

## Beware of False Light, False Teachers, and False Prophets – Part 2

### Discernment: Testing Spirits and Guarding Against Deception

#### 1. Brief recap from last meeting; we discussed...

- The Biblical warnings about False light, teachers, and prophets.
- The concept of our eyes being a lamp to our bodies **Lk. 11:33-36; Mat. 6:22-23 (NLT, AMP)**.
- How the Word says to be careful that the light within you is not actually darkness.  
\* Worldly wisdom can be a false light; light that is actually, darkness.
- Satan being a murderer, a liar and that there is no truth in him and that he is the father of lies and half-truths. **Jn. 8:44 (AMP)**.
- How the Word warns us about false apostle and that deceitful workmen can disguise themselves as apostles of Christ and Satan can disguise himself as an angel of light and how his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. **2 Cor. 11:12-15**. This passage is very applicable to what we will be learning about in this study.

#### 2. Heed the warnings: Beware of False Light, False Teachers, and False Prophets.

- a) In our last meeting we touched on false profits and teachers coming to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. I want to dig a little deeper into this. Let's start with reading **Mat. 7:15 (NLT/AMP)**. Some are being wolves and don't know it.
- b) False teaching is like tares being sown among the wheat. It is hard to tell the difference between the two. In the context of this study, I am referring to truth vs. falsehoods regarding the word of God. There is a lot of twisting of the scriptures going on right now and it is accelerating. Let's read this parable about the wheat and tares.

**Mat. 13:24-29 (ESV)**. Further explained in **Mat. 13:36-43 (ESV)**.

- c) **BibleRef commentary on the "tares":** *"The enemy's attack takes the form of sabotage. He sows a second round of plants, weeds, mixed right in with the wheat. It's possible that this was a known form of vandalism, and that the people listening to Jesus had seen or heard of this very thing happening before. Scholars suggest the audience likely would have imagined the weeds to be an inedible type of ryegrass called "darnel" or "tares." Prior to modern sorting techniques, this was a difficult weed to manage. It looks almost exactly like wheat, at first. By the time it can be clearly distinguished, it's already fully rooted in the ground".*  
**Note:** False teaching can look like the real thing and can sometime be hard to notice.

- d) **1 Jn. 4:1-6 (ESV & AMP)** – *"Discerning false prophets: do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God".* How do we do this? Discuss. ~ Vs. 4&5 really jump out as something that is happening today. *"4 Little children (believers, dear ones), you are of God and you belong to Him and have [already] overcome them [the agents of the antichrist]; because He who is in you is greater than he (Satan) who is in the world [of sinful mankind]. 5 They [who teach twisted doctrine] are of the world and belong to it; therefore they speak from the [viewpoint of the] world [with its immoral freedom and baseless theories—demanding compliance with their opinions and ridiculing the values of the upright], and the [gullible one of the] world listens closely and pays attention to them."*

e) Vine's Expository Dictionary commentary on 1 Jn. 4:1 regarding the use of the word "spirit" in this passage. *"Every spirit - The question arises is whether John intends this phrase to refer to human spirits or spiritual beings who influence, but the context supports the interpretation that behind the false prophets with their false Christology (and false light teachings) is the spirit of the antichrist, and ultimately the spirit of the consummate (extremely skilled and accomplished) liar Satan, and behind the spirit of believers to which he is writing is the Spirit of God (The Holy Spirit, **The Spirit of Truth**). (Compare the phrase "the spirit of truth and the spirit of error". Since one cannot see a spirit, spirits is a metonymy (figure of speech) for the human agents (and their teachings) who manifested the antichrist spirit. The false prophets are the ones who willingly spoke error. However, do not miss the significance of what John is saying using the word "spirit" -- he could have just plainly stated "do not believe every false prophet" but he did not. In using the word "spirit" he was calling our attention to the literal spiritual war that is raging in the unseen world, the spirit of error on one side and the Spirit of truth on the other. Do not let the invisibility of our enemy lull us into complacency and indifference regarding our absolute necessity to daily, moment by moment put on the full armor of God (**Eph. 6:13-17**). In a parallel passage in 1 Ti. 4:1 Paul says that "the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons." How are those "doctrines of demons" propagated, except by human agents who are in a sense the "missionaries" of the evil one!*

f) Let's quickly read about the "spirit of Truth" **Jn. 14:16-17; 15:26; 16:13 (NKJV)**.

g) An excerpt from a sermon by Ray Stedman on 1 Jn. 4:1-3: "When Unbelief is Right". *"Every Christian is also called to be an unbeliever. There is a time when unbelief is the right thing and the only right thing. The very same Scriptures which encourage us to believe likewise urge us not to believe. In fact, they not only urge us, they command us not to believe. ...You cannot believe truth without rejecting error. You cannot love righteousness unless you are ready to hate sin. You cannot accept Christ without rejecting self. ...You cannot follow good unless you are ready to flee from evil. So, it is not surprising, therefore, that the Scriptures tell us we are not to believe, as well as to believe. This is what John declares in the first three verses of 1 Jn. 4. (In Stedman's closing words he says) "God help us to be unbelievers in error as well as believers in truth."*

h) Paul also spoke of about this in **2 Cor. 11:2-6 (NASB/NLT)** – *"...you happily put up with whatever anyone tells you, even if they preach a different Jesus".*

i) Peter also warns us about not being carried away with error. **2 Pet. 3:17** – *"You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability." This also ties into **Rom. 12:2** "do not be conformed to this world, to its culture". **Mat. 24:11** says "...many false prophets will arise and lead many astray." There are many more warning in the scriptures about false teachings. Be on guard and do not be led astray!*

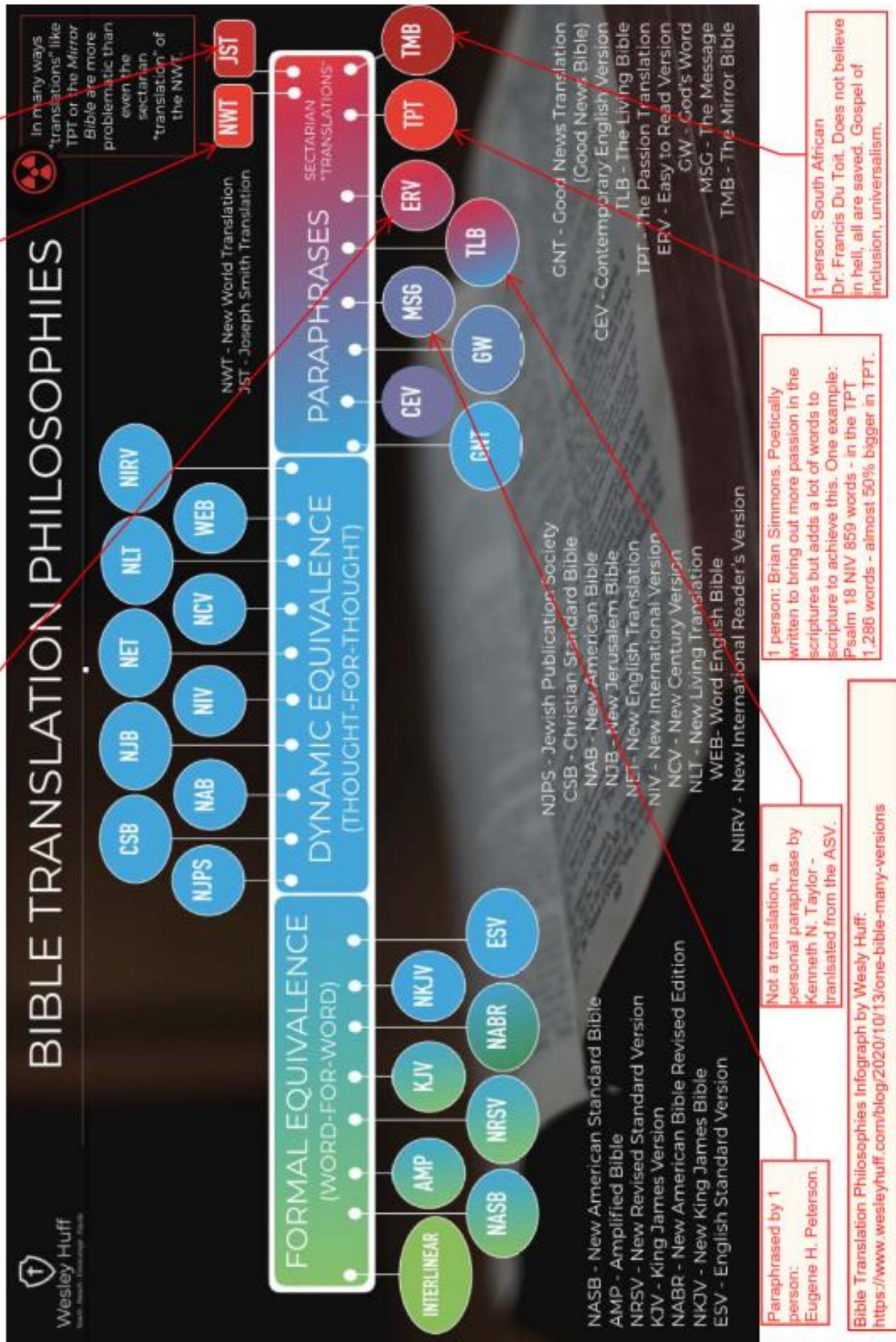
j) So back to my question: How do we "not believe" every spirit and "test" the spirits to see whether they are from God or not? First, we are told to "not believe" these false teachings.

The first challenge to testing the spirits if they are from God or not is to know right away if they are false teachings or not. We can only know they are false teaching by knowing what the truth is, knowing what the word says for yourself. We need to know the real thing, the truth, the word of God so well that we can instantly and easily recognize the counterfeit. Similar to how a bank teller is trained to spot counterfeit money by knowing what the real thing looks like and feels like. They don't train with the counterfeit, they train with the real money long enough so when the counterfeit shows up, they know it instantly.

By staying grounded in the word, a false teaching that comes your way should instantly sound an alarm in your spirit. We also have the Holy Spirit in us to help give us spiritual discernment. The Holy Spirit will guide you into all truth. We need to be grounded in the word and allow the Holy Spirit to guide us and give us discernment. Prayer is necessary as well. - Knowing the Word of God leads me to the subject of Bible translations and paraphrases. What Word are you reading. I would like to touch on Bible translations for a moment. ~ *Discuss attached infographic. [Mark-up notes added by me]*

One notable aspect of the Bible Translation Philosophies infographic is the section on the right side, which indicates the "red danger zone." This area represents translations and paraphrases created by a single individual. It's important to exercise caution with these translations, as the biases and agendas of one person can significantly influence the text, lacking the checks and balances that come from a committee of Bible scholars. In contrast, on the left side, you'll find the word-for-word translations, such as for one example: the ESV, which was produced by a team of over 100 prominent Bible scholars and pastors. The ESV is based on recently published critical editions of the original Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek texts. It follows an "essentially literal" translation philosophy that accounts for differences in grammar, syntax, and idioms between contemporary English and the original languages. This translation prioritizes "word-for-word" accuracy, literary quality, and depth of meaning. If you're reading paraphrases like The Message or The Passion Translation, it's advisable to compare them with word-for-word or phrase-for-phrase translations. Consider "paraphrase" Bibles for casual reading, "word-for-word" translations for more in-depth Bible study and "phrase for phrase" translations for help with context. Additionally, it's important to note that paraphrase Bibles often add many more words to the original scripture, which can distort the intended meaning of the text.

Next study will be a part 3 and continuation of this study and we will dive into some good examples of false light and deceptive teachings. As noted above, if we are grounded in the word of God, we should be able to spot the counterfeit when we see it.



## **Homework:**

Read in full context the scriptures referenced below:

Beware of the false prophets: **Mat. 7:15, 13:24-29**

Test the spirits: **1 Jn. 4:1-6**

The “spirit of Truth” **Jn. 14:16-17; 15:26; 16:13**

Warning on not being carried away with false teachings: **2 Cor. 11:2-6; 2 Pet. 3:17; Rom. 12:2; Mat. 24:11**