

## KEYS TO DISCERNMENT

by Andrew Strom

<http://www.JohntheBaptistTV.com/>

We need to realize that the Bible says to "Test the spirits" and warns very strongly that the Last Days will be a time of "seducing spirits" and great deception. Remember, a lot of the people caught up in today's "manifestations mania" actually know their Bible quite well. And yet they could still be deceived. Did you know that even an unbeliever can often spot a 'con-man' or a snake-oil salesman? They get a kind-of "gut feeling" about such things. And they are often right! In fact, they are often less gullible than the Christians! (-Because we are told in the church-"Do not judge", 'Touch not the Lord's anointed', "You have a critical spirit if you do not join in", etc, etc. This is the very reason why Christians are often the most gullible and easily deceived). So how can we become more alert to these things? what are the things that can help us avoid deception? Some of the most basic keys to discernment that God has shown me are as follows:

(1) Know your HOLY GOD intimately. (-When you have seen His glory, His holiness and His love - by drawing close to Him in prayer -then you can usually see through any "counterfeits" because you know the 'real thing' so well).

(2) Know your Bible. It is very important to be able to spot teachings that are either extra-biblical or directly opposed to what the Scriptures teach. However, it is important to remember that the Scribes and Pharisees were extremely learned in the Scriptures and yet they missed the very Messiah that was prophesied! So knowing the Bible is important - especially for doctrinal issues - but we need to be able to "discern the spirits" also.

(3) Be a "lover of truth". This is very crucial. Are you someone who will actually stand up for TRUTH - even against the crowd? Or do you remain silent even when you feel something is very wrong?

(4) Purity of heart and Humility. Many deceptions only appeal to us because there is something inside us that "wants" to believe them. They are seductive because of darkness and wrong motives in our own lives. We must search our hearts and root these out.

(5) The 'inner witness' of the Holy Spirit. We must learn to NEVER over-ride this "still small voice", as it will save us from deception again and again. (-More on this below).

God has placed within every human being a measure of faith—an inner "warning system" to protect us from being easily deceived - just as He has given us all a conscience. It is something that He has built into every one of us, in His mercy. (I guess a lot of it is simply 'common sense'). However, Christians should have an even greater advantage in this area, because we have the "inner witness" of the Holy Spirit, and the 'still small voice' of the Lord speaking to us every day. But what I have found again and again with people who give themselves over to some form of deception is that they often "override" these alarm bells. They go against their 'better judgment'. They ignore the little voice deep inside them that is telling them that there is something wrong. Christians do this all

the time. That is how they get themselves involved in such foolish deceptions. This may all sound very obvious, but I am telling you, this one basic area alone could wipe out half the deception in the church right now. If only people would listen to these internal 'alarm bells' and act with common sense, half of it would be gone overnight.

The Bible is very clear that the Last Days are a time of such widespread deception that it would "deceive if possible the very elect". It also shows that much of this deception will arise from WITHIN the church - luring believers with "itching ears". Do we see evidence of this kind of thing taking place today? Certainly! In fact, some of it is at a level that is truly shocking. And yet it is all accepted as perfectly "normal" by many Christians.

One of the problems, of course, is that those who bring in these deceptions are 'trusted' by the congregation. They have a reputation and they put across some very convincing-sounding arguments and surround the whole thing with Biblical terminology. And thus the deception is harder to spot. (After all, if it were not "deceptive" then it would not be called 'deception'!) People see spiritual power operating and assume that it "must be God". But this is a very dangerous assumption to make in these days.

...There is also a lot of "peer pressure" involved as well. For if everyone in the church is getting into something, then shouldn't you just ignore those little 'alarm bells' and jump right in? This is what is happening all the time in the church right now. And some preachers are very good at making people feel that they are 'hindering the Spirit' if they do not get involved.

So how do you avoid being deceived in this way? Very simply, you do not go along to these meetings in a "gullible" frame of mind. And you do not allow yourself to be carried along with the crowd. You listen carefully to the preaching and make sure that it truly is Biblical. Then you watch the ministry happening down the front of the meeting and discern whether it really is of God or not. You do not "override" any feelings of unease or any 'alarm bells' going off inside you. And you do not allow yourself to be swayed by 'peer pressure'. Even if the whole church is getting into something, it does not mean that you have to. If you do not feel quite "right" about it then DO NOT GET INVOLVED. If you need to, make some excuse and get out of there! You do not have to get involved in things that do not feel spiritually "right" to you.

A lot of people today will go down the front to get something "imparted" to them by almost every visiting speaker - almost as a matter of course. I tell you, in today's climate this can be a very dangerous thing to do. In fact, some of this 'impartation' business has very flimsy backing in Scripture. Who knows what on earth these preachers are imparting? And who knows where they picked it up? I tell you, deceiving spirits are commonplace today, and they are being imparted to Christians on a large scale.

Let me give you an example. I received the following account from a preacher in England recently: "There were about 20 fellow ministers all gathered together in one large room at a local minister's house. We were introduced to the special guest... The next 3 hours were the weirdest three hours I have ever had to endure, we started listening to [her] testimony

which seemed very powerful, next she spoke of the times that she meets with the Angel Gabriel and other spiritual beings, next we moved on to portals between this world and the next and then finally to how she was going to open up a portal to Heaven in the room that we were all in. Now things started to happen, really crazy things and strange noises... As [she] moved around the room ministering to individual people they were crashing to the ground, bouncing up and down, running around as if on fire and making all sorts of sounds. When she came to me she had no prophetic words for me and nothing happened to me so she just moved on. My Vineyard friend was the first to crash to the floor. Since that day his church has taken on a different guise, it is not the same church any more."

This is a true account, because it is very similar to what I myself observed happening under the same ministry. In fact, what I saw was people making involuntary "bat"-like movements all over the building and an eery 'wailing' noise filling the air. It was truly awful. Now, it should not surprise us that there are strong deceptions or "powerful delusions" around today, for this is exactly what the Scriptures predict will happen. All the way through the New Testament we are warned of these days - over and over again.

One of the problems we have is that God actually does 'strange and unusual' things Himself. (-Think of the Book of Acts, for instance). So we cannot simply throw out everything "unusual". Angelic visitations DO HAPPEN. Strange prophetic signs DO OCCUR. And being a strong Charismatic Christian myself, I expect to see believers speaking in tongues and moving in the gifts of the Holy Spirit as well. Now, there is no doubt that many of these things could be termed 'unusual' phenomena. So how do we tell the difference? Well, God never goes against His own holy character. Or against Scripture. And as I often say, we may see Him do 'unusual' things but I believe we need to draw the line at "weird" or 'ugly'. Some of the deception that is around right now has a 'touchy-feely' New Age sense about it. Remember that the New Age movement majors on "inner healing" and unusual spiritual experiences. I do not believe in 'guided visualization' or anything of that kind. And neither am I fond of the writings of Catholic mystics or the like.

However, I have personally found it very helpful to immerse myself in the writings of past Revivalists and the accounts of great moves of God. A lot of the men and women involved in these Revivals lived very close to God and knew Him intimately. They knew His holiness, they knew His glory, and they knew His love. And it is enormously helpful to one's discernment to immerse oneself in these writings, I have found. I would recommend this to all Christians everywhere.

If you have been touched or involved in any way with manifestations or experiences that you think may not have been from God, then I urge you to utterly RENOUNCE (with your mouth, but also from the depths of your heart and soul) any links or involvement with that experience or 'anointing'. Please do not put this off, my friends. Some of this stuff is extremely dangerous. RENOUNCE IT today.  
PLEASE COMMENT on this topic on our blog page.