

QUESTIONS WE WANT ANSWERED

33 What Is the Gift of Discernment?

Scripture: I Corinthians 12:7-11; Matthew 7:15-20; II Corinthians 11:13-15

One day our Lord looked out into the faces of those before Him and made this amazing declaration, *“For the children of this world in their generation are wiser than the children of light.”* The statement arises out of a story about the sons of this world and their acumen in carrying on their enterprises. Very often the Christian is not as eager and ingenious in his attempt to obtain various levels of achievement. He would be the better person if he were. On the other hand, if a child of this age were to give more attention to the welfare of his soul, he would be the better person for that. The point is that sometimes the non-believer appears to know what is going on and the Christian looks naive. However, there are areas of understanding that are completely shut off to the person who does not have the Lord in his life. There is a unique kind of understanding, that the Scripture calls *“discernment”* and that is what we will look at together.

I. SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT:

The second chapter of I Corinthians is one of the most important chapters in the word of God in terms of this matter of Spiritual discernment. Man's thinking ability places him at the crown of creation, but the harsh effects of man's historic fall has so effected his mind that proper discernment in the spiritual realm is impossible. In regeneration, God renews the mind so that again man is equipped to make proper spiritual judgments. Hence, we have the reason for the unbelievers disinterest and hostility toward the Gospel. *“But the natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”* (I Corinthians 2:14)

II. A SPECIAL ABILITY TO TELL:

Though every believer has the insight to discern spiritual truth, there is a gift for some that enables them to readily discern between truth and error, between pretense and the genuine to unmask Satan's ploys, and to ferret out heretics. Jesus solemnly warned his disciples to *“beware of false prophets”* and this was not so much a message to those outside the church as to those within. This is

surely a very necessary gift today when so many quote the Scripture, look pious, but whose teaching is not that of the Spirit sent Scripture.

III. GUIDELINES TO FOLLOW:

It seems to me that in looking at the way the Bible describes false teachers, the discernment of the Holy Spirit by this gift has to do with the motive, manner, and message of the pretender. (Matthew 7:15-20, I John 2:22,23) The false prophet will be marked by the following:

1. A Profession:

That is to say, a wolf in sheep's clothing.

2. An Allegiance Without Obedience:

It is easy to use Christian words and religious jargon without obeying the will of the heavenly Father. (Matthew 7:2.1)

3. An Activity Without Reality:

He prophecies, casts out devils, does many wonderful works, but does not know Christ (Matthew 7: 22-23) Surely, this is one of the most alarming passages in the New Testament. I John warns that the supreme test is that of maintaining the honor and high place of Jesus. Every word in I John 4:2,3 requires attention. **Jesus** refers to the historical person, **Christ** refers to the prophesied one, **is come** refers to his pre-existence, **in the flesh** has to do with his human nature and coming as a substitute person on the cross. Any teaching which does not recognize Jesus as the incarnate Son of God, crucified and resurrected Savior, is spurious and is not of God. We can be very grateful for the gift of discernment.

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