

Shalom AZ Ministries

In Pursuit of Israel's Redemption



“Test the spirits”

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Devotion and Discussion Questions

Key Texts (TLV): 1 John 4:1-6; 1 Jn. 3:23-24; John 1:1-3, 14; 6:33-35, 51; 12:31-33; 14:30; J 15:18-23; Rev. 2:2-5

Most of us know what it feels like to hear something that sounds spiritual, powerful, even convincing—and yet something feels off. The language may be familiar. The person may speak with confidence. They may even use the right words about God, Yeshua, the Spirit, or truth. But John reminds us that not everything claiming to be spiritual actually comes from God. A good counterfeit looks close to the real thing, and that is why discernment is not optional for the people of God.

John writes, *“Loved ones, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see if they are from God. For many false prophets have gone out into the world”* (1 Jn. 4:1). This comes right after John has reminded us that we know God abides in us by the Spirit He has given us. But immediately John adds this warning: not every spirit is the Spirit of God. Not every message that claims inspiration is from Him. So, loved ones, we are called to test, to examine, to prove what is being said, and to ask: where does this originate? Is this from God, or is this from the spirit of this age?

1. TEST THE SPIRITS TO SEE IF THEY ARE FROM GOD

John begins again with love: “Loved ones.” He is not writing to stir up suspicion, arrogance, or fear. He is writing to those whom God loves and whom he loves, so they will not be led away from the truth. In the early congregations, believers often met in homes in smaller groups for worship and fellowship. They did not have immediate access to all the emissaries who had walked with Yeshua. John sent trusted emissaries to carry his teaching and letters, but there were also false prophets and traveling teachers who claimed to speak by the Spirit. So John gives the community a command: do not simply believe every spirit—test the spirits.

To test something is to examine what it is really made of. Like testing metals or recognizing counterfeit money, discernment grows as we become deeply familiar with what is true. Truth and error are not always easily distinguished, because error often comes dressed in religious language and through real people—sometimes even professing believers. That means we must exercise discernment with care and humility. We do not test the spirits by personal preference, suspicion, or novelty. We test by the truth that has been revealed in Yeshua and handed down through the apostolic witness.

2. TRUE CONFESSION ACKNOWLEDGES THAT MESSIAH YESHUA CAME IN THE FLESH

John gives the central test: *“You know the Ruach Elohim by this—every spirit that acknowledges that Messiah Yeshua has come in human flesh is from God, but every spirit*

that does not acknowledge Yeshua is not from God" (1 Jn. 4:2–3). This is not merely a verbal formula that someone can repeat while still reshaping Yeshua into whatever they want Him to be. John is speaking about *this* Yeshua—the Yeshua proclaimed by those who heard Him, saw Him, touched Him, and bore witness to Him. *"In the beginning was the Word. The Word was with God, and the Word was God"* (Jn. 1:1), and *"the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us"* (Jn. 1:14).

To confess Yeshua Messiah come in the flesh is to confess that in Yeshua, we are not dealing with merely a rabbi from Nazareth, but the Word of God made flesh. He was truly human, flesh and blood. He revealed the Father to us. And He gave His flesh for the life of the world. Yeshua said, *"I am the living bread, which came down from heaven. If anyone eats this bread, he will live forever. This bread is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world"* (Jn. 6:51). So a denial or distortion of Yeshua in the flesh is not a small matter. It undercuts His atonement, His example, and the life we are called to walk. If He did not truly come in the flesh, then the call to "walk as He walked" becomes unrealistic. But the Lord will not allow us to sidestep that central command. Indeed, Yeshua came in the flesh, loved in the flesh, obeyed in the flesh, suffered in the flesh, and laid down His life for us. And those who abide in Him are called to walk as He walked.

3. OVERCOME THE SPIRIT OF THE WORLD BY THE ONE WHO IS IN YOU

John does not leave the loved ones fearful or overwhelmed. He says, *"You are from God, children, and you have overcome them, because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world"* (1 Jn. 4:4). The spirit of anti-Messiah is already in the world. It is the spirit that resists the rule of Messiah, the kingship of Yeshua, and the way of the kingdom. It is the voice of our flesh, the whisper of the enemy that says, "Take the fruit, exalt yourself, have it all, rule your own life." But Yeshua in the flesh said, if anyone would come after Him, he must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Him.

The world listens to messages that come from the world. John writes, *"They are from the world, so they speak from the world and the world listens to them"* (1 Jn. 4:5). Even when such messages use religious language, their thoughts may be shaped more by worldly categories—power, control, self-exaltation, success, dominance, pride—than by the actual Good News that Yeshua brought. But the people of God listen to the apostolic witness of the New Covenant Scriptures because that witness comes from those commissioned by Yeshua, those who saw and heard and touched the Life that was revealed. John says, *"We are from God; whoever knows God listens to us"* (1 Jn. 4:6). This is not arrogance. It is a stand for truth, so the community will remain in the safety of what was revealed in Messiah and not be carried off by every new, impressive, spiritual-sounding distortion.

CONCLUSION

Testing the spirits is not about becoming cynical. It is about remaining faithful. The Spirit of truth will always lead us to the true Yeshua—Messiah come in the flesh, the Word made flesh, the One who laid down His life, the One who calls us to walk as He walked.

And that true confession will never be separated from love. John has already told us the commandment is one unified command: believe in the name of His Son, Yeshua the Messiah, and love one another. It is heads and tails on the same coin. If we truly believe in this Yeshua, then His love must be formed in us and expressed through us.

So today, bring your heart before the Lord. Ask Him to expose every place where you have been listening to the spirit of this age—every place where self, pride, control, comfort, or religiously varnished ambition has tried to sound like truth. Ask Him to anchor you again in the true Yeshua, the One who came in the flesh, gave His flesh for the life of the world, and now lives in you by His Spirit. Loved ones, do not be afraid. Greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world. Return to the truth. Return to love. Return to walking as He walked.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Why does John tell the loved ones not to believe every spirit, but to test the spirits? What does that teach us about discernment in the life of the believing community?
2. John says the true Spirit acknowledges that Messiah Yeshua has come in human flesh. Why is this confession so central to the truth of the Gospel?
3. How does denying or distorting Yeshua in the flesh affect the way a person understands obedience, love, sacrifice, and walking as He walked?
4. In our modern world, what are some messages that may use spiritual or religious language but still sound more like the world than like Yeshua?
5. Where do you personally need to grow in discernment—not with suspicion or arrogance, but with humility, truth, and love?

CLOSING PRAYER:

Avinu Malkhenu, Our Father, Our King, thank You for sending Your Son, Yeshua the Messiah, the Word made flesh, full of grace and truth. Thank You that He came to us where we are, gave His flesh for the life of the world, and showed us what Your love looks like in reality.

Teach us to test the spirits with humility and wisdom. Keep us from being led away by messages that sound spiritual but are not from You. Anchor us in the truth of Yeshua, in the witness of Your Word, and in the love that comes from Your Spirit. Help us not only to confess the true Yeshua with our mouths, but to walk as He walked with our lives.

Lord, expose every place where the spirit of this age has shaped our thinking, our desires, or our actions. Form in us the life of Messiah—self-giving love, faithful obedience, and confidence that greater is He who is in us than he who is in the world.

B'Shem Yeshua, In the name of Yeshua, amen.