

Testing The Spirits (Part 1)

The Spirit of the Antichrist

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There are certain unexplainable things that happen in our lives everyday. Some of them are good, some of them are bad, and some of them that we are not sure of. Sometimes there are things that we find ourselves unable to believe. There seem to be no explanations for the destructive decisions our leaders are making with regard to our personal safety.

We have theories about why our national borders are monitored like Swiss cheese; why the United States government will run us through metal detectors, and our luggage through x-ray machines at airports, but they will stand and watch as millions of illegal aliens (many of which are hardened criminals and terrorists) run, even walk across both our northern and southern borders into the United States. We have few solutions as to why that is the case, although we have our theories.

This concerns us, and rightly so. For the United States government to so flagrantly ignore this major national security problem spells out conspiracy among the highest ranking members of the United States government. Sadly, this is no surprise when we take into consideration their self-serving character and Globalist worldview.

Their plans are extensive and their goal is to have only those of one spirit left alive as they attempt to depopulate the earth with war, abortion, euthanasia, manufactured viruses such as AIDS, West Nile, and bird flu, as well as many other designed diseases. This is not a spirit that, as a Christian, we would want any part of.

The conspiracy scenarios are innumerable and endless, and one could spend every waking moment researching and studying them. And we should not get caught up in them, to any great extent, other than to have a general knowledge that they exist.

The master conspirator is the ruler of this world. Satan has a simple plan to his conspiratorial nature and there is a simple reason for it. He is a rebellious liar and his goal is to deceive and destroy mankind. Satan's one spirit is a spirit of confusion. He has such catch phrases as: 'unity through diversity' which is his counterfeit to the make up of God's church—one body with many members. Satan's 'unity through diversity' however is in reality one spirit through chaos.

His one spirit has one main motivation and characteristic—it is antichrist! So Satan, the

master conspirator, is the master antichrist!

Recently, I received a sales catalog that really irritated me. It is called *One Spirit—Resources for the Spirit, Mind, and Body*. This catalog really irritated me. This is the prime example of what one spirit means to people in the world.

I just wanted to skip through some of the books that they offer.

"Phenomenon—Everything you need to know about the paranormal." The author sheds light on all things supernatural, ghosts, miracles, sorcery, and much more. She is under this category "one spirit designs." So, that one book covers several different spirits all of one source.

"Water Colored fairies."

"Birthdays, stars and numbers." This is interesting; this delightful book provides 366 comprehensive birthday forecasts. New morality in fixed star readings.

"Light on life." This is from a yoga master, and he is telling you that by aligning the five levels of being through breathing exercises and yoga postures we can live in harmony with the world around us.

"The secrets of Chinese astrology."

"The universe in a single atom—The convergence of science and spirituality." The write-up on here says, "his holiness, the Dalai Lama, explores how the relationship between science and spirituality can lead to happiness, joy, contentment and the alleviation of suffering for the individual and society as a whole." He is promising quite a package there.

"The book of secret." The secret is that the locked door is inside of you, but so is the key.

"Open to desire." This not only includes Buddhist teaching, where desire is often treated as the root of suffering, but the psychiatrist who wrote this, shows us how our yearnings can be teachers in their own right. I am still trying to figure out what all of that means.

The Dalai Lama has another book, "True enlightenment is nothing but the nature of ones own self being fully realized." I guess he has finally realized who he is.

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I want to take a little bit of time flipping through some of these because it really does show you what chaos is out there in this "One Spirit" magazine.

"Animal Wisdom and Animal Images." This says, "Learn to adapt the principles used by shamans. In 'Animal Wisdom' you will discover what your animal guides are telling you when they reveal themselves in dreams, or in the day to day world around us."

"Animal Messages" shows you how to seek their advice.

"Let One Spirit Be Your Guide," and under that one spirit they have the "Spirit book." Over five hundred entries on Spiritualism. Topics include Channeling, ESP, Divination Methods, Useful Objects, Astrology.

"1001 Meditations" offers wisdom from a vast range of sources, Buddha, da Vinci, and others. I guess they could add anybody they wanted under this.

This at first disturbed me, but then I felt good about it. This is a short page, there are only four books at the bottom of it and this is their offering having to do with Christ and Christianity.

"The Woman with the Alabaster jar, Mary Magdalene and the Holy Grail." That book is on feminine principles in Christianity.

"The Laughing Jesus." This is an insightful look at literalism in Judaism, Islam and Christianity.

"Kabbalah - 365 Days."

"The Gospel of Mary Magdalene." This is Mary Magdalene's Gnostic gospel for biblical scholarship.

So, that is their entire offering about Christianity. At first, I thought, that they had not bothered to put Christ in there. But, then I was pleased, because this right here shows that this "one spirit" is the opposite to the "one spirit" that we want to be part of.

Going on with a few more:

"The Watkins Dictionary of Magic."

"The Spells Bible."

"Gods and Goddesses."

"Vampires, Werewolves and Monsters."

"Goddesses and Angels." Virtue provides the wisdom to unlock the magical healing gifts within ourselves.

We see there that this is their version of one spirit—it is a whole lot of chaotic demons that are supplying this knowledge and this information. This nation has come to a point where it cannot recognize the true Spirit of God, if it ever really did.

This company's product catalog is called "One Spirit," yet it reveals many different beliefs, many different sub-spirits—it has 'unity in diversity' as Satan's lie goes; they just agree to disagree.

Satan's one spirit has one core motivation and characteristic—it is antichrist! Since he is the master conspirator we must be aware that he is sending out his 'agreeing to disagree demons' to confuse the world and accuse the elect of God—the individual members of God's church.

In this world there appears to be no truth without its counterfeit, no religion without hypocrites, no gold without tinsel, and no good wheat of God unmixed with tares. Christ is mimicked by antichrists and impersonated by Satan. In fact, the more religiously active a society is, the more numerous and diverse is its search for spirituality. So, now we see in this nation a nation that is lost and searching and finding any number of spirits to receive guidance from.

It is amazing to see the ease with which many religious minded people fall into the tangled web of spiritualism. They do not realize they are witnessing manifestations from another world, and they are too quick to bow to them as revelation from God, without considering important qualities such as: their intrinsic character, their moral worth, and their agreement with scripture and established truth.

The apostle Paul had to deal with a similar opposition at Corinth, with spiritual and prophetic heresies from people who disregarded his teaching of the truth. And he speaks, in I Corinthians 12:10, of 'discerning of spirits,' the power to distinguish genuine from counterfeit inspiration, as a spiritual gift given to certain members of the church.

The apostle John denounces those who, through false doctrine in their deceived state, try to deceive others. He sees in them more than just a worldly spirit, he sees a spirit

whose origin is demonic and antichrist.

In view of that in I John 4, he puts them through a theological examination using for their touchstone the question of whether they "confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh."

John's theme in his first epistle is the possibility of having joy while living in this world. This is a joy that comes from God. In spite of circumstances and conditions we find ourselves, John made that perfectly clear in I John 1:4: "These things we write to you that your joy may be full."

He writes to the members of God's church in a very difficult and contradictory world. He writes to us to say that although "the whole world lies in wickedness," nevertheless it is possible for us to have a joy, a fullness of joy, in spite of it all.

I John 4:1-6 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world. You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. They are of the world. Therefore they speak as of the world, and the world hears them. We are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

There, in verse one, he says "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits whether they are of God". This is a very important piece of advice, especially in the world that we live in today. But, it goes further than that, because all of those wrong spirits are not out there in the world. Sometimes they are in the Church of God.

Just as some people do today, a person during John's time could delude himself into a skewed mindset in which he sincerely thought that he had a direct message by the Spirit from God.

It has not been uncommon in the church for some people to believe that God is revealing new truth exclusively through them. In every case I have seen people with such a belief, whether a member of God's church or not, pride has been the underlying

and motivating factor.

It is in the pressure from such presumptuous people that John lays out the criteria for judging and discerning between the true and the false. "Beloved, do not believe every spirit [*pneumatī*], but test [*dokimazete*] the spirits [*pneumata*], whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world."

Let us look at the implication of the words spirit and spirits here in verse one: Spirit, here, is translated from the Greek word *pneumatī*, it has several possible uses: current of air, wind or breath; the spirit of man; good or bad angels; or the Holy Spirit.

If the word spirit is used here with the meaning spirit of man, then spirit refers to the seat or source of man's insight, feeling, and will. So, the spirit of those who serve God is connected with, or inspired by, God's Spirit. At the same time a person's spirit represents that person himself.

In this sense, the first part of verse one could be translated: "*Beloved, do not believe everyone, but examine thoroughly whether it is God's Spirit that inspires them.*" Now let us look at the implication of the word test here in verse one.

The Greek word *dokimazete* means to test, to approve. The KJV translates the Greek word into allow, discern, examine, and try. But, this word try, is not in the way of tasting or experiencing, but in the way of testing the purity of metal.

Testing the spirits requires the same amount of effort as that of examining the scriptures. The Bible tells us certain things that we need to do to learn the Bible itself, and it is a wonderful thing that it gives us such instructions to guide us.

In John 5:39 Jesus Christ said, "Search the scriptures." That word search means to examine very thoroughly and to investigate; it implies a good deal of diligence and effort in finding the truth that is there.

In the audience that was there with Jesus, there were Jews who were no doubt proud of their knowledge of scripture. They had indeed searched the Scriptures, but they had antagonism, spiritually speaking. They were selective in what they were seeing in scripture. They were seeing certain things and were refusing to see other things. They were picking *a la carte* out of scripture what they wanted to follow.

Christ reminded them that the scriptures testified of Him. They had shut off that part of scripture. It was not penetrating them at all. They did not come to scripture to learn what

was there; they came to confirm what they desired to see and what would give support to what they already believed.

Sometimes, people do the same thing when they listen to the complaints and gripes and accusations of others. We have that problem in the church.

There always seems to be an undercurrent of complaining by a small dissatisfied group of people within the church. They always manage to find one another; it must be a common spirit. I have seen it for more than thirty years now; and it certainly exists today.

I Corinthians 11:17-19 Now in giving these instructions I do not praise you, since you come together not for the better but for the worse. For first of all, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you, and in part I believe it. For there must also be factions among you, that those who are approved may be recognized among you.

Knowing human nature, Paul assumed such divisions are inevitable even among Christians so that those who act worthy of God's approval can be made evident. It is important that it eventually become clear exactly who are the elect of God—so that the individual member can verify in his own mind that he is indeed being prepared for God's Kingdom, and to produce a true witness of God's way of life.

Those who test the spirits can avoid the antichrist spirit which is aggressive and haughty, while at the same time they can confirm their own steadfastness with the church. One of the most magnificent things about scripture is its extraordinary stability and steadiness, as we see in I John 4:

John 4:1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God....

That is foundational advice, and advice that we have to use and apply. It is not that we go out looking for the spirits to test, but when someone comes to us with the wrong attitude, or false doctrine or heresy, then we know to test the spirits. But too often in the church, there are too many gullible people who will just immediately believe the accusations and the false doctrines and heresies that people come up with. We are commanded to test those spirits to see if they truly are of God before believing them. A bad attitude is a wrong spirit and a spirit that needs to be tested as well.

If the members of the church were always careful to observe this perfection of stable and steady statements, then much of the controversy by which we are constantly aggravated, and certainly much of the bitterness, would be avoided.

But the trouble with us, as the result of sin, is that we always seem to tend to extremes. We tend to go from one extreme to the other instead of maintaining the position of scriptural stability and steadiness.

That seems to be the tendency of mankind, and maybe it has never manifested itself more than concerning the subject of the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in a Christian's calling and inspiration.

II Timothy 1:7 For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.

So if someone is coming to us with an unsound mind, with some heresy or accusation against the ministry or one another, then we know that this is not a spirit associated with God.

This is discipline, this is self-control, this is self-government, this is stability! The person who has the Holy Spirit is the person who always manifests stability and steadiness.

In Ephesians 5:18, the apostle Paul said, "do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit". There is power and stability, but no excess when filled with the Spirit of God. Paul told the Corinthians to speak one at a time—let all things be done in order.

I Corinthians 14:33 For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.

The Spirit that comes from God is a spirit of order, not disorder or confusion as we saw in that magazine of the "One Spirit," which was disorder and chaos.

Doctrine and love are both required; as are inspiration and power, intellect and mind—the whole person is involved and functions as this perfectly stable body with no schism, with no rivalry and competition if it can apply the full complete teaching of the doctrine of the scripture.

We have to make sure that it is the Spirit of God guiding us, and not some false, evil spirit telling us what we want to hear.

More specifically, there seems to be a constant problem with the respective places of inspiration and doctrine in a Christian's life. That is, how do inspiration, doctrine, and the Holy Spirit relate with one another?

The trouble has generally been due to the fact that people have emphasized either inspiration or doctrine at the expense of the other. In reality, they have often been guilty, and still are, of putting up as contrasts things that clearly are meant to be complementary. This is something that has been happening in the church almost from the very beginning.

This is something that could be dealt with very easily from the historical standpoint. In short, the problem is this tendency to oscillate between two extreme positions instead of combining the two.

There are those who tend to emphasize the influence of the Spirit over that of doctrine. They emphasize inspiration at the expense of doctrine and truth.

Those who lean more toward inspiration rather than scriptural doctrine, claim that the ministry should not spend time defining doctrine. They think that the church beliefs are only something alive and living if it emphasizes inspiration.

But, then there are people on the other hand who say, "Yes, that is all fine, but what the scripture really says..." then they proceed to explain only the letter of the law because they do not understand the spirit of the law; and so they leave no room for inspiration. So, we have the two extremes.

When the whole emphasis is placed on one or the other, there is a tendency to fanaticism and excesses or a tendency toward intellectualism and a dead, mechanical kind of attitude or religion. We have seen both come out of the Church of God as well as the Worldwide Church of God, where people go to the extremes and are led away by the wrong spirit because they did not test the spirits.

It is the result of putting the whole emphasis on one or the other about which the apostle Paul was contending with the church at Corinth—the whole idea of identifying the complete body. They tended to think of the independent and separate parts, instead of realizing this stability that is always a great characteristic of God's way of life.

It was exactly what the apostle John was writing about in this epistle of I John. There were certain people who claimed unusual authority from God, who claimed to have the Spirit in an unusual and special way.

In reality, it was the precursor to Gnosticism and Docetism. They were impatient with definition and doctrine. They wanted to promote their professed inspiration from God.

The great fight for the faith that was fought in the first century was against the support of apostolic teaching and authority. There was a tendency to talk against those who supported the authority in the Church.

They justified their rebellious attitudes by saying that they were every bit as inspired as the ministry in the Church of God. And, they proclaimed themselves to be recipients of the Holy Spirit, but their words, attitudes and actions showed very clearly, to those who tested the spirits, that they were of another spirit. Any spirit that is not of God is anti-God—antichrist!

We see this same thing among the congregations of the Church of God today. It seems that on a regular basis people attend with us who think God is communicating directly with them to reveal "new truths" to them. It is amazing how these "new truths" that people come up with are just repackaged old heresies that the church has had to contend with for 2,000 years, over and over again.

Some of the repackaged lies called "new truths" that have cycled through the church are such things as: Christ is a created being; God wants us to use a different calendar than the Hebrew Calendar (although no one has been able to decide on one that will work; the fact is that it has been fine with God that His church use the Hebrew calendar for thousands of years). It is another spirit that is dissatisfied with it; it is an anti-Christ spirit.

The true scriptural position is the stance that is stable in Spirit and doctrine, inspiration and definition. It is not a matter of either/or; it is both. But, it has to be based on the two great commandments upon which all of the Law and the Prophets stand.

Jesus came to magnify those two great laws and by His example we have a duty to emulate the example of Jesus Christ.

Matthew 22:34-40 But when the Pharisees heard that He had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. Then one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, and saying, Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said to him, 'You shall love the LOORD your

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God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.

One of the most severe problems facing the greater church of God today is this tendency of people associated with the church to go to the extremes.

They seem to be unconcerned about some very important things, and because of their lack of interest in doctrine, their one idea is to establish a great worldwide work almost without any doctrine at all.

There have been religious movements concerned purely with doctrine spending most of its time teaching it, but in this there is a tendency to intellectualism, a concern about truth in the abstract, about definitions and ideas, and to stopping at that. So, because people are unbalanced, in general, they do tend to extremes and we must make sure that we test the spirits to make sure that what someone is telling us is not to the extreme. If a person is not following both of these Two Great Commandments then we know that their spirit is another spirit.

And then there is another movement, and there is always this opposite movement. There is a great tendency on the part of many to stress only the inspirational side—to talk extensively only about gifts of the Spirit.

The point here is that those who really are concerned about their religious beliefs are still tending to take up one or the other of these positions. Either they go way too far to definitions, or they go way too far to the inspiration and experience side.

The ministry of God's church finds itself fighting on two fronts. We are obviously critical of both pure intellectualism and of a dead mechanical church that lacks any life. We cannot only be concerned with mere theoretical belief. The gospel of Jesus Christ is a life-giving dynamic way of life. So, we have to experience and apply what we hear in our lives. To only listen to doctrine and agree, is not enough, we have to apply it in our lives. We know that faith without works is a dead faith.

On the one hand, we are here to say, "By this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit [that] He has given us." And on the other hand we say, "Do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God." By taking these two scriptures together we find ourselves with a stable teaching with a scriptural approach.

The ministry of God has always had its critics, partly because we seem to some of our accusers to be opposing everything, and so we receive criticism from all sides. More often than not, the accusers are lacking in a true understanding of scripture, and so are speaking from ignorance.

So, we are criticized for being too emotional by one side, and by the other side charged with being an intellectual, two opposite criticisms, but we receive both.

The position of Holy Scripture, as I am trying to show you, is one that is facing two extremes; the Spirit is essential, and inspiration is vital. However, truth and definition and doctrine and principles are equally vital and essential. Inspiration, or experience, must be based on truth and doctrine.

Now let us look at this in detail as it is presented to us by the apostle John. We are commanded to test and try the spirits.

I John 4:1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God.

There are some people who object to this process of testing. Often, they complain about how God is treating them, but not exactly in those words—more subtly. In the case of some people, it is nothing but slackness, idleness, and laziness—a desire for ease. They do not want to bother to make the effort to apply the scripture.

Some seem to dislike the whole idea of definitions and examining and testing; they just want to go on as they have always done. There is no excuse for such an attitude, because it is an attitude of laziness.

Then there are others who seem to object to this process of testing because they are what we might call "anti-theological." It is amazing how many people, who claim the name of Christian, are actively opposed to doctrine.

It is amazing how many people flat out dislike it, and say, "What is so important about doctrine?" They continue, "The most important thing is that we have love for one another." That is a true statement, but it is meaningless without definition, or without true doctrine, to define it.

It is our duty to understand the truth we claim to believe, in doing so we may be able to state and express it in such a way that God can use it for the benefit of others. But,

there are those who feel that this whole process of testing the spirits is something worthless.

In their way of thinking, the "spiritual" person is one who lives with his head in the clouds and must never come down to earth on matters of definition and doctrine. The moment we begin to discuss and consider and explain and define, these people claim that we cease to be a purely spiritual, because they believe that a spiritual person works directly from inspiration. We have had people that have said those things in the Church of the Great God, in our distant past.

Those who think of themselves as very spiritual believe that they should not be bothering with these technical matters of definition.

Many people judge a minister by how he moves them emotionally. The Pentecostal movement is a prime example of this pep-rally approach. People leave after a sermon feeling high on religion. That is just what they have—a rush, just like a drug that they feel high on.

Many people seem to love to have their emotions jerked up and down and from side to side. But, when it comes to doctrine, and definition, they see no value in it because their emotions are not being titillated by doctrine and definition.

The problem with this approach to preaching is that people expect increased excitement for their senses the next time. They may be moved emotionally by one week's sermon, but when they come back the next week, they feel let down because the minister did not excite them emotionally like he did before.

We see this same problem in the media. The television news programs, newspapers and news magazines believe that they have to sensationalize because of what the average person expects from entertainment today. The journalist Bill Moyers put it this way regarding entertainment and news:

Once you decide to titillate instead of illuminate, you create a climate of expectation that requires a higher and higher level of intensity.

Of course, what he is saying is that if you do not continue to outdo yourself, in the way of excitement and emotion, then you end up becoming boring, more and more and more. So, if the person goes to a Pentecostal church to be uplifted, raised and emotionally stirred, and if then they are not emotionally stirred then they feel let down

and depressed. We should not be that way. We should be stable and be able to learn from scripture in many different ways and from different perspectives.

We have to test the spirits because scripture commands and exhorts us to do so. As John said, "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God;" This is a commandment, and we have no right to shrug it off. Not only that, but scripture tells us why we should do this: "because many false prophets have gone out into the world."

We have to test the spirits because they are everywhere around the world and have definitely infiltrated the Church of God. We are all very familiar with what the apostle Paul warned in Ephesians 6:

Ephesians 6:12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

Even though we read this passage on a regular basis, I do not think that we realize the full extent of its message. There are false prophets; there are evil spirits; there is a devil who is so clever and subtle that he can transform himself into an angel of light. This angel of light, who by this very description, at first glance, resembles God's teachings, cannot be distinguished from the real thing by the undiscerning person.

And, if it were possible, he could even deceive the elect of God. But, why can he not? What stops him from deceiving us? It is nothing physical. It is the Holy Spirit—the mind of God in us that we must draw from to be able to discern the pseudo angel of light—the unclean spirit of deception. We have to ask God to help us to not be deceived, and to be able to test the spirits and be discerning.

II Corinthians 11:13-15 For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.

So, we see here, that it is extremely important to test the spirits and to apply the full measure of the Spirit of God and to apply the whole of the scripture to be able to determine the spirits.

If, upon our calling and subsequent conversion leading to salvation, we were only dealing with the Holy Spirit of God, there would be no need to test the spirits, but the very name "Holy Spirit" suggests that there are other spirits, unclean spirits, rebellious spirits, and they are demonic spirits.

Another reason for testing the spirits is the evidence provided by the long history of the church, of the havoc that had often been inflicted on the church because people would not try and test the spirits—because they said, "I have been so blessed and have grown so much, therefore I must be right."

But take one look at the history of the church, and we must conclude that physical blessings, and the appearance of righteousness, are not indications of either true conversion or discernment of spirits. This is one of the important reasons why true doctrine, diligent examination, and right application of the scriptures are so very important.

Acts 17:10-12 Then the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea. When they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so. Therefore many of them believed, and also not a few of the Greeks, prominent women as well as men.

Even though they were hearing the holy Scriptures of God, teachings of the apostles, they still searched the scriptures to find out if what they were being told was true. We are to test all spirits, as it says in I John 4:1.

What we are concerned about is not a matter only of sincerity and honesty—we are concerned about truth and error. Truth and error is something that has to be defined. We are sanctified by the truth. Truth separates us from other religions, even from mainstream "Christian" churches. We are very familiar with the scripture that says, "You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free."

Sunday keeping churches, no matter how Christian they claim to be, are of a different spirit. Christ kept the seventh day Sabbath; they do not! They are antichrist! They are not being truthful to their members.

It is impossible for a Sunday keeping church to be Christ's. He cannot lead those who are rebellious. He cannot lead those who are of a different spirit—just as God could not

lead Satan and the rebellious angels who followed him. But I understand that occasionally, some in the church watch the Sunday preachers, and apparently think that they are getting something valuable from that. Well you are listening to another spirit, and you are putting yourself in a very dangerous situation.

John 17:15-19 I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth.

Let me ask another very important question. Is testing the spirits something only for ministers and church leaders? No, it is for every last one of us.

I John 4:1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

"Beloved..." The apostle John is writing to the average member, "Do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits." Later, in verse 4 he says, "You are of God, little children," and I am sure that he used the expression "little children" deliberately, *"you, the ordinary church members—little children—hear us because you are of the truth."*

It is our duty and responsibility to try, examine, and test the spirits. God gives us the power to do so. "He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world," as verse 4 says. We have been given this capacity by God, through the Holy Spirit; the Spirit dwells in us, and therefore we have this power of discrimination, understanding and discernment. The apostle Paul tells us this, at great length, in I Corinthians:

I Corinthians 2:10-14 But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually

discerned.

This is why sometimes within the church there are individuals who try to push their heresies on us. Their spirit is one that has to be tested. There are tests that are dangerous if we rely only on them. Let us look at how this testing should not be done.

1) It would be wrong for us to try to determine who has the Holy Spirit by looking for all the gifts of the Spirit to be present in all who have the Holy Spirit. An obvious example is the gift of tongues.

I am sure that you recall that the apostle Paul asks the question in I Corinthians 12:30: "Do all speak tongues?" The whole chapter is designed to show that the gifts are distributed by Jesus Christ, Himself. He may or may not give these gifts, and the manifestation of gifts is not an essential proof of the possession of the Holy Spirit.

But, do not confuse the gifts of the Spirit with the fruit of the Spirit which everyone who has the Holy Spirit must be producing—love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

So the producing of spiritual fruit is actually a very good way to discern spirits. "You will know them by their fruits."

Matthew 7:15-23 Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore by their fruits you will know them. Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'

Matthew 12:33 Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or else make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for a tree is known by its fruit.

Luke 6:43-46 For a good tree does not bear bad fruit, nor does a bad tree

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bear good fruit. For every tree is known by its own fruit. For men do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they gather grapes from a bramble bush. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks. But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do the things which I say?

Those who keep Sunday as a day of rest are outside of the law because the law of God says the seventh day is the Sabbath, therefore they are spiritual outlaws.

Since breaking one of the Ten Commandments makes us a breaker of all the Commandments, then those who refuse to keep the seventh day that God established at the end of Creation Week are lawless. God says He never knew them!

Do not be fooled by the spirit of the antichrist that took many of our friends and acquaintances into Sunday worship! Since you are here, worshipping on the seventh day, you must not have believed every spirit, but tested the spirits as John instructed. We cannot stop at the obvious when we test the spirits. The more subtle spirits that work on attitudes are just as dangerous.

God looks at the fruit produced by people to test them, to read their true intentions and loyalties.

Jeremiah 17:10 I, the LOORD, search the heart, I test the mind, even to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings.

2) A very dangerous way of testing or examining the claim to having the Spirit is to judge in terms of phenomena, as in the appearance of the gift of healing, or the specific physical result of a man's ministry.

People look at a man's physical accomplishments or the appearance of impressive works and say, "This man must be right. Look at the results he has had."

On a physical level, we see this to a great extent in the pharmaceutical and the natural health industries—where there is the appearance of a cure; but given enough time many "cures" may have little or no effect on the disease, or harmful side effects found out only with long-term use. Just as we have to search, really investigate and research, what we are about to put in our mouths in the way of a health aid, we also have to test

the spirits as well.

The test of phenomena, taken alone, is an extremely dangerous one because evil spirits can work miracles through people (similarly to the way some drugs appear to).

Matthew 24:23-24 Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There!' do not believe it. For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.

These great signs and wonders may not always be as obvious as we think that they will be if they are able to deceive.

II Thessalonians 2:9-10 The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

Part of that love of the truth is that they could not withstand listening to doctrine—what the scripture really says. When the scripture says, "no man has ascended into heaven," they actually ought to believe it.

3) The same caution applies to fervor and passion and zeal. The fact that people are full of zeal does not imply that they have the Holy Spirit. Evil spirits are often very fervent.

Great excitement is not proof of the Spirit; great energy is not a proof of the Spirit; a lot of assurance or confidence is not a proof of the Spirit. It never ceases to amaze me how, year after year, people are deceived by this enthusiasm that flows from a person who is enticing them with some false doctrine or false belief.

Romans 10:2-3 For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God.

Often the only tests taken are that a man speaks with confidence and assurance, and that he is energetic. The flesh can hide false feelings and present them as something good, so to use that as a test is extremely dangerous and even foolish.

4) Caution is important likewise with the test of inspiration and experience. People may come and say they have had visions; that they had extraordinary dreams. They may say that strange things have happened to them; that they have had unusual guidance, astonishing answers to prayer.

I have heard people say, "I prayed and this happened." Some tend to say, as a result, that this person must have the Holy Spirit. I heard one woman say, repeatedly, "My prayers always get answered". Also she said, "When I get anointed God always heals me right away." This woman actually said this to me. She is no longer with us.

Such inspirations and experiences can be counterfeited by the lying adversary and often have been; inspirations have come and do come to us, but do not rely on them. Do not put up the test of inspiration as the sole test, it must be weighed against the scripture. The spirit must be tested.

Notice how God Himself tests us to see if we will rightly test the spirits.

Deuteronomy 13:1-5 If there arises among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams, and he gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder comes to pass, of which he spoke to you, saying, 'Let us go after other gods'—which you have not known—and let us serve them,' you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams, for the LORD your God is testing you to know whether you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. You shall walk after the LORD your God and fear Him, and keep His commandments and obey His voice, and you shall serve Him and hold fast to Him. But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has spoken in order to turn you away from the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of bondage, to entice you from the way in which the LORD your God commanded you to walk. So you shall put away the evil from your midst.

In verse 3, Moses spells out the reason why God tests us. God wants to know if we genuinely love Him with our whole being. Moses also states, clearly, why that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams, is trying to persuade us—"to turn you away from the Lord," and "to entice you away from the way,"—the way of God, the way that you have been commanded to walk. We are very clearly commanded not to listen to these individuals who are accusers of the brethren and the ministry, and who will not speak biblically from scripture.

Moses states it twice in two slightly different wordings to emphasize that teachers with a wrong spirit have one purpose in mind—to draw you away from the way that God has commanded you to live. Most often, these people, with an antichrist spirit, do not even know they are being used as an instrument of Satan. If any of us suspect that we may be being used in such a way, or if we have a bad attitude, we had better hit our knees, and ask God to show us if we have that wrong spirit. If we are genuine about it, He will show us.

What are true tests for discerning the spirits?

1) The first, and the most important test, is a right understanding and conformity to scriptural teaching. Do not be fooled by those who overwhelm you with their spiritual sounding discourses.

John 5:38-40 But you do not have His word abiding in you, because whom He sent, Him you do not believe. You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life.

Everything that we believe about Jesus Christ must be put up to the test of scripture. John said only those who know God, and are of Him, will listen to what Jesus and the apostles have to say. What happens many times to individuals coming out of the world from a worldly church that calls itself Christian is they bring many heresies with them. They have a vision of Christ that is not accurate, it is not right. Weigh that against the scriptures, not against your previous beliefs and what you feel comfortable with.

Only those who are called, and have received the Holy Spirit will truly listen to what scripture has to say. By listen, I mean internalize it, and apply it, and as a result, bear spiritual fruit. When God is calling a person, before they receive the Holy Spirit, He does help them to get to a point where they can have the faith and desire for repentance.

I John 4:6 We are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

The first thing to ask about someone who claims to be filled with the Spirit and who claims to teach truth is, does his teaching conform to scripture?

Does what he says agree with God's law and His prophets and with Jesus Christ and the apostles? By the term 'teacher' I am not only talking about the ministry, I am referring to anyone who explains or interprets biblical information. Even in the course of conversation, we have to test the spirits. Whether a person's explanations conform to scriptural teaching is a very reliable and effective test of the spirits.

2) The next true test examines for a necessary characteristic of every true Christian, especially of a true minister of God—a readiness to listen to scriptural teaching and to abide by it. Not just to speak from scripture, but to be willing to apply it.

Is the teacher personally willing to submit to the inspired written word of God? This is a very telling test of the spirits. If someone is presumptuous and prideful, he will believe he is above and beyond the confines of scripture, but he will never admit it openly. We need to ask, does he live his own life according to scripture? Sometimes ministers do not. I knew several ministers, in Worldwide, who preached from the scriptures, but they did not live their lives by them. I know of at least one who ended up in prison for a business that he went into after being a minister. Another was rebellious and actually stole tithes from the brethren to start his own church. These were major names in the Worldwide Church of God. Another minister was running drugs across the Mexican border using the Y.O.U.!

You will find that the spirit of error would rather shrug off scriptural teaching. They may say, "I agree but that is just too legalistic, we must have love." That is probably one of the most common comments that you hear, not necessarily in those words, but in that vein. They do not have a clue what love is because they have not defined it or had it defined to them.

The wrong spirit will always have the tendency not to abide by the teaching of scripture but to be almost contemptuous of it. They begin to believe that conformity to scripture cramps their style; it interferes with the way they want to live their life.

That has always been the characteristic of those who have tended to go astray. It is easy for a church to have that tendency if the ministry does not guard the truth carefully, and with diligence. We, in the Church of the Great God, try very hard and genuinely to guard that truth, but you still must test the spirits.

The apostle Paul told Timothy, a minister of God to guard the truth for the same reason we are talking about here.

I Timothy 6:20-21 O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust,

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avoiding the profane and idle babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge—by professing it some have strayed concerning the faith. Grace be with you. Amen.

We still have people like this, among us, in the Church of the Great God, that are guilty of profane and idle babblings, and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge.

3) The true test is that the true Spirit always glorifies God the Father and Jesus Christ; they are always the center; the Father is always the pre-eminence with Jesus Christ at His right hand.

The true minister is not the man who talks about inspirations, experiences and visions and extensively what he has done and seen, but about what the Father and Christ are doing. Jesus said, "I work and My Father works." We, in the ministry, try to talk about, and use the examples, of God the Father and Jesus Christ, as much as possible.

Only the person having the spirit of truth will truly glorify God. The main way this is done is by living God's way of life—by living the way Jesus lived and lives His life. By living in conformity to scripture we give a true witness that truly glorifies God.

I Corinthians 10:31 Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

So, testing the spirits, and finding out whether they are of God or not, is another way of glorifying God—by following that Commandment of His.