1 John

An Exegetical Series

1 John 4:1-6: The Spirit of Truth and Error, Part 2: Confessing the True Christ

Summary of 1 John 4:1-3

- Christians are called to know the truth, test what is taught, and remain steadfast in Christ through the Spirit of truth. The Spirit teaches us to rightly understand and confess Jesus Christ, including His true humanity. Because Jesus came in the flesh as our second Adam and covenant head, His righteousness, atoning death, and bodily resurrection accomplish our full redemption.
- Therefore, spiritual discernment is not suspicion, but a faithful commitment to know Christ truly, confess Him faithfully, and remain in His truth through the Holy Spirit

Opening Questions

- What makes an idea or teaching seem trustworthy to you?
- Why can something that sounds good or even familiar sometimes be harder to recognize as wrong?
- What happens when we allow the culture around us to define what we think is reasonable, normal, or true?

You Have Overcome the Evil One

Resisting the Lies (1 john 4:4)

- **Pastoral Assurance:** John believes those who receive this letter, and have stayed in the church and remained in the truth, have done what is true and right!
- **Remember:** John can objectively say this—rather than it being a “subjective” opinion, as it were—because he knew Christ (**1 John 1:1-3**)
- **Overcoming** — refers to not giving into the lies about Jesus in the flesh but remaining in what they heard from the beginning

You Have Overcome the Evil One

Resisting the Lies (1 john 4:4)

- We live in Jesus' power by the Holy Spirit—Jesus said, in John 16:33:

"33 I have told you these things so that in me you may have peace. You will have suffering in this world. Be courageous! I have conquered the world."

➡ In other words, since Jesus overcame the world and has given us the Spirit, we are enabled to rightly understand who Jesus is and what he accomplished and remain in that truth!

You Have Overcome the Evil One

Resisting the Lies (1 john 4:4)

- The last part of v. 4 can be read, “Greater is the Spirit that is in you than the one in the world.”
- Here, John is tying us back to what he previously said in **1 John 4:2-3** “This is how we know the Spirit of God…” and “this is the Spirit of the Antichrist.”
- There is more to be said here—but for now, understand that the Spirit of God, affirming to us the truth, is greater than the spirit of the world trying to deceive us!

They Are of the World

A Distorted Gospel is Acceptable to the World (1 John 4:5)

- Very simply, those who do not profess Jesus “has come in the flesh,” is “of the world,” in that, they allow the **influences** of **worldly** religion and philosophy to sway their understanding of Christ rather than the Apostolic witness, the Word of God, or the Holy Spirit—Cf. **Colossians 2:3-4:**

“*In him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. I am saying this so that no one will deceive you with arguments that sound reasonable.*”

They Are of the World

A Distorted Gospel is Acceptable to the World (1 John 4:5)

- **Remember:** The denial of Jesus coming in the flesh dismantles the Gospel in terms of the scope of redemption:
  - Chiefly, such a denial distorts the very concept of redemption—Jesus came bodily, as a human, to redeem humanity; if we take that from Jesus' person, we take away the possibility of redemption altogether
  - There is a distortion of the scope of redemption in terms of what ***of*** us is redeemed—our whole self!

They Are of the World

A Distorted Gospel is Acceptable to the World (1 John 4:5)

- These “professing” Christians, whom John is labeled antichrists, speak a message of the Gospel that is ultimately not the Gospel but they dress it in language that “sounds” Christian—yet, it is a message only the world hears and accepts
- While we do not encounter docetism today, the same fundamental error is found whenever the humanity of Jesus is made irrelevant, merely “apparent,” or other!

Further Discernment of Who is Who

Seeing the Obvious (1 John 4:6)

- Immediately, we should see a connection from what we have read before—see **1 John 3:10:**

"This is how God's children and the devil's children become obvious. Whoever does not do what is right is not of God, especially the one who does not love his brother or sister."

➡ John expands "not of God" from the failure to love to also include a failure of right belief as a failure to rightly listen to the truth as delivered to them by God

Further Discernment of Who is Who

Seeing the Obvious (1 John 4:6)

- There is a duality of meaning to the word “we” (cf. 1 John 1:1, “…what ***we*** have heard…seen, touched”)—that is, the “we” includes John’s apostolic witness and the church he has written to
- Those who are “of God,” then, accept the witness of the Apostle and count his words as not only credible but as authoritative to the truth—those of the world do not ultimately accept this (1 Cor 2:10-16)

Fearless Proclamation

John’s Firm Stand (1 John 4:6)

- John unapologetically states that he, in essence, carries the word of truth by what he writes—this may seem arrogant for someone to say, but John is taking a firm stance!
- He believes what Jesus revealed, and as a witness to the testimony of Christ, who commissioned him by the authority of God (**Matt 28:18-20**), he makes the stance that those who listen to their words are truly of God—those who listen, hear, and profess faith in Christ (**Matt 13:9**)

Eschatological Connection

Looking back to 1 John 4:3b-4

“This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming; even now it is already in the world. You are from God, little children, and you have conquered them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world”

- **Revelation 13** (the Beast from the sea and earth)
- **Revelation 17** (the woman upon the beast, and the kings of the earth with her, and their coalition with the beast
- **Revelation 17:13-17** speaks into **1 John 4:3b-4**

Closing Questions

- What does it look like for you to actively “remain” in the truth about Christ rather than merely knowing that truth?
- How does knowing that “the One who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world” change the way you approach spiritual deception?

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