or a Jesus saves sticker on their bumper and then drives down the highway at 100 MPH, with faulty brakes. They need not to take refuge in this passage. He probably will need to take no thought for tomorrow either.

This verse does not deny the need for medical or life insurance. Nor keep us from dreading separation from our loved ones, by death. But this verse means that we have a hope that is secure. If we test these spirits and find our way in this love.

W. W. Barnes, a historian, when he retired from teaching in Chapel - they unveiled a picture. He spoke a few words, included Whittier's words - these lines.

And so beside the silent sea
I wait, the muffled ore
No harm from him can come to me
On ocean or on shore.

I know not where his islands lift
Through froned psalms in air
I only know, I cannot drift
Beyond his love and care.

So therefore, V. 19 - He talks about the motive of love should be first. How to solve the problem of hate. But if we are going to test these prophets, you can do it through love.

Love of Christians -- one for another. I think the church could use this healing. As a wonderful thing, at Christmas time. Love for one another among the members. This prescription is still appropriate to those who split off, those who bear grudges, those who cease to attend worship. Love alone will do it.

The story of James Robinson - who has turned evangelist, and conducts many crusades now - he began his life in Charity Ward, St. Joseph's Hospital, Houston. A baby was born to a 41 year old woman whose alcoholic husband had deserted her. When the baby was three weeks old the desperate mother placed an ad in a Houston newspaper. Asking someone to take ^{CARE} of and love her baby.

Rev. and Mrs. H. D. Hale of Pasadena - took James and cared lovingly for him until his mother came back for him when he was 5 years old. James lived a life of poverty with his mother and her new husband, an illiterate man. No one seemed to care about the boy's spiritual life and no one invited him to church or took him. Later the mother divorced the second husband and James' real father came back into their lives. Because of his drink, there was always trouble. At 15 years of age, his mother allowed him to visit the Hale's in Pasadena. For the first time, since he left their home, at the age of 5. It was during this visit that he accepted Christ. The Hale's and their children and church members prayed for James to know Christ. When he was 18 years of age, during the Dan Vestal revival, he was called to be an evangelist. He changed his plans to study law and entered the University of Texas, and went to East Texas Baptist College. It seemed that God's hand was upon him from the beginning. He married in 1964 - he said I can remember many times when God seem to indicate that he wanted to use my life. And I would go out and try and do a work for him. And I would begin with

my own power - but I came to the place where I said, I will walk with God. I will walk with Christ. As I breathe, every breath I take will lead me to be more like Jesus. That his power will prevail in my life. And he says in making a total commitment in my life, I have found joy running like a river. He said I became a Christian because others cared for me, wept for me, and reached out to me. He says I was lifted to Christ by a pastor's wife. Who placed her hand on my shoulder while tears came down her cheeks and said James, don't you want to go to Jesus. Those tears melted my heart and I saw in it the love of God.

The only true test of the demon spirits then is to come to recognize that Jesus is the Christ, bound up in God's love.

Geo. Matheson

