# 1 John 4:1 – 6 Five Truths Concerning False Prophets, Part 2

I. The Clear Command of God (v. 1)

- IV. The Charlatan's Compelling Message (v. 5)
- II. The Conflicting Confession of False Prophets (v. 2 3) V. The Confident Certainty of Scripture (v. 6)
- III. The Christian's Conquering Salvation (v. 4)

#### III. The Christian's Conquering Salvation (v. 4)

In verse 4, John is still referring to Christians when he says, "little children." He goes on to say that believers "have overcome them." In other words, as powerful and deceptive as false teaching might be, believers have the assurance that their salvation is secure. When it comes to the foundational truths of Christ's person and work, believers will never apostatize. They will never ultimately walk away from the faith.

**Why?** Well, John says, "for <u>he</u> who is in you is greater." The "<u>he</u>" John is referring to is the Holy Spirit who indwells every believer. Genuine born-again believers receive God's Holy Spirit within their hearts the moment they surrender their lives to Jesus Christ (**Rom. 8:9**).

Therefore, the Holy Spirit, together with the examination of God's word, is an impervious safeguard to our being fooled about the Jesus of Scripture (1 Cor. 2:12 – 16).

**John MacArthur** says, "Believers may be unsure about secondary, peripheral matters, but not about the foundational truths of the gospel, such as the person and work of Christ (cf. **John 3:14 – 16; Rom. 1:16 – 17; 3:24 – 26; 5:1; Gal. 2:16; Eph. 2:8 – 9; 2 Tim. 1:9).**"

When John refers to, "<u>he</u> who is in the world" he is speaking of Satan. In Scripture, Satan is referred to as "the prince of this world" (**John 12:31**) and "the god of this age" (**2 Cor. 4:4**; see also **1 Peter 5:8**). Therefore, even though Jesus Christ defeated the devil on the Cross, Satan has been given a measure of latitude on the earth, all limited by God's sovereignty. But as powerful as Satan is, he is no match for the Holy Spirit.

To be clear, **1 John 4:4** doesn't say that Christians can guard against theological error because they are <u>smarter</u> than the false teachers or have undergone intense <u>training</u> <u>in false religions</u>. No, John says that Christians can discern between truth and error <u>because of the Holy Spirit</u>. (**1 John 2:20**).

Therefore, even though false teachers can cause great confusion and apprehension among God's people, they cannot corrupt or destroy them. True believers will never abandon Christ, the Good Shepherd, to follow false shepherds because the Holy Spirit will keep them (**John 10:1 – 5; 1 John 2:19, 21**).

The Holy Spirit is like a God-given, built-in radar device. Therefore, true believers will recognize the truth revealed by God (John 8:31 - 32, 47, 51 - 52) and reject error. Therefore, those who are Christ's do not leave Him to follow those who deny the truth. This is **The Christian's Conquering Salvation**.

## IV. The Charlatan's Compelling Message (v. 5)

In this context, when John speaks of the "world," he is speaking of an organized, invisible system. A set of values, philosophies, lifestyles, and religions that exist in opposition to God.

Therefore, false prophets are part of Satan's world system that is hostile toward God. They have *bought into it*, they *promote it*, and they want others to buy into it too.

And you know what? "The world listens" to these charlatans! Their message <u>is</u> popular! Their message <u>is</u> compelling! (**1 John 5:19**). This means it isn't a little problem affecting only a small group of people. On the contrary, there are so many false prophets and religions in the world that there is literally something for everyone.

False prophets have been successful in this world because people don't want to hear the truth (2 Tim. 4:3-4).

If a false teacher would stand up and say, "Hello everyone, I'm a false teacher! What I am about to tell you is a lie. If you believe what I say, you will go to hell." But sadly, false teachers don't have a sign on their back telling us who they are.

In fact, Jude says that false teachers are very sneaky. **Jude 4** says they "creep in unnoticed." So, these false prophets have not only "gone out into the world," but they have infiltrated the church of the Lord Jesus Christ (**Acts 20:28 – 30**).

Satan is so cunning that he will raise up men and women who like to be with Christians, they talk like Christians, and they want to be identified as Christians. But like their master, Satan, false teachers are deceptive, disguising themselves as messengers of Christ, angels of light, and servants of righteousness (**2 Cor. 11:13 – 15**). Currently, these false prophets preach and serve on staff in churches, teach at universities, host radio and television programs, write books, and record music. False teaching is so prevalent that your spiritual antenna always needs to be up and running.

### V. The Confident Certainty of Scripture (v. 6)

John begins **verse 6** by saying, "We are from God." Who is the "we?" To answer that, let's back up a minute. In **verse 4** John says, "You are from God." The "you" John refers to those who are born again believers. In **verse 5** John says, "They are from the world." "They" refers to all false prophets. So here in **verse 6** when John says, "We are from God." The "we" are the apostles.

In other words, if you know God you will listen to the apostles. Therefore, true Christianity is apostolic Christianity (1 John 1:3). John is telling us to place our confidence in the Scriptures. The Scriptures are God's revelation to man (2 Tim. 3:16 – 17).

While it is Satan's nature to lie and deceive, the Bible tells us that God only speaks truth (**Heb. 6:18**; **John 14:6**; **16:13**; **17:17** – truth comes from above).

**John MacArthur** says, "Believers must be able to pick out the voice of the Good Shepherd and His genuine under-shepherds amidst the howls of Satan's wolves (**John 10:27**)."

#### Questions

- 1) We have the truth in God's word. Is Scripture alone sufficient for what believers need to live a life pleasing to Him? Why or why not?
- 2) When it comes to biblical truth, is the statement "If it's new, it ain't true!" a good rule to live by? Why or why not?
- 3) If a person is persuaded to turn from the basic truths of Christ's divine person, work, and Word, is there evidence in that person's life of genuine salvation?