

Briefing Document: 1 John Lesson 73

Wednesday, August 19, 2026

Executive Summary

Spiritual discernment is a vital responsibility for every believer. This process involves testing every spirit and teaching against the Bible to distinguish between the Spirit of Truth and the spirit of error. There are three primary tests for discernment: the confession of Jesus as the divine Lord (Christology), the possession of a changed life (regeneration), and submission to the Word of God (divine law).

The spirit of antichrist is already active in the world, appearing in any teaching that denies the deity of Jesus Christ. True believers are protected from these fatal errors through the "anointing" of the Holy Spirit. Finally, the nature of humanity is defined by our creation in the image of God. Unlike the rest of the biological world, humans are designed specifically for relationships, reflecting the eternal fellowship of the Trinity.

The Mandate for Spiritual Discernment

Discernment is the ongoing practice of comparing all spiritual claims against the authority of Scripture. This is necessary because Satan seeks to cause confusion within the Christian church. Many people today avoid discernment because they are uncomfortable telling others they are wrong. However, the Bible commands believers not to believe every spirit but to put them to the test.

A major misconception in modern society is that all religions are simply different ways of seeking the same God. For example, some argue that Muslims or those who have never seen a Bible are worshipping God as best as they know how. However, biblical truth states that God cannot be known where Jesus is not confessed. Any spiritual teaching that leaves out or redefines Jesus is not from God.

The Three Primary Tests of Truth

To identify a true teacher or spirit, three specific criteria must be applied:

1. The Christology Test (The Incarnation)

The most critical test is what a person believes about Jesus Christ. A true spirit will confess that Jesus is God in human flesh—the God-Man who is fully God and fully man. Any denial of His deity is also a denial of the Trinity.

- The name "Jesus" (the Greek form of Joshua) means "Jehovah saves."
- The title "Christ" means "the Anointed One," "the King," or "the Messiah."
- Romans 10:9 states, *"if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus,"* highlighting the necessity of recognizing His Lordship.

2. The Regeneration Test (Divine Life)

This test looks at whether a teacher possesses divine life. There is a distinction between incarnation and regeneration:

- **Incarnation:** God becomes a partaker of human nature.
- **Regeneration:** Man becomes a partaker of the divine nature.

Believers have an "anointing" from the Holy Spirit that protects them from being led astray by fatal heresies. As 1 John 4:4 explains, *"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."* While a believer might be confused by small issues, the Spirit provides a "doctrinal instinct" that recognizes attacks on the gospel.

3. The Divine Law Test (Scripture)

This test examines the teacher's source of authority and their response to the Word of God.

- **False Teachers:** Their source is the world and demonic influence. Because they speak from a worldly perspective, they are often very popular. 1 John 4:5 notes, *"They are of the world. Therefore they speak as of the world, and the world hears them."*
- **True Teachers:** They submit to the Bible. 1 John 4:6 says, *"We are of God. He who knows God hears us. He who is not of God does not hear us."* Like the noble Bereans, true teachers search the Scriptures to confirm the truth.

Understanding the Spirit of Antichrist

The term "antichrist" does not only refer to a future figure like the "beast" in Revelation. The spirit of the antichrist is already present in the world through any teaching that opposes the truth about Christ.

1 John 2:18 states, *"Children, it is the last hour, just as you heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come."* Furthermore, 1 John 2:22 clarifies, *"Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son."* This spirit is not merely incorrect; it is in active opposition to Christ. Believers are urged in Jude 3 to *"contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints."*

The Purpose of Creation and Human Relationships

The foundation of human identity is found in Genesis 1:26, where God said, *"Let us make man in Our image."* This image is not physical but relates to the immaterial part of humanity. The Hebrew concept of "image" suggests being "carved out" or shaped to reflect God.

Key aspects of being made in God's image include:

- **Transcendence:** While humans share biological traits with plants and animals, we are not highly evolved apes. We were created as a unique and higher form of life from the beginning.
- **Capacity for Relationship:** Because God exists as a Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit), He exists in eternal fellowship. Humans were created specifically for interpersonal relationships and, most importantly, a relationship with God.

Key Greek Terms and Definitions

Greek Word	Phonetic Pronunciation	Brief Definition
Jesus [¹]	JEE-zus	The Greek form of the name Joshua; it means "Jehovah saves."
Christ [²]	KRAHYST	Meaning "the Anointed One," "the King," or "the Messiah."

[¹]: Referring to the true person and divinity of the Lord as the God-Man. [²]: Referring to the office of Jesus as the Messiah.