

# The Christian Arsenal

[www.christianarsenal.com](http://www.christianarsenal.com)

## 1 JOHN 4:1-6

I was talking with two other Sunday School teachers this past week - at separate times – and both commented to me that they thought **1 John** is very repetitive. Well, after I thought about it, I had to agree with them. The Apostle John has **three main points** and he just keeps coming back to them over and over and over...

John emphasizes **righteousness**,  
John emphasizes **love**,  
and John emphasizes **false teaching**.

There must be a reason that the Holy Spirit inspired John to be redundant...and I believe the reason is that we need certain things over and over and over in order for them to make an impact on our lives.

When you think about it...that's what teaching is...it's taking a fact that we've already heard or at least are already aware of and presenting it from different perspectives, but arriving at the same conclusion.

### **1 John 4:1-3...**

First of all, we need to remember that chapter divisions are not inspired. The passage we just read is simply a continuation of the thought from last week's lesson. Last week, we saw that our heart can be assured before God for several reasons...the last one being that the Holy Spirit abides within us.

...and here John tells us since we have the Holy Spirit living within us, then we have the ability to test or try the other spirits that would try to speak to us...

Now, let's see if we can understand who these spirits are that John is talking about.

John Calvin says we can translate the word "spirit" as "prophet". He said in every case where the word "spirit" is used we can translate it "prophet".

Well, according to Kenneth Wuest, a Greek scholar who has written a very good Greek exposition (even I can understand it)...this is not the literal translation of this passage, but Dr. Wuest does agree that it is in keeping with the thrust of these verses and will help us understand them better.

The reason is this...spirits speak through human beings. John is speaking here of men and women who are inspired by either **the Holy Spirit** or **an unholy spirit** to say what they say and do what they do.

In other words...these spirits in this passage were human beings actuated either by demons or the Holy Spirit. In this case, they would be the teachers, pastors and evangelists who circulated around the local churches of that day.

Think about it...most of what we say and do is inspired by the spirit of truth or the spirit of error. So...let's look at it again from the standpoint of "prophet" or "prophetic utterance." I believe it will help us understand this better.

"Beloved, do not believe every prophetic utterance, but try or test or prove or examine the prophets to see whether they are from God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

# The Christian Arsenal

[www.christianarsenal.com](http://www.christianarsenal.com)

By this you know the Spirit of God: every prophet that confesses Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God. And every prophet that does not confess Jesus is not from God and this is the prophet of the antichrist..."

One more thing...the word "try" means "to put to the test for the purpose of approving..."

So, with all that in mind, I want us to think this morning "How do we determine a false prophet from a true prophet? Or how do we determine a false preacher or teacher from a true preacher or teacher?"

There are all kinds of folks out there who want to teach you something...to get you to believe something...and God wants us to be able to discern the false from the true.

Things aren't always what they appear to be...ILLUSTRATION: Keith and the guinea pig...

Let's look at **five ways** we can discern whether a teacher or preacher is true or false:

## 1) Examine his doctrine...

**most importantly...what does he believe about Jesus.**

If a person is wrong about Jesus, you cannot trust him about anything else!

Jesus is not the **heart of Christianity**...Jesus is the **whole of Christianity**. Jesus is not **part** of the Christian faith...Jesus **is** the Christian faith.

Well, what should he believe about Jesus?

### a) Jesus Christ has come..."Christos"...the Anointed One...The Messiah

The Old Testament said He is coming! The New Testament says He has come and is coming again!

When my husband and I got back home from church this past Wednesday night, we caught some of Larry King. On the show that night was a panel of two Jewish rabbis, one Christian Jew, and a Southern Baptist professor from Southwestern Seminary.

The Jewish rabbis were up in arms because of the prayer guide that the Southern Baptists had put out encouraging us to pray for the Jews. So, of course, they were taking the two Christians, especially the Southern Baptist, to task for trying to make converts of folks who already have "religion."

And, of course, their main argument was the fact that Christ...the Messiah...has not come. They believe there was a man named Jesus who lived historically...but that He was not the Christ...the Anointed One...the Messiah.

And because of this...they want to be left alone. I thought Dr. Mohler did a good job...made a good argument for Christianity...but we both thought how great it would be if they had someone like an Adrian Rogers on there...

A second test we should give a teacher is does he teach that

### b) Jesus has come in the flesh

# The Christian Arsenal

[www.christianarsenal.com](http://www.christianarsenal.com)

A true teacher or preacher will confess readily that Jesus is the Christ and that He was born of a virgin and became a human being.

“is come”...perfect tense...past act with continuing results...

It means not only did Jesus become a man but He still is a man and will forever be a man. He is the God-man...the man, Christ Jesus.

## c) Jesus Christ died for our sins

Paul tells we have been bought with a price and the price is the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Peter tells us that false teachers will deny the Lord who bought them.

## d) Jesus Christ rose from the dead

**What is the Gospel? The Gospel is the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.**

Paul tells us 1 Corinthians that if Christ be not raised from the dead...we are of all folks most miserable.

## e) Jesus Christ is coming again

**Remember what the angels said to the disciples when Jesus ascended into heaven?**

“Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven.”

There are skeptics around today who scoff at this...they're not unique, there were skeptics back during the New Testament days who said,

“where is the promise of His coming, because since the fathers fell asleep people have been saying the Lord will come...”

Peter goes on to tell these folks that indeed God will keep His promise. Peter says a day with the Lord is as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day... In other words...it may seem like an awfully long time to us, but it's just a short time to God...and “the day of the Lord **will** come.”

So...a preacher or teacher must believe and preach and teach what the Bible teaches about Jesus...

that He has come...  
that He was virgin born...  
that He died for our sins...  
that He rose from the dead...  
that one day He will come again!

**And, let me say again...if a preacher isn't right about these things...you can't trust him about anything! Examine his doctrine!**

A second way you can determine a false prophet from a true prophet is

## 2) Examine his convictions...

verse 4-5...

If a preacher teaches a message that is accepted by the world, that should be a red flag...a flashing light...a warning bell...an alarm...It should tell us something is definitely **WRONG!!**

# The Christian Arsenal

[www.christianarsenal.com](http://www.christianarsenal.com)

**And, this is happening all over today. Within our own denomination, there have been churches that have endorsed homosexuality.**

Folks, Jesus said we must live **in the world** but we must not be **of the world**. And if lay people are held to this standard, preachers are held to a higher one. What else did Jesus say?

**“If the world hates you, you know it has hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love (you) its own.”**

The bottom line is this...if a preacher comes along and his message is not different from the message the world has to offer...if the world of lost folks embraces what he has to say because it agrees with what **they** have to say...**then his convictions are wrong...**

**A third thing...**

### **3) Examine his motive for ministry...**

Turn back a few pages to **2 Peter 2:2-3...**

If a man's (or woman's) motive for ministry is money...you better beware!

For the life of me I don't understand how people can take folks like Jan and Paul Crouch seriously...or Benny Hinn...and many others we could name. I mean, you really don't have to listen to some of these folks very long before you know their motive...I mean you really don't have to be a seminary professor, do you?

**Sadly...today we also have some so called preachers whose motives are also political...i.e. Jesse Jackson.**

**God has given us discernment...We're to try the spirits...test their doctrine...test their convictions, test their motives and**

### **4) Examine his converts...**

Jesus said we will know folks by their fruits. Look at the overall character of the people who come under the ministry of a man and more often than not, you'll discern if he is a true man of God.

For example...the folks who are caught up in the emotionalism movements...the laughing revivals, the “name it and claim it” ministries, the “health and wealth” teachings...

These folks aren't grounded in God's precious Word and they will be swayed by every wind of doctrine.

**But John tells us in verse 6...**

Those who truly know God and are interested in sound doctrine will be hungry to hear and learn from those who teach sound doctrine...and those who don't won't and it's as simple as that.

# The Christian Arsenal

[www.christianarsenal.com](http://www.christianarsenal.com)

Of course, the sad, sad thing is how many good folks are led astray by false teachers and preachers every single day. Dr. John Floyd said something one day that I'll always remember... "A really thirsty man will drink from any old well."

Well, there's one more thing before we leave the false prophet section of our lesson...

## 5) Examine his personal moral character...

### **Jude 4...**

The word "licentiousness" (NAS), "lasciviousness" (KJV) means **unbridled lust**. In other words, they use their ministry as an opportunity to sin, and in special view here is **sexual sin**.

Beloved, a person can look good and sound good, but if a man's or woman's personal moral character is not pure...is not above reproach...he or she is not of God.

James said..."Not many should be teachers because they incur a stricter judgment."

Well, these are five simple little ways we can examine to see if a man is a true or false teacher.

You know, it's hard to look at these men who are trying to get the nomination for the presidency, isn't it? Who in the world is the best man? **This** one claims to have all the right answers and **another** one speaks up and says, "Oh no...it's me, I have 'em all." **This** man is a great family man and **this** one we're not so sure about.

**This** man says, "Oh, I know everything about taxes and the economy, and **another** one says, "But, I know all there is to know about foreign policy."

It's tough...it's confusing...but, Beloved...I want to tell you it's not that tough to recognize false prophets.

Listen to what he says about Jesus.

Listen to his convictions...are they in line with this world or with God's Word.

Examine his motives...how much does he talk about money?

Examine his converts...are they grounded in sound doctrine?

Check out his personal moral character...

Ask the Holy Spirit for the discernment you need and you'll know...you'll know...

Well, let's look back at **verse 4** and see a few things and then we'll be through...

### **1) Someone is against us...**

Who is against us...or better...who **are** against us?

### **Ephesians 6:12...**

Folks, the devil doesn't run around with horns and a long tail dressed in a red union suit and carrying a pitchfork. Oh no...the devil is far more subtle than that.

The devil, Peter says, is like a roaring lion that prowls around seeking someone to devour. Paul says the devil disguises himself as an angel of light. He is **destructive** and he is **dangerous** and he is **deceptive**.

# The Christian Arsenal

[www.christianarsenal.com](http://www.christianarsenal.com)

He comes against us and he comes against our children and our grandchildren in various ways. And, he is not alone...he has minions of demons who do his bidding. We shouldn't see the devil or a demon behind every rock...but we should be very aware of his presence on this earth.

So, we know someone is against, but, also

## 2) Someone is for us...

In **Psalm 124**, David says that the Lord is on our side.

The other Sunday, Bro. Bob quoted that verse that says "If God be for us who can be against us?" and then, he said, "If God be for us who cares who's against us?"...

Isn't it a comforting thought to know that God is for us!! He demonstrates this in many ways...

He delivered us from the bondage of Satan. Before we were saved, the devil had a chain around our neck and when the devil pulled that chain, we jumped. But, God freed us from that bondage...He took the chain off our neck and He did it at Calvary. The blood of the Lord Jesus Christ broke the bonds the enemy had on you and me.

But after we're freed from Satan's bondage...the battle is still not over! So, the One who is in us **protects us from** and **directs us away** from the enemy who **still** seeks to devour us!

There's one more thing and we'll be through...

## 3) The One who is for us is greater than the one that is against us... verse 4... "Greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world."

The devil is mighty...but God is Almighty!!

The devil was defeated at the Cross, and one day he will be thrown into the lake of fire along with all his demons...

Now, why do you think John includes this here in this passage about false teachers? Let's read this in context...**verses 4-6...**

I believe John is saying,

"Folks, since you know Jesus, you're without excuse. There's absolutely no excuse for you to be led astray by false teachers.

You are indwelt by One who is greater than the enemy. You have been given the ability to discern and test and examine the spirits.

You're from God, not from the world. You live on a higher plane. You serve a greater Master. You have a better song to sing. You have a better message to hear and know and believe and share..."

Think about it...this is what John is telling these first century believers...and let me tell you something, Beloved, if all this was true for these folks who did not yet have the New Testament

# The Christian Arsenal

[www.christianarsenal.com](http://www.christianarsenal.com)

and did not have several copies of God's Word just laying around their home...how much more is it true for you and me!

Do not believe every teacher or preacher...

Examine them closely. Use this precious Book as your plumb line. Follow the leadership of the One who indwells you. He's greater than the one who would lead you astray.