

**I. Introduction and review: Many claim to speak for God.**

**II. Test those who claim to be inspired. v. 1-3**

- A. Do not be gullible. Examine the spirits. v. 1 Mt. 24:4 I Th. 5:21f Acts 17:11**
1. There is a certain kind of “unbelief” which is a mark of spiritual maturity.
  2. Every prophet (teacher) is the mouthpiece of some S(s)pirit. v. 6b John 8:44
  3. The presence of spiritual power does not prove someone is from God.  
Mt. 24:24 Acts 8:11 13:6 16:16 19:16 Ex. 7:22 8:7,18-19 II Cor. 11:14-15
  4. Many false prophets have gone out into the world. v. 3b Jer. 29:8 23:16-18,21  
I Ki. 22:22-24 Eze. 13:2f Mt. 24:5,11,24 I Tim. 4:1f II Pe. 2:1f Rev. 16:13 19:20
  5. Every Christian has the duty to examine those who claim to speak for God.
- B. The test of a prophet’s spiritual origin is his attitude towards Jesus Christ. v. 2-3 2:23  
II John 1:7 Mt. 16:15**
1. We are to evaluate spiritual claims based upon doctrine, not mere feelings.
  2. A true confession of Christ is not merely a verbal statement, but it is an inward, wholehearted commitment to Him. Rom. 10:9-10 I Co. 12:3 Mark 1:24 3:11 5:7-8
  3. What are the implications of this confession? John 1:14 I Tim. 2:5
    - a. Jesus is the long-awaited Messiah.
    - b. God the Son came from the Father. 1:1 Jo. 1:1 16:28 17:5 13:3
    - c. His divine nature and human nature are permanently united in One Person.
    - d. God the Son has taken on our human flesh to save His people. Heb. 2:14-15
  4. A true confession is only possible by the help of the Spirit. I Co. 12:3 Jo. 16:13-15
- C. The one who corrupts the truth about Christ is antichrist. v. 3 2:18f**
1. John is not diplomatic with those who distort the gospel. Gal. 1:8-9
  2. Christological heresy has deadly implications. Heb. 4:14-15
  3. Every Christological heresy has its origin in the early church.
- D. How should we test the spirits today?**
1. We too are engaged in raging Spiritual warfare. Eph. 6:10f
  2. There are false prophets making fantastic claims.
  3. Some claim their experiences validate their message. Doctrine tests experience.
  4. Many teachers are corrupting the doctrine of Christ. (Examples 2:18f)
  5. We are under intense pressure to conform to the pluralism of our day.
  6. Reject false teaching and false teachers. II John 1:9-11

**III. You can also test the hearers. v. 4-6**

- A. Because you are from God, you have overcome the false prophets (teachers). v. 4**
1. You are of the Holy Spirit. v. 1 2:29 II Pe. 1:4
  2. You have not succumbed to those who sought to lead you astray.
  3. You have conquered in God’s power. 2:13-14 5:4-5 Rom. 8:37
    - a. He who is in the world (Satan) is powerful. 5:19 John 14:30 16
    - b. Christ has overcome the ruler of this world. Mt. 12:28-29 Col. 2:15 John 12:31
    - c. The indwelling Holy Spirit is more powerful. 2:20,27 3:24 4:13 John 14:16-17
  4. Our spiritual security rests not in ourselves, but in God. Jer. 9:24 I Co. 1:31
- B. Because the false prophets are from the world, the world listens to them. v. 5 Jo. 8:23**
1. Their origin is worldly. 2:16 John 8:23

2. They speak the world's language. John 3:31 Col. 2:8
  3. The world likes what they hear. Luke 6:26 II Tim. 4:3-4
  4. The popularity of false prophets (teachers) is explained by the spiritual state of their hearers.
  5. The test of truth is not who is popular, but who is biblical. I Ki. 18,22 John 15:19
- C. Because the Apostles are from God, those who know God listen to them. v. 6a
1. "We" refers to the Apostolic testimony of Christ. 1:1f Acts 2:42 Eph. 2:20
  2. Whom you follow shows to whom you belong.
  3. God's sheep hear His voice. John 10:4-5,27
  4. Those who are not of God are repulsed by the faithful proclamation of Christ. I Co. 1:18 2:14 II Co. 2:15-17 John 8:47 Deut. 29:4
  5. Both the Word and the Spirit are necessary. I Co. 2:14 Acts 16:14 Jo. 6:44
- D. Application.
1. Where can you hear God's voice today?
  2. Are you devoted to the apostolic doctrine? Acts 2:42
  3. If you hear His voice, give Him thanks and glory! I Co. 12:3 I Co. 1:31

#### IV. Concluding applications: Test yourself. v. 6b

#### V. Appendix.

- A. What is a prophet?
1. A prophet declares the mind of God in the power of the Holy Spirit. Ex. 7:1-2 Num. 11:29 12:6-8 II Pe. 1:20-21 Dt. 18:18
  2. True prophecy comes with God's infallible authority. II Pe. 1:20-21 Dt. 18:19
  3. How is prophecy different from preaching and teaching? Eph. 3:3-5 I Co. 14:30 Prophets receive new revelation. Teachers expound revelation previously received.
  4. Prophets must meet a very high standard. Deut. 13:1-5 18:21-22 I Kings 22:28
    - a. Everything they predict must come to pass. Deut. 18:21-22 Jer. 28:9
    - b. All they say must be consistent with God's previous revelation. Dt. 13:1-5
  5. Prophets who did not meet God's standard were to be put to death.
- B. Why don't we have prophets today?
1. God's revelation in the New Testament Canon has been completed.
  2. The foundation has been laid. Eph. 2:20 Rev. 22:18 II Co. 12:12 Heb. 1:1-2 2:3-4
- C. One should be extremely cautious about claiming to be a prophet, or in any sense to have special revelation from God.

#### Discussion questions

1. What are the 'spirits' we are to test? v. 1
2. Why shouldn't we believe everyone who appears to have supernatural power? v. 1
3. What is the decisive test of someone who claims to speak for God? v. 2
 

Are there popular teachers of whom you are suspicious?
4. What does it mean to *confess* Jesus Christ? v. 2
5. Give examples of those who are of the antichrist? v. 3
6. In what sense have we overcome spiritual evil? v. 4
 

How did we do it?
7. Why are false teachers so popular? v. 5
8. Who in our day gains followers by speaking the language of the world? v. 5
9. To whose teaching do God's people listen? v. 6
10. Why don't those of the world receive the apostolic message?