

1 John 4:1-6

John sandwiches a warning between his foundation for love in 1 John 3:10-24 and his full essay on love in 1 John 4:7-21. Though it seems a strange place to interject a warning, the placement is not coincidental. It is exactly because John loves the brethren that he issues the warning! This is clear from his first word: "Beloved." You are so beloved, I want to warn you about the dangers of false teachers, what distinguishes them from true teachers, and how to discern the difference.

READ/PRAY

There are three main points that I see unfold for us here in this text.

I. Danger v1

We are given a serious warning here in this first verse concerning the danger of false prophets and the spirits which influence them.

- a. They are not just wrong, they are dangerous!
- b. We must be aware and on guard against the danger of being deceived by them!

Jeremiah 29:4-9

1. The false prophets were prophesying that Babylon would soon crumble and the Jews would get to go home to their houses and lands.
 - a. Everything they prophesied was easy on the ears...and the heart
 - b. They were telling the people exactly what they wanted to hear
2. Then you have Jeremiah instructing them exactly the opposite in verse 5-7
 - a. Who they believed mattered much!
 - b. If they believed the false teachers (because it felt good) they would find themselves homeless, landless, and futureless in Babylon as they waited on a dream that would not come true: Jerusalem
 - c. If they believed the true prophet (even though it hurt) they would find themselves with houses, land, food, and family...in Babylon.
3. Their ability to test the spirits would determine if they would prosper in exile or if they would die bitter and frustrated in exile as they waited for something that God never promised.

The danger is the same today.

1. We can gather for ourselves teachers who will tickle our ears
2. Or we can find ourselves teachers who will proclaim truth, rightly divided and applied.
3. It won't be both! And the end results are eternities apart...literally.
4. 2 Timothy 4:1-4
5. Don't miss the danger of getting swept up into teaching and teachers who would deceive you by their feel good teaching.

II. Distinctives v2-3

This all hinges on Jesus. Know Jesus and you will recognize the spirits!

1. Confessing the biblical Christ V2

- a. Legitimate teachers recognize, believe, and confess that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has come in the flesh!
- b. John actually begins his letter with this proclamation.
- c. 1 John 1:1-3 *What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life-- 2 and the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us-- 3 what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.*
- d. THE GOSPEL
- e. Are they confessing the right Christ?

2. Confessing Christ V3

- a. Are they confessing Jesus at all?
 1. Or are they confessing church, Sunday school, their brand of religion etc.
 2. Revelation 1:1-2 *The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants, the things which must soon take place; and He sent and communicated it by His angel to His bond-servant John, 2 who testified to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw.*
 3. John was confessing Christ to all that he saw!

3. It virtually always comes down to Jesus! Is the biblical Jesus central to everything or not?

- a. That will generally be your answer to the type of teacher and spirit you are hearing.
- b. Jesus is the distinguishing factor.

III. Discernment v4-6

1. v4

- a. We must ensure that we are from God.
- b. You have overcome the antichrists because greater is He that is in you than He who is in the world!
- b. As we saw just a few weeks ago, we have an anointing from the Holy One!
- c. John 14:16-17 *I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; 17 that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you.*
- d. John 16:13 *But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come.*
- e. If we are from God, we should have some discernment because of the Holy Spirit who dwells in us.
- f. With the help of the Holy Spirit, we should be able to identify the false teachers because they are from the world.

2. V5

- a. They speak as from the world and the world listens.
- b. Their message is palatable to the world and their lives are compatible with the world
- c. If you fit in and look like and talk like the rest of the world, you might need to ask am I from God (vs 4) or am I from the world (vs 5) and what does this say about me.

3. Do we listen?

- a. Do we listen to the “us” of John and the other apostles? The Word of God?
- b. Jeremiah 13:10 *This wicked people, who refuse to listen to My words, who walk in the stubbornness of their hearts and have gone after other gods to serve them and to bow down to them, let them be just like this waistband which is totally worthless.*
- c. You better know your bible and learn to apply it to your life and build your worldview from it!
 1. THIS IS HOW YOU WILL GET GOOD DISCERNMENT!
 2. Not by a feeling...but by You meditating on Scripture day in and day out.
 3. Romans 12:2. *And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.*
- d. John 8:47 *He who is of God hears the words of God; for this reason you do not hear them, because you are not of God.”*
- e. Do you hear? Do you listen?

Conclusion:

1. Without hearing God’s Word you will not have good discernment.
2. Without good discernment, you will not be able to distinguish between the false and the legitimate teachers.
3. And without being able to distinguish the false from the legitimate teachers, you will run the risk and danger of falling into false doctrines.
4. Beloved...because I love you...I say do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits!

Discussion Questions

1. Take some time to review the sermon notes from Sunday.
2. Was there anything from this sermon that was difficult to understand or that didn’t make sense to you? Discuss it with the group to try and get a better understanding.
3. What do we learn about God the Father....God the Son....and/or God the Holy Spirit from the main Scripture text that was used?
4. What do we learn about man from the main text?
5. Are there any commands to obey? Promises to believe? Sins to avoid in the main Scripture text?
6. What do you believe was the most impactful part of the sermon Sunday? Discuss.
7. How do you plan to apply some portion of what you learned to your life? For example, “In response to this sermon, I will _____