



Deception

February 18, 2018

1 JOHN 4:1 NKJV – (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.

One night after bible study, I went to get something to eat at a well-known restaurant and I remembered this particular menu advertised on television and I decided to try it. The price was great and the food looked delicious! Once I ordered, I was shocked to see what I had ordered and the price was not even worth what I had. The menu looked absolutely like nothing I saw on the television! I was inspired by the television ad, but also deceived.

Clearly the claim to be inspired by the Spirit can and must be tested, for the claim to have the Spirit is not proof that one does. Here spirit has been variously taken to refer to the *spirit* that inspires the prophet, to the person who is inspired or to the message delivered by the prophet. Obviously the three are related, for in testing a person's words one is actually testing whether or not that person speaks by divine guidance.

In light of the rest of the passage two things emerge: **(1)** The author believes that individual persons are inspired or led to confess or deny Christ by *spirits*, some reality beyond the human individual.

(2) Ultimately there are only two spirits: God's Spirit, also called the Spirit of truth because it guards and inspires truth (**4:2, 6**); and the spirit of antichrist, which inspires falsehood, and especially false confession of Christ (**verses. 3, 6**). Therefore, readers are not to believe every claim to be divinely inspired or to have a prophetic message, but are rather to test the spirits, to discern whether a message is the truth that comes from God.

SCRIPTURE READING: JOB 15:35

THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK: Knowing Christ is no substitute for knowing Christ.