



# CAPITOL COMMISSION

## Discernment (1 John 4:1-6)

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**Do not consider it proof just because it is written in books, for a liar who will deceive with his tongue will not hesitate to do the same with his pen. *Maimonides***

### *1 John 4:1-6*

*1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. 2 By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; 3 and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world. 4 You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world. 5 They are from the world; therefore they speak as from the world, and the world listens to them. 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.*

Questions to consider:

Why is John so concerned?

What are the consequences of neglecting John's admonition?

How was it possible for the false spirits to gain access and consideration?

John begins with a term of affection, two commands and a rationale behind the commands.

John has long been labeled the Apostle of love. This stands in stark contrast to the label applied to him and James by the Lord, Jesus! . . .

Each command is oriented toward the development of a particular conduct on the part of this believing community: 1) Don't start believing every spirit, 2) a strong adversative contrast, 3) start examining, testing, interpreting every spirit presenting itself.

### **SPIRITS**

Evidence abounds as to the presence and activity of evil spirits (demons, or fallen angels) during the lifetime of the Lord Jesus

and the Apostolic band. The Apostle Paul even declared the servants of Satan manifested themselves as "angels of light."<sup>2</sup>

This being so (and recalling the subtlety of the serpent in Eden) it is easy to understand how someone not given to "testing the spirits" might easily be led astray. Again, as Paul suggested : *"3But I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ.*

The serpent laid the groundwork for the assault of Truth in the Garden of Eden and, having laid the groundwork, this tendency toward craftiness is part and parcel of our nature inherited from Adam.

That is, generation after generation, century after century the assault against the truth of the word of God has always been: 1) doubt what God has said, 2) distort what God has meant, 3) deny what God has determined resulting ultimately in one's deception.

(One might be given to suspect such tactics could be utilized in the political arena.)

### **DISCERNMENT**

To discern is to discriminate, to distinguish, to separate good from bad, false from true; in a measure: to TEST. These false teachers had led some astray using, I would suggest, the following tactic.

### **DOUBT ENGENDERED BY THE SERPENT**

God had said: *"The LORD God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; 17 but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die." Genesis 2:16*

The Serpent said: *"Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden?'" Genesis 3:1*

Is not the impact relating to the placement of a verb in a sentence awesome?

God has said!

Has God said?

## Discernment

Obviously, grammar was an intuitive part of her psyche for she was in the image of God. (No one taught her grammar nor sat her down and grilled her with the various language paradigms).

She knew them<sup>3</sup>, and knew them correctly, as did Adam.

Here we enter into an aspect of the mystery of Creation and we tread lightly. We tread this ground lightly because, as Adam and Eve, we also are Imago Dei. Meaning, we were created to think. Robots follow programs. Those created Imago Dei are expected to think. Especially those within the context of the New Covenant! But...and here is the mystery:

### DISTORTION SUGGESTED BY EVE

Why Eve added this proviso is not made manifest. Following the pattern of Eve, generations have thought it wise to add an additional safeguard to every basic prohibition so as to ensure the prohibition is not violated. "Don't drink alcohol because it can lead to drunkenness" Don't go to movies because they are the devil's lair". "Don't..." you add the caution! This is what has come to be called "Fencing the Law".

Touching the fruit wasn't the problem. Drinking coffee isn't the problem. Going to movies, dancing, chewing, etc. is not the problem.

The problem lies in the danger associated with the erection of the "false fence". When Eve "touched" the fruit without an immediate consequence, *Doubt* tipped toward disbelief with eternal consequences. A "Tipping Point"<sup>4</sup> had been reached.

### QUESTION

Is it possible this tendency toward "fencing the law" manifests itself in the political arena?

### DENIAL

*"For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil. 6 When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate."*  
*Genesis 3:5*

Now, the rubber meets the road! Pre-Supposition meets Empiricism. Which do you trust: a proposition you know to be

from God or an experience you have had or what you currently see, touch, smell, hear, taste or feel?

Welcome to the realm of the New Covenant! Recall my suggestion: in the New Covenant God deals with us as with Adults versus children. We are to learn how to discern and test the spirits.

### DECEIT

**This is the bottom line. Remember, the serpent is also called THE DECEIVER.**

In terms of eternal verities, doubt can lead to distortion and then to denial of The Truth.

There are only two ways open to man: Truth or Deceit.

The sad part is stated in Proverbs 14:2 & 16:25

*"There is a way which seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death." Prov. 14:12. "There is a way which seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death." Prov. 16:25*

So, obviously, John is vitally concerned for his charges.

They were living in perilous times. Anti-christs were are presently operative within his area of concern. Notice also, John doesn't name names but focuses on principles. This is not to say naming names is wrong, for Jesus named names, as did Paul.

But, in every case, principles trump personalities!

Sadly, principles often get confused with pragmatism when the immediate tends overwhelm.

Politics assumes precedence over statesmanship.

Politics often focuses on the election cycle.

Statesmanship on Principles.

Next week we will consider the parameters of the testing John seems to suggest.

<sup>1</sup> Mark 3:17

<sup>2</sup> 2 Corinthians 11:14, 15

<sup>3</sup> Job 38:36

<sup>4</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Tipping\\_Point](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Tipping_Point)