

I JOHN: TRUE SPIRITUAL FELLOWSHIP

XI. Discerning True From False Spirits

(1 John 4:1-6)

I. Introduction

- A. When the Apostle John wrote 1 John, he implied in 1 John 1:3 that a number of his readers did not enjoy spiritual fellowship with the Apostles, with God the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ!
- B. This lack of true fellowship occurs with many believers today, a state that Christ predicted in Revelation 3:14-22 would exist in our era of Church History. We thus continue our study of 1 John in viewing 1 John 4:1-6 on discerning true from false spirits that we might identify true from false, artificial fellowships (as follows):

II. Discerning True From False Spirits, 1 John 4:1-6.

- A. John warned believers about great deception that had come to exist in the spiritual realm, 1 John 4:1:
 - 1. John warned believers to **stop** believing (*me* negative particle with the **present** imperative *pisteuete* from *pisteuo*, "believe;" U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1966, p. 820; The Analyt. Grk. Lex. (Zon.), 1972, p. 326; Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 665-670) every spirit, but rather (*alla*, a strong adversative particle (Ibid., U. B. S. Grk. N. T.; Ibid., Arndt & Gingrich, p. 37-38) to be putting [all] the spirits to the test (*dokimazete*, **present** imperative from *dokimazo*, "put to the test; examine" (Ibid., The Analyt. Grk. Lex., p. 105; Ibid., Arndt & Gingrich, p. 201) to see whether they were from God, for many false prophets had permanently gone out (*exeluthasin*, perfect tense of *exerchomai*, "go out;" Ibid., U. B. S. Grk. N. T.; Ibid., The Analyt. Grk. Lex., p. 145; Ibid., Arndt & Gingrich, p. 273-274) into the world.
 - 2. This was a spiritually dangerous state for Christians: many believers even in John's era believed what false prophets taught when such prophets were influenced by demons opposite how godly teachers were empowered by the Holy Spirit, and the false prophets were permanently positioned out in the world!
 - 3. If this state of affairs existed in John's day, it surely exists in our spiritually needy era of Church History!
- B. John then gave valuable directives for us on effectively handling this great problem (as follows), 1 John 4:2-6:
 - 1. We can discern true from false spirits by the test of confessing the Incarnation, 1 John 4:2-4:
 - a. We can "experientially know, recognize" (*ginosko*, Ibid., U. B. S. Grk. N. T.; Ibid., Arndt & Gingrich, p. 159-161) the Spirit of God's ministry through a believer because He "makes a confession of faith" (*homologeō*, Ibid., p. 571) that Jesus Christ is **permanently** come (*eluthota*, **perfect** participle of *erchomai*, "come;" Ibid., U. B. S. Grk. N. T.; Ibid., The Analyt. Grk. Lex., p. 132, 167) in the flesh. However, every spirit that does not "make a confession of faith" (*homologeī* again, Ibid., U. B. S. Grk. N. T.) [regarding] Jesus [and the permanency of His Incarnation] is not of God, 1 John 4:2-3a. [The perfect tense of *erchomai* here counters the error of Cerinthus who taught that Jesus was only a man, that the divine Christ came on Him at His baptism and left Him before His crucifixion, B. K. C. N. T., p. 881.]
 - b. John added that those spirits and teachers influenced by them that deny the permanency of Christ's incarnation are representative of the spirit of the Antichrist who was predicted to come, 1 John 4:3b; 2:18.
 - c. Lest his readers become distraught over learning that they face the spirit of Antichrist, John added that we believers are of God due to the spiritual new birth (1 John 3:9a) and have thus overcome such antichrist spirits and teachers, for greater is the Holy Spirit who is in us believers (cf. Romans 8:9b) than he [Satan] who is in the world [and who rules the realm of such demonic spirits], 1 John 4:4 with 2 Corinthians 4:4.
 - 2. We can also discern the spirit of truth from error by one's response to apostolic teaching, 1 John 4:5-6:
 - a. Referring to the antichrists of verse 3b, John added that they were of the godless world, so they speak out of the godless world's errant views, and the godless world naturally heeds these antichrists, 1 John 4:5.
 - b. However, John claimed that "we," that is, Christ's original apostles, were of God, and he who experientially knows (*ginosko* again, Ibid., U. B. S. Grk. N. T., p. 821) or fellowships with God heeds the teachings of Christ's original apostles where he who is not of God does not heed the teachings of Christ's original apostles, 1 John 4:6a; Ibid., Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 898. By this test every believer can experientially know (*ginosko* again, Ibid., U. B. S. Grk. N. T.) the spirit of the [i. e., God's] truth and the spirit of the [i. e., Satan's] "error, deceit, deception" (*planes*, Ibid., Arndt & Gingrich, p. 671).

Lesson: *To handle the great spiritual deception that exists in the world, we must test every spirit (1) to see if it correctly confesses Christ's permanent Incarnation and (2) if it heeds the teachings of Christ's original apostles.*

Application: *May we test every spirit with these two tests to discern true from false spirits for our spiritual welfare.*