

1 John
(Lesson 11)

Introduction:

1. In this lesson we are concentrating on the information presented in 1 John 4:1-6.
2. As we study these verses we must remember that John wrote this letter to Christians who were being influenced by some people he identified as "*antichrists*" (2:18).
3. John mentioned their origin (2:19), and he warned against their influence (2:26).
4. The verses we are studying reveal additional instructions that relate to the "*antichrists*."

Discussion:

- I. JOHN WROTE THIS LETTER TO PEOPLE HE DEARLY LOVED
 - A. John referred to those who first read his letter as "*my little children*" (2:1a), "*brethren*" (2:7a), and "*beloved*" (4:1a).
 - B. John had strong feelings for the Christians who first received his letter.
 - C. John's love led him to address some unpleasant issues that existed.
- II. (vs.1) JOHN INSTRUCTED HIS FELLOW CHRISTIANS TO "*TRY THE SPIRITS*"
 - A. John identified the "*spirits*" he wrote about -- "*the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error*" (vs.6b).
 - B. Before John said, "*try the spirits,*" he first said, "*believe not every spirit.*"
 1. In other words, Christians must not accept blindly everything that is taught.
 2. Spirits must be "tried" [tested, proved] because:
 - a. there is a spirit that is from God -- "*the spirit of truth*"
 - b. there is a spirit that is not from God -- "*the spirit of error.*"
 - C. "Trying the spirits" was necessary because of the abundance of false prophets (vs.1b).
 - D. John originally wrote to Christians who had received "*an unction*" ["*anointing*"] (2:20, 27).
 1. Spiritual gifts existed in the early church (1 Corinthians 12:8-10).
 2. "*Discerning of spirits*" was one of the gifts.
 3. Christians who possessed this gift could determine whether spirits were of God.
 - E. Christians who did not possess this gift [including us] needed to follow the example of the Bereans (Acts 17:11).
- III. (vs.2-3) JOHN REVEALED THE BASIS FOR "TRYING THE SPIRITS"
 - A. (vs.2a) "*Hereby know ye the Spirit of God.*"
 1. (vs.2b) "*Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God.*"
 2. Teachers from God can be detected by what they teach.
 3. True teachers taught what John wrote about Christ in John 1:1-3, 14.
 - B. We are shown in vs.3 how the "*spirit of antichrist*" could be detected.
 1. "*Every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God.*"
 2. We learn from 2 John 9-11 how Christians are to react to such teachers.
- IV. (vs.4-6) GOD'S CHILDREN ARE DISTINGUISHED FROM CHILDREN OF THE WORLD
 - A. The children of God
 1. (vs.4) God's children have a special strength because of who is in them -- through God's strength, false teachers can be overcome.
 2. (vs.6a) God's children listen to those who teach the truth.
 - B. The children of the world
 1. (vs.5) Children of the world speak of the world, and the world hears them.
 2. (vs.6b) Children of the world do not listen to those who teach the truth.
- V. THESE ISSUES ARE ADDRESSED IN MANY PASSAGES
 - A. Matthew 7:15-20
 - B. Romans 16:17-18
 - C. Galatians 1:6-9
 - D. Titus 1:10-11
 - E. 2 Peter 2:1-3
 - F. Jude 4, 12-13, 16-19