

THE SPIRIT OF GOD

1 John 4:1-6

Key Verse: 4:2

“This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God...”

In 1 John 4 we can study about the Spirit of God. There are too many conceptions about the Spirit of God. But 99% of the conceptions of the Spirit of God are wrong. These days many cultural Christians say, “Yesterday, the Holy Spirit told me not to take the cross of Jesus, just say ‘Amen.’ Still, I can inherit the kingdom of God by the grace of God.” There was a heroic man of faith who was martyred after imprisonment by the Japanese CIA, because he did not worship the Japanese Emperor god. He was a man of prayer. Once, he prayed all night, for the next day he had to take a test on systematic theology. But he could not answer even one question. He said to his classmates, “Even the Holy Spirit trembles at the examination.” The seminarian did not know that the Holy Spirit helps us spiritually in most cases. His saying spread very wide. “Even the Holy Spirit trembles at the examination.” Since then all seminarians began to study well, realizing that examination is examination and the work of the Holy Spirit is the work of the Holy Spirit. Some think that the Holy Spirit is an auxiliary person. But God the Father, God the Son and God the Spirit are one body. We call them the Trinity of God. Many antichrists denied the presence of the Holy Spirit. So St. John clearly defines the work of the Holy Spirit and points out the evilness of the work of the antichrist. May God give us basic knowledge about the Holy Spirit.

First, the Holy spirit (1-3).

Look at verse 1. **“Dear friends, 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.”** This verse clearly tells us that as there is the Holy Spirit, so there is the evil spirit. Who is the Holy Spirit? When we study the Bible, distinctively the Old Testament calls him, **“the Spirit of God”** (Ge 1:2; 1Sa 11:6). The New Testament calls him, **“the Holy Spirit”** (Jn 14:26; Ac 1:5; 1Co 6:19; 2Pe 1:21). The Bible, which is the combination of the New Testament and the Old Testament, says, **“the Spirit of God,”** or **“the Holy Spirit,”** or **“the Spirit of Jesus”** (Ac 16:7).

Look at verse 2. **“This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God.”** It is the basic spiritual truth. Man is both body and spirit. To recognize the Spirit of

THE SPIRIT OF GOD

God we must recognize that God sent his one and only Son Jesus Christ in the form of a man so as to save men from their sins. Then we can realize the love of God and spiritual reality.

Nevertheless, there are many people who say the words, **“the Holy Spirit”** habitually, yet never believe the presence of the Holy Spirit. But we must believe the presence of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit mainly teaches and also gives men wisdom to know God. John 16:8-11 says, **“When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me; in regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.”** These verses teach us that the Holy Spirit is a teacher. The Holy Spirit teaches us mainly the love of God and righteousness of God.

The Holy Spirit is God's power. For example, when God orders, then the Holy Spirit actualizes the order of God. Genesis 1:1-2 says, **“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.”** In these verses, God created the heavens and the earth. But the Holy Spirit is God's invisible person who has the power to create the heavens and the earth. The Holy Spirit has the power to make the heavens and the earth and he has the power to change each individual person's inner person: He is the power of God.

For example, after Jesus' ascension, 120 flock of God's sheep became helpless. In their helplessness, they gathered together and prayed for the world salvation work. Then the Holy Spirit came upon them and gave them the power and wisdom of speaking all kinds of languages. And the Holy Spirit changed them from selfish people into very sacrificial people. Most of all, the Holy Spirit changed utopian idealists to believe Jesus' suffering, death and resurrection, his ascension, and the Second Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (Ac 2). Each of Jesus' disciples was his own kind of stubborn man. Among them, Peter was the top figure in his stubbornness. Bartholomew, whose presence did not make any difference, had the same political ambition that he would be the prime minister in the earthly messianic kingdom he thought Jesus would establish. By the changing power of the Holy Spirit, all of the eleven disciples became one in heart and spirit and they began to love one another, hugging and clapping their hands together. When we study the whole of Acts chapter 2, we learn that God changed 120 flock of God, who were helpless and who had to find the way to run for their lives, into the

THE SPIRIT OF GOD

mighty soldiers of God. Without them, it was impossible to conquer the Roman Empire. Without them, conquering the whole world with the gospel of salvation was totally impossible.

There is a problem among men. Men live in this world. They are not conscious of the spiritual reality. But we must know that a man was made with two things. First, man's body was made from the dust of the ground. Second, his spirit is made by God's breath. Therefore, a man is both body and spirit. John 6:63 says, **“The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life.”** When a man dies, his body is buried in the earth by the funeral professionals. But our souls are immortal and one who believed in Jesus can enter the kingdom of God. The fact that man is both body and spirit is the unchangeable universal truth. But men are so busy to do homework every day and to prepare final exams and to find a future marriage candidate. Their suffering is more than enough due to lack of sleep. As a result, they have no time to think about the spiritual reality, not to mention thinking about the Holy Spirit. But it is very important to realize that man is both body and spirit. When we realize that a man is both body and spirit, we come to know the spiritual reality, especially the presence of the Holy Spirit. It is not easy to realize the spiritual reality. For example, there was a man of honor and wealth. He climbed up the ladder of success by defeating one opponent after another. Finally, he became a member of the Sanhedrin. A Sanhedrin member was equivalent to a U.S. Senator. His name was Nicodemus. He had honor as a Sanhedrin member, wealth worthy of his position, and he was the envy of all because of his golden chariot and Sanhedrin uniform. But he was not happy. One night he visited Jesus secretly. He asked Jesus for a kind of fantastic miraculous change in his fearful soul. Otherwise, he felt as if he were dying. Jesus told him, **“I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again”** (Jn 3:3). Here, the words “born again” mean unless he realizes the spiritual reality, that is, the kingdom of God. In other words, Nicodemus only thought about this world, and about his agony to maintain his honor, and about his money which drove him into constant anxiety. His right hand was almost paralyzed from shaking hands with his fans. Jesus was very sorry that Nicodemus was confined to the body. Nicodemus did not know the spiritual reality, that is, the kingdom of God. He did not know the happiness which comes from the spiritual realm. Jesus' words, **“to be born again,”** mean that he should acknowledge the spiritual reality and live before God as a child of God, not a child of the devil. But Nicodemus asked, “How? How?” His reaction was outrageous and he was emotionally upset. But humble Jesus explained about the spiritual reality with long-suffering patience. John 3:5-8 says, **“Jesus answered, ‘I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and**

THE SPIRIT OF GOD

the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, “You must be born again.” The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.”

We must learn that there is material reality and spiritual reality. Material reality is frequent and temporal like kitchen activity and filling up the garbage can. But spiritual reality is to save men from their sins and bring them back to the kingdom of God through the atoning sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ. Look at verse 3. **“...but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world.”** We are children of God, because we believe that Jesus is the Son of God. We know the spiritual reality and the presence of the Holy Spirit. Without this, life is empty. Those who do not believe that Jesus is the Son of God are all antichrists.

First of all, we would like to know how the antichrists have spread so rapidly. In the past, men of wisdom and sagacity searched for the First Cause (Prima Causa) which deals with how man came into being first and what the meaning of man's existence is. Most importantly, it deals with where man came from and where man goes back to. They wanted to know man's final destination. In philosophy we call this ontology. It seems to have been very foolish to spend time on this problem for the last 3,000 years. And nobody could find a proper answer. Nevertheless, many wise men never gave up on this subject, because without knowing “The First Cause,” they felt that their souls were empty, and they felt that they were wandering in their weariness and anxiety. When we review history, as long as men hung on the problem of First Cause, human beings were truth seekers.

Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), who studied man's pure reason, claimed that man's existence comes from a man's pure reason. In his third book, Critique of Practical Reason, he confessed that, “as there is a star in the sky, something is constantly moving in my soul.” He emphasized human reason. But people did not think about the conclusion of his philosophy that there is something beyond human reason. Rather, many philosophy students ignored the problem of first cause and began to think about human reason only. This human reason was the landmark of new philosophy. Kant's philosophy motivated philosophy students to stop men's aspiration of searching for the First Cause. Kant begot existentialism.

THE SPIRIT OF GOD

The existentialists thought that it was not necessary to solve the problem of the First Cause, because we are already existing. After Kant, many philosophy students ignored the meaning of man's existence. The existentialists only thought about man's inner problems, such as fear, anxiety, meaninglessness, nothingness, tragedy and death. There are theistic existentialists, and atheistic existentialists. Especially, atheistic existentialists give bad influence to their descendants. Among them, notorious ones are Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) and Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980). Heidegger defined man's life as rope-riding (walking a tightrope) in a circus, which is very dangerous, nerve-wracking, and with a danger that one would fall down to the earth and be crushed into pieces. Sartre's novel, "Vomit," (Nausea) and Albert Camus' (1910-1960) novel, "The Plague" (La Peste), describe human tragedy and controversy. They saw people as the objects of nausea and man's destiny as before the plague.

For the time being, existentialism was new and popular to many people. But while they were interested in existentialism, they intentionally forgot about God. What is more, they were soon tired from reading books about existentialism which only mentioned about the tragic and dark side of man's existence. Many said that existentialism is nonsense.

Soon, people began to turn to pragmatism. Pragmatists thought it was totally unnecessary to waste time thinking about man's pathos and the tragic and dark side of man's existence. They thought men should be practical. For the time being, pragmatism produced instant benefits, selfishness and instant coffee. Pragmatism is not a philosophy at all, because it doesn't deal with the First Cause and man's final destination. Pragmatists only think about a short cut to success and instant benefit. Pragmatism seemed very attractive to Americans. So Charles Peirce (1839-1914), John Dewey (1859-1952), and all these people changed the educational system on the basis of pragmatism. Actually, the Supreme Court decision to forbid school prayer was not caused by one woman's petition. It was the influence of pragmatism. They thought that if they study even one or two minutes more, they can study better. They thought it was not necessary to pray for three minutes before every class. Since pragmatism prevailed in this country, many seeds of tragedy were sown in this land. The people mentioned above are antichrists because they denounced the precious name of Jesus.

It is irony. When America invited so many scholars and students and gave them full tuition, room and board, an allowance, and even airfare, and helped them become Ph.D.s and sent them back to their own native countries, the U.S. government used a huge amount of money. At that time, "In God we trust," was

THE SPIRIT OF GOD

the American psyche. Not only did U.S. government officials help foreign scholars and students educationally, they also helped helpless countries financially. For example, during the cold war between the U.S.A. and the former U.S.S.R., America supplied 2/3 of crops to the people of the former U.S.S.R. free of charge. At that time, it seemed that the U.S. was educating and feeding the whole world. Yet at that time, America was known as the richest country and all other countries envied her with many tears. But when man did not search for the meaning of man's existence, they lost the third-dimensional world, that is, the spiritual reality, completely. Now by the influence of pragmatism the U.S. government charges three times the amount of tuition to foreign students and gives them no benefit. So America should be getting richer and richer, at least three times richer. But, ironically, it does not work that way. In the past, Germany, France and Japan were under the protection economy of the U.S. government. But now they say that the American government owes many countries, especially Japan, roughly five trillion dollars. Nobody can conceive of the concept of a trillion. But it implies the American government has huge debts. Now the American population is 265 million. If 265 million people each pay \$830 per year, the American government can pay the 24% annual interest on the national debt. When America was sure that "In God we trust," America was like a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. When America adopted pragmatism, ordinary people all became slaves to money, maybe to the capitalists and the imperialists. Again we must remember that those who do not know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God are antichrist.

Second, the evil spirit, antichrists (4-6).

In the middle of verse 3, there is a phrase, "**This is the spirit of the antichrist....**" The Bible says of the evil spirit, "unclean spirit," or "demons." The devil and Satan are synonymous with the evil spirit. It is amazing that antichrist, the devil, also has spirit. His spirit is an unclean spirit or an evil spirit (Mk 5:2). One young man was so handsome. So it was not difficult for him to make friends with many beautiful girls. He studied very well. So he was the envy of all his classmates. He was a joy to his parents and he was a hope to his community. But one night, he became proud and out of his proud mind committed a sin greatly before God. He tried to forget about his sin. The more he tried to forget about it, the more he was tormented by the evil spirits. He tried to forget about his guilty conscience. The final result was that he was possessed by 6,000 demons. So he left his home and his community and lived among the tombs. But he could not escape from the unclean spirit. He became a slave of self-torture. He cut his flesh with stones and yelled endlessly toward the night sky. But Jesus, who was full of the Holy Spirit, cast 6,000 demons out of him and made him whole.

THE SPIRIT OF GOD

This evil spirit problem is not just a current one. It has been throughout all human history. God wanted to establish Israel as a theocratic kingdom. God anointed Saul as king of Israel. But Saul forgot God's grace and became arrogant. He even erected his own monument, though he achieved nothing. While he was on the throne, the Philistines surrounded Israel's army. They were in deep crisis. Boy David accepted the Philistine champion Goliath's challenge to a duel. David won with one slingshot which made the stone sink into Goliath's forehead. Then there was the celebration of triumphant entry. Naïve ladies praised boy David's victory by singing, **"Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands."** These naive ladies' praising of David made Saul crazy. He said, **"I am credited with only thousands, but David with tens of thousands."** Saul lost his dignity as a king of Israel. He forgot that everything came from God. He was possessed by a jealous demon. All his lifetime, he searched for David to kill him. Finally, he was killed by Philistine soldiers, together with his son Jonathan. In short, Saul was possessed by an evil spirit and jealousy demon.

Look at verse 4. **"You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world."** Sometimes we are afraid of antichrists and the power of evil spirits. But we must lean on God. Then God will give us the Holy Spirit and help us win the victory.

Antichrists are from the world. It means they belong to the world and the devil. They speak from the viewpoint of the world. For example, we talk about our forefathers' beautiful life of faith. It doesn't appeal to modern people. Satan has no sense of history. They speak expedient lies to deceive people to make them stumble in their life of faith. They know the world so well and they speak from the correct point of view of the world. People of the world listen to them. But we must have basic Bible knowledge. We must have a basic spiritual discernment to figure out falsehood and truth. Look at verse 5. **"They are from the world and therefore speak from the viewpoint of the world, and the world listens to them."**

There was a violent oldest son. He came to his father's 60th birthday celebration. He felt something wrong. Then he was an exact Gerasene demoniac and he was beside himself. He turned the tables upside down and yelled at his father and beat his younger brother. So his father's 60th birthday celebration turned out to be a sad one. After the oldest son left, the younger son asked his father, "Why didn't you say anything to him? Maybe you were scared by his violence.

THE SPIRIT OF GOD

But I am not scared. Shall I go and beat him up?” Then the father said, “Well, his inner problem has not been solved by the power of the Holy Spirit. So we must pray that he may be changed by the power of the Holy Spirit. Someday he will be changed and he will be a wonderful person.” Then the younger son learned that the Holy Spirit has changing power. He remembered his father’s words and used them as one of the principles of shepherding the flock of God. We must believe that the Holy Spirit has transforming power to change water into tasty wine (Jn 2:10). All antichrists need to accept the work of the Holy Spirit.

In this adulterous and perverse generation, we must have spiritual discernment to listen to God’s word and reject the work of the evil spirit. For this, we must study the Bible until we can recognize the work of the Holy Spirit. Look at verse 6. **“We are from God, and whoever knows God listens to us; but whoever is not from God does not listen to us. This is how we recognize the Spirit of truth and the spirit of falsehood.”**