

“Spiritual Discernment”

(1 John 4:1-6)

Introduction

- One of the greatest maladies affecting the church today is a lack of spiritual discernment. This is no small issue, for it touches every aspect of a Christian’s spiritual life. A lack of true spiritual discernment can cause Christians to wander into false teaching (unknowingly following false teachers); to fall headlong into worldliness and sin (unable to distinguish right from wrong); to unintentionally lead others into false teaching and/or worldliness (by their beliefs and example).
- This is why Scripture is replete with warnings for us to beware, to be aware, to be alert, to be awake, to be on guard, to take heed, to be watchful – in short, to be spiritually discerning.

Matt 10:16 ~ “Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise [*phronimos*] as serpents and innocent [*akeraios*] as doves.”

Matt 10:16 ~ “Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves.” (NASU)

- Unfortunately, in the world and in the church, knowledge and discernment are often disregarded if not outright rejected. Words like “discrimination”, “judgment” and “critical” are often maligned as hateful and bigoted. While such words can be appropriately used to describe prejudicial and condemning behaviors, we must retain the positive aspects of discernment – we must be able to discern right from wrong, truth from error, good from evil. Christians are called to discriminate (“to make clear distinctions”), without being guilty of immoral discrimination. Likewise, we are called to have judgment, without being judgmental (Matt.7:1-5; Jn.7:24), and we are called to think critically, without being critically minded.

This “anti-intellectualism”, or “irrationalism”, has crept into the church. In fact, some church leaders even go so far as to declare that Bible study is actually antithetical, even harmful, to spirituality (this often stems from the erroneous view that the Holy Spirit is capricious, impulsive, inexplicable).

✓ Illust: I actually had a pastor chide me for studying for a sermon, saying that the process of study voids the work and presence of the Spirit of God. He believed it was more “spiritual” for the preacher to “preach from the heart” (i.e., “shoot-from-the-hip”) than to study for a sermon. Scripture actually says the exact opposite (see 2Tim.2:15).

- While spiritual discernment is not the same as spiritual knowledge, they certainly go hand-in-hand. For the more knowledge we have of spiritual truth, the more we are able to be spiritually discerning. Christians are commanded to be wise, not foolish; knowledgeable, not ignorant; innocent, not naïve; vigilant, not oblivious; humble, not gullible; child-like, not childish; simple, not simpleminded.

Eph 4:11-15 ~ “And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, ¹²to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, ¹³until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge [*epignōsis*] of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, ¹⁴so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine [*didaskalia*], by human cunning [*kybeia*], by craftiness in deceitful schemes [*methodeia*].”

Eph 5:10 ~ “and try to discern [*dokimazō*] what is pleasing to the Lord.”

Phil 1:9-11 ~ “And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge [*epignōsis*] and all discernment [*aisthēsis*], ¹⁰so that you may approve [*dokimazō*] what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, ¹¹filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.”

Col 1:9-10 ~ “And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge [*epignōsis*] of his will in all spiritual wisdom [*sophia*] and understanding

[synesis],¹⁰ so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge [epignōsis] of God.”

1 Thess 5:20-22 ~ “Do not despise prophecies,²¹ but test [dokimazō] everything; hold fast what is good.²² Abstain from every form of evil.”

➤ The issue of spiritual discernment is the main focus of the passage we are studying this morning:

1 John 4:1-6 ~ “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world. ²By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, ³and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already. ⁴Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. ⁵They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them. ⁶We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.”

➤ We can outline this passage of Scripture with three major headings.

I. The CALL for spiritual discernment (vs.1)

➤ Notice again that John referred to the Christians to whom he was writing by the designation of “*Beloved*” (vs.1; *agapētos*; see 1Jn.2:7; 3:2, 21; 4:7, 11; cf. Matt.3:17). This is an indication of the apostle’s relationship with, and affection for, these Christians. It also is an important reminder that John was writing out of (pastoral) love for fellow-believers, not rebuking false Christians/teachers.

➤ John’s love for his brothers and sisters in Christ is what compelled him to call them to be spiritually discerning. He desperately wants them to be faithfully walking with Christ, and to keep them from wandering or falling into deception, error, and/or sin. This heartfelt desire for those who are children of God should be true in every pastor, and true of every fellow-believer.

3 John 2 ~ “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.”

➤ At the outset of this passage, in just verse one, we also find both the motive and need of spiritual discernment. First, the motive: “*to see whether they are from God*” (vs.1). Spiritual discernment is not motivated by a spirit of judgmentalism or legalism, but genuine desire to distinguish between that which is godly (i.e., “*from God*”) and that which is ungodly (i.e., not from God).

Second, see the need of spiritual discernment: “*for many false prophets have gone out into the world*” (vs.1). Satan longs to counterfeit God’s truth, seeking to lead people away from God’s will. We must not be naïve, thinking that we are somehow isolated from, or immune to, Satan’s deceitful schemes (2Cor.2:11; Eph.4:14; 6:11). For his deception is greatly effective, and will lead many astray (Matt.24:5, 11, 24).

1 John 2:18 ~ “Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour.”

Matt 7:15 ~ “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves.”

2 Cor 11:13-15 ~ “For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. ¹⁴And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. ¹⁵So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds.”

1 Tim 4:1 ~ “Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons”

2 Peter 2:1-3 ~ “But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction. ²And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed. ³And in their greed they will exploit you with false words. Their condemnation from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.” (cf. Jd.1:4)

- With the motive and need for spiritual discernment stated clearly, the apostle states two simple but critical commands. There are two imperative verbs in this passage, both in verse one, and both serve as commands to follow. The first one is negative (what not to do), and the second is positive (what to do):

A. What not to do (vs.1a):

- This command, although it can be difficult to apply, is terribly easy to understand: “*do not believe every spirit*” (vs.1). The transition in John’s thinking goes back to the previous verse:

1 John 3:24 ~ “Whoever keeps his commandments abides in God, and God in him. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us.”

- In essence, 1 John 4:1 could read: “don’t assume that every spirit is the Holy Spirit of God, or that every spiritual thing from the Holy Spirit of God.” To be sure, there are other spirits out in the world – “*the spirit of the antichrist*” (1Jn.4:3), “*the spirit of error*” (1Jn.4:6), “*the spirit of the world*” (1Cor.2:12), “*deceitful spirits*” (1Tim.4:1) for “*the whole world lies in the power of the evil one*” (1Jn.5:19).

Eph 2:1-3 ~ “And you were dead in the trespasses and sins ²in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience – ³among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.”

- So, simply put, “*do not believe every spirit*” (vs.1). Not everyone who professes to be a Christian, is actually a true believer in Christ (not every “Christian” ministry, church, artist, author, athlete, or preacher is truly/faithfully Christ-centered, Bible-centered, and/or Gospel centered). We must always bear in mind that false believers can infiltrate the church in order to undermine the authority of God’s Word, distort the Gospel of Christ, and/or create division within the fellowship of believers.

Unfortunately, under the guise of Christian unity and love, Christians are all too willing to accept any so-called Christian leader, speaker, song, book, or movie. Consequently, many Christians are willfully ignorant and gullible to Satan’s deceptions.

B. What to do (vs.1b):

- Rather than be undiscerning, we are called to “*test the spirits*” (vs.1). The Greek word (*dokimazō*) translated “test” is a term that was used to describe or evaluate the purity and worth of metals. Figuratively, the word is used to describe any act of evaluation or examination which proves (or reveals) the veracity or value of something. In the New Testament, the word is often used to describe the testing of spiritual things.

1 Peter 1:6-7 ~ “In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, ⁷so that the tested genuineness [*dokimion*] of your faith – more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested [*dokimazō*] by fire – may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

2 Cor 13:5 ~ “Examine [*peirazō*] yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test [*dokimazō*] yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? – unless indeed you fail to meet the test [*adokimos*]!”

1 Thess 5:21 ~ “but test [*dokimazō*] everything; hold fast what is good.

Rom 12:2 ~ “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern [*dokimazō*] what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”

➤ As we will see, Christians are to “*test the spirits*” (vs.1) by the Word of God, through the Spirit of God, to see if they are truly “*from God*” (vs.1).

II. The CRUCIBLE of spiritual discernment (vs.2-3)

➤ A crucible is a ceramic or metal container in which metals, or other substances, were subjected to very high temperatures in order to melted and examined for impurities. Figuratively, a crucible is any intense trial or testing, any extremely difficult experience or situation, which can reveal one’s true priorities or character.

➤ In verses two and three, the apostle John laid out a very simple crucible of spiritual discernment: “*By this you know the Spirit of God*” (vs.2). While not meant to be only means or measure of spiritual discernment, the following test is infallible in determining whether a spirit – i.e., anyone speaking by any spirit – is “*from God*” (vs.2) or “*not from God*” (vs.3).

In this test, everything is measured against the biblical truth concerning the deity and humanity of Jesus Christ. Here again we see John’s “black or white” contrast – one can either affirm the deity and incarnation of Christ or reject the deity and incarnation of Christ. For Scripture neither silent nor vague regarding the truth that Jesus Christ, as the incarnate (“born in the flesh”) Son of God, is simultaneously and harmoniously fully God and fully man.

1 John 1:1-3 ~ “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life – ²the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us – ³that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.”

John 1:1-2, 14 ~ “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God. ... ¹⁴And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.” (cf. Matt.1:20-23; Lk.1:30-35; Gal.4:4-5)

John 10:30-33 ~ “‘I and the Father are one.’ ³¹The Jews picked up stones again to stone him. ³²Jesus answered them, ‘I have shown you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you going to stone me?’ ³³The Jews answered him, ‘It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you but for blasphemy, because you, being a man, make yourself God.’” (see Jn.8:58-59; 14:9)

Col 1:19 ~ “For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell”

Col 2:9 ~ “For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily”

➤ The deity and humanity of Jesus Christ – that Jesus is fully God and fully man – is essential doctrine, the essence of the Gospel, and any teaching contrary to it is a false gospel and heretical, and therefore damnable (see Gal.1:8, 9; 2Pet.2:1). Jesus was not half-man half-God; Jesus was not God in the appearance of man; Jesus was not man in the aura (or merely power) of God; Jesus was not sometimes God and sometimes man; Jesus was fully and simultaneously and harmoniously God and man.

Therefore, in this matter, the crucible of spiritual discernment is rather clear and straightforward: either a person affirms the deity and incarnation of Jesus Christ, or he/she rejects the deity and incarnation of Christ.

A. Affirmation of the deity and incarnation of Jesus Christ (vs.2)

- John explained the positive result of this test in saying that *“every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God”* (vs.2). To “confess” (*homologeō*; lit. to say the same) essentially means to admit, acknowledge, or agree with. What must a person confess? Simply put, that *“Jesus Christ has come in the flesh”* (vs.2).

In other words, they sincerely acknowledge that Jesus Christ is the incarnate Son of God – fully God and fully man. Affirming this doctrine requires that a person believes in the virgin birth of Christ (that Jesus, being fully God [the Son of God], was conceived by the Holy Spirit of God and born of the virgin Mary), and believes in the substitutionary atonement of Christ (that Jesus, fully man, died on the cross for the sins of all who would ever believe).

For if Jesus was not fully God, He could not have been God’s gracious offering for our sin. And if Jesus was not fully man, He could not have been the sacrifice for our sin.

- So, in 1 John 4:2, we see the very simply – yet vitally important – crucible of spiritual discernment: anyone who sincerely proclaims or professes that *“Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God”* (vs.2).

B. Rejection of the deity and incarnation of Jesus Christ (vs.3)

- The opposite is also true: *“every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God”* (vs.3). That is, anyone who refuses to acknowledge, or outright denies, that *“Jesus Christ has come in the flesh”* (vs.2) *“is not from God”* (vs.3). We know this to be true because the true Spirit of God would never deny (or contradict) the clear teaching in God’s Word that Jesus is both fully God and fully man.

✓ Illust: Make no mistake, there are (and have been) many “Christian” preachers and teachers who unequivocally deny the full deity and/or humanity of Jesus Christ. Some declare that Jesus as just a godly man, but not God. Others declare that Jesus was fully God but only appeared to be human. Some try various ways of conflating Jesus to be part God and part man. In any and all of these cases, they are teaching a false doctrine that is not from God.

- Every major doctrine in Scripture hinges on the person and work of Jesus Christ. Contrary to popular opinion today, there is no such thing as a Christless Christianity (enjoying the “benefits” of Christian values, Christian ethics, Christian promises, but rejecting the Biblical Jesus Christ). You cannot have Christianity without Jesus Christ, and you cannot be right with God if you are not right with His Son Jesus Christ. To *“not confess”* (vs.3) this doctrine is tantamount to rejecting it, and calling God a liar.

1 John 2:20-23 ~ “I write to you, not because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and because no lie is of the truth. ²²Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son. ²³No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also.”

- To reject the biblical teaching of the person and nature of Jesus Christ, is to reject Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Anyone who teaches that Jesus is not fully God and fully man is not from God because they are not teaching the truth of God. In fact, by rejecting God’s truth they are teaching a false/heretical doctrine which comes not from God but from the antichrist: *“This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already”* (vs.3).

1 John 2:18 ~ “Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour.”

- The (singular) *“antichrist”* (1Jn.2:18, 22; 2Jn.7) is ultimately a reference to Satan, and *“the spirit of the antichrist”* (1Jn.4:3) refers to all that is a part of Satan’s reign and work. To be sure, the final *“antichrist is coming”* (1Jn.2:18), but *“the spirit of the antichrist ... is in the world already”* (1Jn.4:3) as Satan seeks to counterfeit God’s truth and deceive God’s children.

- This is a very sobering reason why we, as Christians, need to be spiritually discerning (and not naïve or ignorant). For Satan's deceptions are very deceiving (Matt.24:24; 1Tim.4:1), and things will grow increasing worse until Christ comes again (Matt.24:12; 2Tim.3:13).

III. The CONFIRMATION of spiritual discernment (vs.4-6)

- While all this ought to be very sobering, and perhaps a bit unnerving, it should also be very confirming to those who believe the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. For this serves as another "test" which can give us the assurance of salvation (1Jn.5:13).

However, for those who fail the test – those who reject the fully deity and humanity of Christ – this ought to be very convicting, causing them to quickly repent and renounce false doctrine.

- Again, the apostle John (in writing words inspired by the Holy Spirit of God; 2Tim.3:16-17; 2Pet.1:20-21) provides us with stark contrasts: those who are "*from God*" (vs.4, 6) and those who are "*from the world*" (vs.5-6).

A. Those who are "from God" (vs.4, 6)

- Again, John (based on what he knew to be true of their Christian lives and doctrine) affirms his readers: "*Little children, you are from God*" (vs.4). As we have seen, the expression "*Little children*" (vs.4) is a term of endearment, as a father to a child or as a pastor to his church (1Jn.2:1, 28; 3:7, 18; 5:21). Knowing them as he did, John believed that they were true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ ("*you are from God*"; vs.4). But this is not wishful thinking, or an empty encouragement. The evidence and fruit of their Christianity was two-fold.

1. VICTORY – in the power of God (vs.4)

First John confirmed them as believers (as being "*from God*") because they had "*overcome them*" (vs.4). Meaning that these Christians had proven the veracity of their faith in Christ because they had remained faithful to the doctrine of Christ. As the word "*overcame*" (*nikaō*) suggests, these believers had been tested and emerged victorious.

1 John 5:4-5 ~ "For everyone who has been born of God overcomes [*nikaō*] the world. And this is the victory [*nikē*] that has overcome [*nikaō*] the world – our faith. ⁵Who is it that overcomes [*nikaō*] the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?"

John 16:33 ~ "I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."

Notice that this was not meant to boost their egos or elevate their self-esteem. For they clearly did not overcome false teachers and false doctrine on their own or in their own strength! Their victory was not proof that they were so spiritual or so smart or so strong, but that God – through the indwelling power and presence of His Holy Spirit (1Jn.3:24) – was clearing in them and working through them: "*for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world*" (vs.4).

Eph 6:10-11 ~ "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might."

Col 1:28-29 ~ "Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. ²⁹For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me."

Eph 3:20-21 ~ "Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, ²¹to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen."

1 Peter 4:11 ~ “whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies – in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.”

2. OBEDIENCE – to the Word of God (vs.6)

These believers’ assurance of salvation also came from their obedience to the Word of God. *“We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us”* (vs.6). In saying “we” (vs.6), John is referring to himself and the other apostles who preached the truth of God’s Word (Acts 2:42). Here John is encouraging these Christians in the truth of their salvation based on the fact that they believe and are obedient to God’s Word – the Scriptures.

2 Tim 3:16-17 ~ “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”

2 Peter 1:20-21 ~ “knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone’s own interpretation. ²¹For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”

It is imperative to note, however, that John was not encouraging Christians to bow to his apostolic authority, or blindly adhere to whatever John said. As is clear from the outset of this passage, John is encouraging them to *“test the spirits”* (vs.1), not to naïvely believe every would-be preacher or prophet. Rather, they are to be discerning; testing everything against the truth of God’s Word (Jn.17:17).

Acts 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.”

Again, Christians are not to be gullible. We are commanded to test everything against the truth of God’s Word. *“By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error”* (vs.6). We are not to be captivated by worldly philosophies, or guided by secular psychology, or controlled by political ideologies. We are to be captivated, guided, and controlled by the truth of God’s Word!

John 10:27-30 ~ “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. ²⁹My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand. ³⁰I and the Father are one.”

John 17:14-17 ~ “I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. ¹⁵I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. ¹⁶They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. ¹⁷Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.”

B. Those who are “from the world” (vs.5-6)

➤ Those who are not *“from God”* (vs.4, 6) are, by nature, *“from the world”* (vs.5; see Jn.3:36; Eph.2:1-3; Tit.3:3-6). This is the stark distinction between those who are saved and those who are not; those who are truly followers of Christ and those who reject Christ; those who are walking in the light and those who are walking in darkness; those who are children of God and those who are children of the devil.

Contrary to true believers, those who are *“from the world”* neither abide in God nor obey God: *“They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them. ... whoever is not from God does not listen to us”* (vs.5-6).

➤ In these verses, we can identify two marks of an unbeliever.

1. **WORLDLINESS – embrace the world (vs.5)**

Those who reject the true Gospel of Christ are *“from the world”* and consequently *“they speak from the world, and the world listens to them”* (vs.5). The opposite of being “in Christ” is being “in the world”, and the opposite of “of Christ” is being “of the world.” Christians are in the world, but not of the world.

False teachers – who peddle a worldly religion that is contrary to God’s Word – are embraced by the world. For they speak the same language – *“they speak from the world, and the world listens to them”* (vs.5). Worldliness is the opposite of godliness. To be *“from the world”* is to embrace the world’s truth, the world’s morality, and what the world loves. To be from God is to embrace God’s truth, God’s morality, and what God loves.

1 John 2:15-17 ~ “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶For all that is in the world – the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life – is not from the Father but is from the world. ¹⁷And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.”

Unfortunately, we live in a day and age where the Church is worldly; the world is in the Church; and the Church is like the world. Some church leaders are consumed with being like the world – looking like the world, sounding like the world, being accepted by the world. These are all marks of the unbeliever, not the true follower of Christ.

2. **GODLESSNESS – reject the Word (vs.6)**

To be worldly is to be godless/ungodly. A fundamental part of being *“from the world”* is to reject the Word of God: *“whoever is not from God does not listen to us”* (vs.6). Captivated by the lies of the world (the lies of the devil), non-Christians hate the truth of God’s Word and those who embrace the truth of God’s Word.

John 8:37-38, 42-47 ~ “I know that you are offspring of Abraham; yet you seek to kill me because my word finds no place in you. ³⁸I speak of what I have seen with my Father, and you do what you have heard from your father.’ ...”

“⁴²Jesus said to them, ‘If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and I am here. I came not of my own accord, but he sent me. ⁴³Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word. ⁴⁴You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies. ⁴⁵But because I tell the truth, you do not believe me. ⁴⁶Which one of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me? ⁴⁷Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God.’”

John 18:37 ~ “Then Pilate said to him, ‘So you are a king?’ Jesus answered, ‘You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world – to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.’”

Those who reject the Word of God – in part or in whole – show themselves to be from the world and not from God. Believing and obeying the Word of God is one of the greatest ways we can find assurance of salvation. Conversely, disbelieving and disobeying the Word of God is one of the surest evidences of having no salvation.

1 John 5:10-12 ~ “Whoever believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself. Whoever does not believe God has made him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has borne concerning his Son. ¹¹And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. ¹²Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.”

Conclusion

➤ We must never forget that we are living in treacherous times, and therefore we desperately need to be discerning. For we are in the midst of a spiritual battle – a battle of truth vs. error, light vs. darkness, godliness vs. worldliness, the Spirit of God vs. the spirit of the antichrist. Satan’s deceitful schemes are the real (spiritually deadly) pandemic in the world today.

But for us who are true followers of Christ, those who are from God and not from the world, we need not be discouraged or afraid. For we know that the victory is the Lord’s! And we – by God’s sovereign grace, mercy, and love – will be eternally victorious in Christ Jesus our Lord (1Cor.15:57).

1 John 4:4 ~ “Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.”