

1st John Chapter Four

Two Spirits in the Cosmos (vv. 1-6)

VERSE 1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether

they are from God (Ἀγαπητοί, μὴ παντὶ πνεύματι πιστεύετε ἀλλὰ δοκιμάζετε τὰ πνεύματα

εἰ ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐστίν, [*adj.voc.m.p. agapetos beloved, dear + neg me + adj.dat.nt.s. pas every +*

noun dat.nt.s. pneuma spirit + pres.act.imper.2p. pisteuo believe + conj. alla but +

pres.act.imper.2p. dokimazo test, examine + d.a.w/noun acc.nt.p. pneuma + part ei whether +

prep ek + d.a.w/noun abl.m.s. theos + pres.act.ind.3s. eimi], **because many false prophets**

have gone out into the world [ὅτι πολλοὶ ψευδοπροφήται ἐξεληλύθασιν εἰς τὸν κόσμον

[*conj. hoti because + adj.nom.m.p. polus many + noun nom.m.p. pseudoprophetes false prophet*

+ pf.act.ind.3p. exerchomai go out + prep. eis into + d.a.w/noun acc.m.s. kosmos]).

ANALYSIS: VERSE 1

1. John, as he has done previously in this epistle, warns his “beloved” saints to exercise extreme caution with respect to the things they might be exposed to in the cosmos (“For there are many rebellious men, empty talkers, especially those of the circumcision.”)
2. There were those individuals that were actively trying to deceive his recipients (1 Jn. 2:26 “These things I have written to you concerning those who are trying to deceive you.”).
3. Appeals to having the Holy Spirit are worthless unless we can objectively test the claims of men.
4. John’s opponents laid claim to spiritual inspiration.
5. There are two spirits actively operating in the cosmos, the spirit of truth and the spirit of error which comes our way (1 Jn. 4:6 “We are from God; he who knows God listens to us; he who is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.”).
6. Verses 1-6 are devoted to two spirits.
7. This is linked to 3:24 by the catch-word “spirit.”
8. John returns to a previous theme, that of antichrists with their false confession of Jesus Christ (1 Jn. 2:18).
9. The command “do not believe every spirit” is followed by the command to “test the spirits.”
10. “Spirit” here refers to individuals that we might come across.
11. There are all types of false teachers claiming to have spiritual insight.

12. The extreme approach is to believe all that one hears.
13. Many believers fall prey to something that sounds good or plausible.
14. Asserting something that is true, and the target is in full accord with, is a set-up for the false doctrine that follows.
15. We are to subject what we hear to a test.
16. We are to see if it lines up with the teachings we have learned under face-to-face teaching under right-pastor (in their case to John and his associates).
17. For the verb ‘to test/examine’ see Rom. 12:2; Phil. 1:10; and 1 Thess. 5:21.
18. Even at this early stage of the CA many false prophets/teachers had arisen (cf. Matt. 7:15; 24:11, 24; 2 Pet. 2:1).
19. Prayer, searching the Scriptures and listening to right pastor will protect you from the spirit of error.

Where to Begin (vv. 2-3)

VERSE 2 By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that

Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God (ἐν τούτῳ γινώσκετε τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ θεοῦ· πᾶν πνεῦμα ὃ ὁμολογεῖ Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν ἐν σαρκὶ ἐληλυθότα ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐστίν, [*prep en* + *pro.instr.nt.s. houtos this* + *pres.act.ind.2p. ginosko know* + *d.a.w/noun acc.nt.s. pneuma* + *d.a.w/noun gen.m.s. theos God* + *adj.nom.nt.s. pas* + *d.a.w/noun nom.nt.s. pneuma* + *rel.pro.nom.nt.s hos that* + *pres.act.ind.3s. homolego confess, acknowledge* + *noun acc.m.s. Jesus* + *noun acc.m.s. Christ* + *prep en* + *noun loc.f.s. sarx flesh* + *perf.act.part.acc.m.s. exerchomai come* + *prep ek* + *d.a.w/abl.m.s. theos* + *pres.act.ind.3s. eimi*]);

VERSE 3 and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God ([καὶ πᾶν

πνεῦμα ὃ μὴ ὁμολογεῖ τὸν Ἰησοῦν ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ οὐκ ἔστιν· [*conj kai* + *adj.nom.m.s. pas all*, *every* + *noun nom.m.s. pneuma* + *rel.pro.nom.nt.s. hos that* + *neg. me* + *pres.act.ind.3s. homologeio confess* + *d.a.w/noun acc.m.s. Jesus* + *prep ek* + *d.a.w/noun abl.m.s. theos* + *neg ouk* + *pres.act.ind.3s. eimi*];

this is the *spirit* of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world [καὶ τοῦτό ἐστιν τὸ τοῦ ἀντιχρίστου, ὃ ἀκηκόατε ὅτι

ἔρχεται, καὶ νῦν ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ ἐστὶν ἤδη [conj kai + pro.nom.nt.s. houtos this + pres.act.ind.3s. eimi + d.a.nom.nt.s "the spirit" + d.a.w/noun gen.m.s. antichristos + rel.pro.acc.nt.s hos which + pf.act.ind.2p. akouo hear + conj hoti that + pres.dep.ind.3s. erchomai + conj kai + adv. nun now + prep en + d.a.w/noun loc.m.s. kosmos + pres.act.ind.3s. eimi + adv. ede already]).

ANALYSIS: VERSES 2-3

1. This is where it begins in evaluating whether an individual is from God or not.
2. The test of spirits begins with the doctrines related to who and what Jesus Christ is.
3. The docetic and Gnostic tendencies of John's time denied doctrines associated with the 1st Advent.
4. The confession that Christ has come in the flesh must include: (1) the doctrine of the hypostatic union; (2) the necessity of the virgin birth to side-step the ISTA and spiritual death; (3) the fact that Jesus, though tempted, never committed so much as one sin; (4) bearing the sins of the world while on the cross; (4) His death, burial and resurrection; (5) His ascension and session; (6) His genealogical connection to King David; Rom. 1:3).
5. Only the genuine believer can make the confession since it is made by the Spirit of God (1 Cor. 12:3).
6. Peter made the good confession (Matt. 16:13-17).
7. The spirit of denial of some vital aspect of who and what Christ is, is not from God and is the antichrist syndrome.
8. With the advent of the CA this proliferation of antichrist types is rampant on the earth.
9. False teachers, false christs and false prophets are a sign of the end.
10. BD in the soul enables us to overcome the spirit of error, not just in regards to the Person of Christ, but all that is false and corrupt.

Believers are Overcomers (vv. 4-6)

VERSE 4 You are from God, little children, and have overcome them (ὁμοίως ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐστε, τεκνία, καὶ νενικήκατε αὐτούς, ὅτι μείζων ἐστὶν ὁ ἐν ὑμῖν ἢ ὁ ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ [*pro.nom.p. su + prep ek + d.a.w/noun abl.m.s. theos + pres.act.ind.2p. eimi + noun voc.m.p. teknia child + conj kai + pf.act.ind.2p. nikao overcome + pro.acc.m.p. autos*]); **because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world** [ὅτι μείζων ἐστὶν ὁ ἐν ὑμῖν ἢ ὁ ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ [*conj. hoti + compar.adv. meizon greater + pres.act.ind.3s. eimi + d.a.nom.m.s. ho “He” + prep en + pro.loc.p. su + conj. e than + d.a.nom.m.s. ho + prep en + d.a.w/loc.m.s. kosmos*]]).

VERSE 5 They are from the world; therefore they speak as from the world, and the world listens to them (αὐτοὶ ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου εἰσὶν, διὰ τοῦτο ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου λαλοῦσιν καὶ ὁ κόσμος αὐτῶν ἀκούει [*pro.nom.m.p. autos + prep ek + d.a.w/noun abl.m.s. kosmos + pres.act.ind.3p. eimi + prep dia therefore + pro.acc.nt.s. houtos “they” + prep ek + d.a.w/noun abl.m.s. kosmos + pres.act.ind.3p. laleo speak + conj kai + d.a.w/noun nom.m.s. kosmos + conj kai + d.a.w/noun nom.m.s. kosmos + pro.dat.m.p. autos “them” + pres.act.ind.3s. akouo hear; “listens”*]]).

VERSE 6 We are from God; he who knows God listens to us; he who is not from God does not listen to us. (ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐσμεν· ὁ γινώσκων τὸν θεὸν ἀκούει ἡμῶν, ὃς οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ οὐκ ἀκούει ἡμῶν. γινώσκομεν τὸ [*pro.nom.p. ego “We” + prep ek + d.a.w/noun abl.m.s. theos + pres.act.ind.1p. eimi + d.a.w/pres.act.part.nom.m.s. ginosko know + d.a.w/noun acc.m.s. theos + pres.act.ind.3s. akouo hear + pro.gen.p. ego + pro.nom.m.s. hos “he” + neg ouk + pres.act.ind.3s. eimi + prep ek + d.a.w/abl.m.s. theos + neg ouk + pres.act.ind.3s. akouo “listen” + pro.dat.p. ego*]]).

By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error (ἐκ τούτου γινώσκομεν τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς ἀληθείας καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς πλάνης ἐκ τούτου γινώσκομεν τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς ἀληθείας καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς πλάνης [*prep ek + pro.instr.nt.s. houtos “By this” + preps.act.ind.1p. ginosko know + d.a.w/noun acc.nt.s. pneuma spirit + d.a.w/noun gen.f.s. aletheia truth + conj kai + d.a.w/noun acc.nt.s. pneuma spirit + d.a.w/noun gen.f.s. plane error, deception*]).

ANALYSIS: VERSES 4-6

1. “You are from God” refers to the salvation adjustment based on faith in the One who has come in the flesh (cf. v. 2).
2. John once again assures his “children” in the faith that they are of God.
3. Their faith has overcome their opponents regardless of any other factor.
4. So however imposing and numerous the followers of the evil one are (2:13 & 14), they cannot negate the believers’ victory in the Angelic Conflict.
5. They may persecute, and even murder believers, but words (pen) and the sword cannot nullify our faith.
6. The new birth guarantees ultimate victory over the kosmos (1 Jn. 5:4).
7. We are secure in our salvation because “greater is He that is in you than he who is in the world.”
8. Of course, this refers to the indwelling Holy Spirit who is the active agent in regeneration and who permanently indwells each and every believer.
9. He keeps us secure (Eph. 4:30 “Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.”).
10. Negative volition will not listen to us as the kosmos is under the delusion of the evil one (v. 5a).
11. That is why everything that they say with regard to the truth is false.
12. The cosmos listens to its own and all that they assert is listened to by their own.
13. The cosmos speaks and the cosmos listens.
14. The cosmos takes its cues from Satan which denies the Person and work of Christ.
15. The cosmos at large listens to cosmic viewpoint on the meaning of life.
16. On the other hand, those who listen to us regarding the truth about Christ prove themselves to be of God.
17. That does not mean, of course, that all who are of God will listen to all that we who are genuinely positive have to say.
18. But at the very least those who have their source in God will confess Jesus Christ.
19. Those who take issue with us (personal and impersonal) prove themselves to be of the spirit of error.
20. John provides two tests to identify those who are false: (a). those who deny the incarnation; (b) those who will not listen to us.
21. Believers can turn away from the truth (2:19, 24; 2 Jn. 1:8-10).
22. The focus in these verses is the line drawn between the world that is hostile to the Gospel and those who confess Christ.