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“Disclosure, Deception, and Discernment”

1 John 4:1–6

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We are living in strange, exciting times before the second coming of Christ. In recent years, the UFO/alien phenomena have been on news headlines like never before. As the apostle Paul revealed in 2 Thessalonians 2, the spirit of lawlessness is already at work secretly behind the scenes. The apostle John tells us in 1 John 4 that we as Believers are to test spirits to see if they are of God or not. Could all this be connected as we get closer to the return of Jesus Christ? The Believer needs to be equipped with the Word of God and seek discernment from God to recognize the Spirit of truth from the spirit of deception.

1. **1 John 4:1–6** – “[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. [2] By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, [3] 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. [4] 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. [5] They are of the world. Therefore they speak as of the world, and the world hears them. [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.”
 - a. The NLT says, “the spirit of deception” (verse 6).
2. UFOs, aliens, and demonic deception
 - a. Our news media and Hollywood cannot seem to stop talking about aliens and UFOs.
 - b. But while the Bible does hold to the reality of supernatural beings, it calls them angels.
 - i. Not every angel is of God. Some are fallen angels (demons).
 - ii. Aliens are likely demons propagating deception.
 1. Belief in aliens may be part of the great deception that will culminate with the Antichrist.
 2. Only after the Holy Spirit departs with the raptured Believers will the Antichrist be fully revealed.
 3. **2 Thessalonians 2:7** – “This lawlessness is already at work secretly, and it will remain secret until the one who is holding it back [the Holy Spirit] steps out of the way.” (NLT)
 4. There are demonic schemes happening behind the scenes.

- c. We have to test the spirits.
 - i. Not every spirit is from the Lord.
 - ii. The spirit of the Antichrist is *“already in the world”* (**1 John 4:3**), conditioning people to accept the great delusion.
 - 1. **DISCUSS**: How do we prevent the world's conditioning from conforming us into its image (**Romans 12:2**)?

3. Strange occurrences

- a. Events seem to be setting the stage for the last days, including:
 - i. The government cover-ups of the 1940s
 - ii. The Roswell crash of 1947
 - iii. The Jewish state being reestablished in 1948
 - iv. Congressional meetings about aliens
 - v. Scientists linked to the topic of UFOs going missing or found dead
- b. Perhaps these strange events are not coincidences, but a way of setting the stage for a global, alien, new age religion.
 - i. As deception intensifies, we know we are drawing closer to the return of Christ.
 - ii. **DISCUSS**: Amid these dark times, how do you find hope and light in looking forward to the Lord's return?

4. The problem of deception

- a. What is truth?
 - i. 2,000 years ago, Pilate asked Jesus, *“What is truth?”* (**John 18:38**).
- b. Deception is prevalent, then and now.
 - i. Angels have been around for longer than we have, which gives them greater knowledge than us (**Job 38:7**).
 - 1. Angels may not have knowledge of the future, but they have knowledge of the past.
 - 2. Demons can easily rework old lies into new deceptions to trick mankind.
 - 3. Satan's greater knowledge enabled him to effectively deceive Eve, though not Adam (**Genesis 3:13; 1 Timothy 2:14**).
 - 4. A.I. may be morally neutral, but as with anything, Satan can use A.I. against us.
 - 5. **DISCUSS**: How do you evaluate whether the morally neutral things you allow into your life are spiritually affecting you (**Romans 14:1-13; 1 Corinthians 10:23**)?
 - ii. Humans were made *“a little lower than the angels”* (**Hebrews 2:7**).
 - iii. In the last days, Satan will empower the Antichrist and the False Prophet to be powerfully deceptive (**2 Thessalonians 2:9-10**).

1. Only a remnant will refuse to bow the knee to the Antichrist, and they will be killed for it.
 2. The False Prophet will breathe life into an inanimate object and compel the world to worship the Antichrist.
 3. Even now, many false christs are in the world, which is how we know the time for Christ's return is near (**1 John 2:18**).
 - c. The solution
 - i. Only by becoming Biblically literate can we discern the truth.
 1. **DISCUSS**: When has God used Scripture to help you discern truth from deception?
5. Understanding deception
- a. Deception perverts truth.
 - i. In **Acts 13**, Paul encountered a sorcerer trying to prevent him from sharing the Gospel with the governor.
 - ii. Paul responded by having the sorcerer become temporarily blind, saying, "*O full of all deceit . . . will you not cease perverting the straight ways of the Lord?*" (**Acts 13:10**).
 1. Evil cannot create; it only corrupts.
 - b. Deception shapeshifts.
 - i. **2 Corinthians 11:14** – "*Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light.*" (1984 NIV)
 1. "Masquerades" comes from the Greek **metaschēmatisō**, meaning "to shapeshift or change figure."
 2. Satan "masquerades" because he has not been an angel of light since he fell.
 3. The alien phenomenon may be another way Satan masquerades as someone helpful.
 - c. We must gain wisdom to spot deception.
 - i. **Proverbs 8:7** – the personification of wisdom says, "*I speak the truth and detest every kind of deception.*" (NLT)
6. Understanding discernment
- a. Defining discernment
 - i. "Discernment" comes from the Greek **anakinó**, meaning "to separate out by diligent search."
 - ii. **DISCUSS**: When have you made "diligent search" to learn the truth? What does it look like to regularly practice separating out truth by diligent search?
 - b. Discernment keeps you from stumbling.

- i. **Hosea 14:9** – *“Let those who are wise understand these things. Let those with discernment listen carefully. The paths of the LORD are true and right, and righteous people live by walking in them. But in those paths sinners stumble and fall.”* (NLT)
- c. Discernment comes from God’s Word.
 - i. As we read God’s Word, we develop our discernment, whether we have the spiritual gift of discernment or not.
- d. Discernment protects us.
 - i. Discernment allows us to determine whether something is true or false despite the flashy signs and wonders.
 - 1. The Antichrist and False Prophet will deceive many with their counterfeit signs and wonders.
 - 2. Jesus rebuked the Jews who asked Him for another sign, for He wanted people to hear what He had already spoken to them.
 - ii. Miracles are great, but our faith needs to be based on God’s Word.
 - 1. **Romans 10:17** – *“Faith comes from hearing, that is, hearing the Good News about Christ.”* (NLT)
 - 2. **DISCUSS:** How has your faith deepened as you have read and studied God’s Word?

7. Standing against deception

- a. We must know whom we belong to—God or the world.
 - i. **1 John 4:4–5** – *“[4] 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. [5] They are of the world. Therefore they speak as of the world, and the world hears them.”*
 - 1. There are only two options.
 - 2. The worldly feel at home in the world, but Christians should not get comfortable. Those who love this world cannot love God (**1 John 2:15**).
- b. We must know our responsibility to encourage other Believers.
 - i. **Hebrews 3:13** – *“Exhort one another daily, while it is called ‘Today,’ lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.”*
 - 1. Deception can harden our hearts and take us away from the Lord.
 - 2. **DISCUSS:** What is the “deceitfulness of sin”? How do we avoid letting sin deceive us? Have you asked God to soften your heart so you may hear His conviction again?

8. Standing with discernment

- a. Know the fear of the Lord.

- i. Biblical fear of God is not simply respect, but a deep, holy, reverent fear.
 1. The fear of the Lord is based on the understanding that we are fully dependent on God.
 2. **DISCUSS**: What can hinder you from having a proper fear of God (**Proverbs 11:2; Proverbs 29:25**)?
- ii. Biblical fear brings wisdom.
 1. **Job 28:28** – *“The fear of the Lord is true wisdom; to forsake evil is real understanding.”* (NLT)
 2. *“Understanding”* can also be translated as “discernment.”
 3. **DISCUSS**: How has fearing God kept you from falling into temptation (**Proverbs 3:7**)?
- b. Know God’s Word.
 - i. God’s Word is irreplaceable.
 1. We cannot allow any devotional book, podcast, or Bible teaching to replace time alone with God. The Bible is more important.
 - ii. God’s Word reads us as we read it.
 1. **DISCUSS**: What is one way God’s Word “reads” you by guiding you, convicting you of sin, and calling you to closer intimacy with Him?
 - iii. God’s Word brings wisdom.
 1. **2 Timothy 3:15** – *“You have been taught the holy Scriptures from childhood, and they have given you the wisdom to receive the salvation that comes by trusting in Christ Jesus.”* (NLT)
 2. Regardless of whether you were blessed with an early Biblical foundation or not, you can go to God’s Word for wisdom.
 3. God cares about how we finish, not how we start.
 - iv. God’s Word stands forever.
 1. **Matthew 24:35** – *“Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.”*

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New King James (NKJV)