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"TWENTY-TWENTY VISION"

- The Spirit of the Antichrist -

(1 John 5:19; 1 John 4:3; John 1:1,14; 1 John 1:2; 1 John 2:22; Jn. 3:3; Matthew 7:26;16:18; 1 Corinthians 12:27)

Intro ... Last Sunday, the first of this New Year 2020 we launched a brand-new series of messages entitled:

TWENTY/TWENTY VISION"
- Seeing the WORLD through the LENS of SCRIPTURE

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And as we did so, we identified:

OUR 2020 SPIRITUAL CHALLENGE

- To **SEE** things around us with **CLEAR 20/20 VISION** -

*"To accurately **RECOGNIZE** and **TEST**
and **CONFRONT** the **SPIRIT** of the **AGE**."*

Or put another way:

*"To steel ourselves against **SATANIC DECEPTION!**"*

Today, I would identify ...

OUR SERIES KEY VERSE:

*"The entire **WORLD** is under the control of the **EVIL** One." -1 Jn.
5:19*

This verse establishes the 'context' for this entire series. This verse points out the underlying 'Reality' that makes this series of messages necessary.

To accurately **Recognize** and **Test** and **Confront** the 'Spirit of the Age' -
to steel ourselves against **Satanic Deception!**

That will indeed be a challenge because (as we have just seen) our **world**

is actually '*Under the control of the Evil One*' and as a result, all of its '*prevailing notions*' and its '*captivating attitudes*' and its so-called '*guiding principles*' (the '*spirits of the age*') have his fingerprints all over them.

And those '*notions*' and '*attitudes*' and '*principles*' (those '*spirits of the age*') will blind us and steal away our clear 2020 Vision and replace it with much fuzzier vision if we allow them to.

The '*Evil One*' (who opposes everything and everyone linked to the Heavenly Father and His Plan for man) seeks to take us all the way back to a state of '*Spiritual Blindness.*' He would deceive us even as he first deceived our parents in the Garden of Eden.

The '*Spirits of the Age*' are the result of His Work in this fallen world ... Each of those '*Spirits*' develops (as it were) its own deceptive and thus destructive '*life force.*'

No wonder the Apostle John tells us to "**Test**" every '**spirit**' that comes our way!
(1 John 4:1)

That's exactly what we are going to be doing these early weeks of 2020.

Today we examine the specific '**Spirit**' that John himself identified for us ... the one underlying and stimulating them all.

TODAY'S 'SPIRIT OF THE AGE' IS ...

"THE SPIRIT OF THE ANTICHRIST"

*"This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and is **EVEN NOW** in the world.*

(1 John 4:3)

If John had gotten a glimpse into the manner in which his writings would be applied and the fascination people over the years would have concerning the identity of this Anti-Christ character, he would have said: "**Forget that!**"

What he did say was (and I amplify and paraphrase):

*"The '**spirit**' of the coming Anti-Christ is already here and*

*great damage is being done to the cause of Christ already.
Take note and guard yourselves and Christ's Church."*

Such a warning is still needed in our day, for consider the significance of ...

TODAY'S KEY CONCEPT ...

All things **CONTRARY** to the Christian **FAITH** arise from and are expressions of this underlying, infiltrating, **DEVASTATING** 'spirit.'

Wherever this 'Spirit of the Antichrist' takes **ROOT** in the hearts and minds of those who influence society, great **DAMAGE** is done.

Consider with me this morning Three Actions or Attitudes of the '**Spirit of the Antichrist**' that will help us **Recognize** it whenever and wherever we encounter it ...

THREE POINTS OF RECOGNITION ...

1. THE SPIRIT OF THE ANTICHRIST IS A SPIRIT THAT DISCOUNTS THE PERSON OF CHRIST

* Discounts Christ's **ETERNAL** Existence

"In the beginning was the Word" - John 1:1

"We proclaim to you the eternal life which was with Father" - 1 John 1:2

* Discounts Christ's **EARTHLY** Existence

"The Word became flesh and dwelled among us" - John 1:14

"... the eternal life which was with the Father has appeared to us." - 1 John 1:2

"(He) who denies that Jesus is the Christ ... is the antichrist." - 1 John 2:22

Denying or Discounting any part of the Story of Jesus reveals that one is under the influence of the '*Spirit of the Antichrist.*'

And **Deniers** and **Discounters** abound ...

*"His miraculous birth - His miraculous deeds -
His miraculous resurrection and ascension into heaven ..."*

These are the targets!

All the unbelievers of the world, of course, all into this category. The atheists, the agnostics, the pagan ritualists ... Jesus Christ is nothing to them.

There are many '*professing believers*' (the ones who say: "Of course, we are Christians.") who fall into this category:

The **Jehovah Witnesses** who deny Christ's deity;

The **Mormons** who see him as only a better version of you and me - a '*spirit child*' of heavenly parents sent to earth to prove himself worthy of exaltation;

The **Liberals Protestants** who see him only as a worthy example of what we all should and can be.

And any number and variety of newly minted '**Spiritually Enlightened Ones**' have their own take on how Jesus Christ fits into the '**Big Picture**.'

All these have embraced the underlying '*Spirit of the Age*' ... The '*Spirit of the Antichrist*' itself.

They are, in one way or another denying and discounting the **PERSON** of Christ.

They have been deceived and are walking in spiritual darkness.

Consider with me now a second '**Point of Recognition**' ...

2. THE SPIRIT OF THE ANTICHRIST IS A SPIRIT THAT DISCOUNTS THE TEACHINGS OF CHRIST

Just time today for two:

* "*No one can see (enter and enjoy the blessings of) the Kingdom of Heaven unless he is **BORN AGAIN**.*" - John 3:3

Jesus taught that man is fundamentally flawed - that man must be fundamentally changed if he would enter into heaven. Those under the influence of the '*Spirit of the Antichrist*' do not admit this essential flaw and thus deny their need of renovation.

The **Mormons**, of course, deny this because they believe that they are 'Spirit Children of God' already - **Catholics** deny this because they believe that they 'Put Christ' into every baby they 'christen.'
And how many folks do you meet who glibly say:

*"After all, we are **all** God's Children."*

However, they discount the **Teachings of Christ** when saying so.
All of these show that they have been influenced by 'The Spirit of the Antichrist.'

Here's the second '**Teaching of Christ**' we will consider this morning:

* "Everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on **SAND**." - Matthew 7:26

Jesus said that those who ignore, discount or even deny the validity of His Teachings, do so to their own harm.

How many 'Born-Again Believers' do that very thing?

Discounting/Denying the Teachings of Jesus Christ makes even Born-Again Believers vulnerable to the various '*Spirits of the Age*' that surround them.

Nothing good ever comes of that ...

Recognize and **Test** and **Confront** every Spirit!

And now consider with me this third '**Point of Recognition**' ...

3. THE SPIRIT OF THE ANTICHRIST IS A SPIRIT THAT DISCOUNTS THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

Again, we will just address two:

* The **CHURCH** is Christ's stated **PURPOSE** in the world today.

Jesus Himself said:

*"On this rock (Peter's confession that Jesus was 'The Christ - the Son of the Living God'), I will build my **CHURCH** and the gates of Hades will not overcome it."*
(Matthew 16:18)

The Church is the place where the Person of Christ and the Teachings of Christ are honored and obeyed. Any 'Church' that denies the Person of Christ is no 'Church' at all. Neither is any 'Church' that denies the 'Teachings of Christ.'

* The **CHURCH** is Christ's **BODY** on earth today.

"Now you (together) are the 'Body of Christ,'
and each of you is a **PART** of it." -
(1 Corinthians 12:27)

The Body of Believers gathered together creates the only place on earth where true Fellowship with Christ can be found. That's one big reason why the Scripture says:

"Let us not give up meeting together, as some are ... doing."
(Hebrews 10:25)

Those who would enjoy 'fellowship with Jesus' today can only do so as they enter into fellowship with His Church.

One biblically sound answer to the question,

"Why do I have to go to Church?"

is this:

"There's less of Christ there when you don't."

Now that's something to think about!

And there we have it ... Three surefire ways to recognize '**The Spirit of the Antichrist**' - the one that underlies all the other '*Spirits of the Age*.'

Anything or anyone who discounts the **Person of Christ** or the **Teachings of Christ** or the **Church of Christ** has been caught up in the '**Spirit of the Antichrist**' and is to be identified as such.

All of the other '**Spirits of the Age**' that we will identify arise from this one for all of them have at their heart an '**Anti-Christian Bias**.'

Final Thot ...

SATAN is the ultimate 'Anti-Christ' ...

He is 'Anti' everything that relates to **CHRIST**.

Confront him every day by consciously committing yourself to Christ's **PERSON** and **TEACHINGS** and **CHURCH!**

