



1 John 4:1-6

On Denying the Incarnation

¹Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. ²This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, ³but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world.

⁴You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. ⁵They are from the world and therefore speak from the viewpoint of the world, and the world listens to them. ⁶We are from God, and whoever knows God listens to us; but whoever is not from God does not listen to us. This is how we recognize the Spirit of truth and the spirit of falsehood.

Distinguishing what is True vs False

Read

Read 1 John 4:1-6 slowly, then ponder on the first verse and try to put yourself in John's shoes. One of the problems confronting the early churches was false teaching. John wrote the letter to help them guard against those who hold themselves out as teaching the truth. What lessons can we learn from these verses?

Think

Christians throughout the ages have seen and heard numerous versions of theoretical interpretations and teachings about God, all claiming to be true. It is, therefore, critical that believers can discern truth from falsehood, good from evil. All teachings have to be examined carefully to see if they are consistent with what God says in the Bible. The Bible is filled with warnings against false prophets (Dt 13:1-3, Mt 7:15) and their teachings (Ac 20:30, 1Ti 1:4-7). Christians must learn to discern, so that we won't be like "infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming." (Eph 4:14)

Except God's truth, Satan can use every ideology, philosophy and belief to confuse the world and lead them away from God. If believers cannot distinguish what is true versus false, not only is our faith compromised but also our ability to spread the Gospel. We have to steadfastly get to know the truth, guard the truth, and distinguish the truth from falsehood. If we hold on to sound teachings faithfully, we can teach others.

Pray

Thank the Lord for delivering us from the power of darkness to be with Him in His kingdom. Let us pray for wisdom and commitment to hold on to His words as a lamp to our feet and a light for our paths so we do not go astray in our pilgrimage. Let us study His words diligently, and ask the Holy Spirit to guide us so that we can understand His truth and be confident in our faith. Let us put on the full armor of God, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist and with the breastplate of righteousness in place. Let us also take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Let us resist Satan's trickery. Let us also ask God to grant us wisdom and words to proclaim the gospel courageously and clearly. (C.f., Eph 6:14-19)

Live

In the book of Hebrews, it says: "Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another - and all the more as you see the Day approaching." (Heb 10:25) We also need to be like the Bereans, "for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true." (Act 17:11) We need to practice God's teaching so that we can grow in faith and character and move beyond the elementary teachings about Christ and be taken forward to maturity (Heb 6:1).

- Let us attend Sunday worship regularly, pay attention to the teaching, study the Scriptures and practice what we learn.
- Let us participate in bible studies, learn from each other, love and support one and other in God's truth.
- Let us participate in the church's prayer meetings, by lifting up brothers and sisters in prayers.
- Spend time with God daily through solitude, prayers, meditation and studying of His words.