

Spying into the Spirit World

“And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying: The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation. And this did she many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour”
(Acts 16:16-18).

The “Discerning of Spirits” gives us a glimpse into the spirit world. It gives us understanding of both the bad and good that exists in the realm of the spirit.

What This Gift is Not

It is not “mind reading”, the “gift of discernment”, or the “gift of suspicion”. It does not have anything to do with psychology or the power of the natural mind.

The “Discerning of Spirits” does not require that we be some sort of “Spirit Hunters” looking for a spirit behind every tree.

Kenneth E. Hagin in “Concerning Spiritual Gifts” highlights that the “Discerning of Spirits” is not the ability to discern people’s faults. This is known as “fault finding and is not a gift at all” (anyone can do that). He states, “the gift of discerning of spirits is not discerning of character or faults. It is the discerning of spirits.”

What This Gift Is

It is a supernatural revelation of the Spirit and allows us to know whether or not something or someone is of the:

- 1. Spirit of God.
- 2. Spirit of Man.
- 3. Spirit of Devil.

This means that the “Discerning of Spirits” allow us to know whether the spirit of a person is of God or not.

It may even allow us to identify certain spirits that have attached themselves to a person or have taken possession of the individual. Lee Stoneking in his book “Gifts of the Spirit” claims that many of these demons take advantage of the works of the flesh mentioned in Galatians 5:19-21. The person possessed will begin to manifest the nature of the spirit that has

possessed him. The “Discerning of Spirits” will allow us to identify these ungodly spirits and cast them out. We will deal with casting out demons in other lessons. This lesson is to provide basic understanding of the “Discerning of Spirits.”

George Shalm in “Dynamics of Spiritual Gifts” reveals a number of different spirits mentioned in the Bible.

Spying on Bible Spirits

Unclean Spirit	Matthew 12:43
Lying Spirit	1 Kings 22:22
Tormenting Spirit	Matthew 4:24
Spirit of Infirmary	Luke 13:11
Spirit of Fortune Telling	Acts 16:16
Spirit of Jealousy	Numbers 5:14
Evil Spirit	Judges 9:23
Familiar Spirit	1 Samuel 28:7
Haughty Spirit	Proverbs 16:18
Perverse Spirit	Isaiah 19:14
Spirit of Whoredoms	Hosea 4:12
Dumb Spirit	Mark 9:17
Foul Spirit	Mark 9:25
Spirit of Fear	2 Timothy 1:7
Spirit of Antichrist	1 John 4:3
Spirit of error	1 John 4:6
Spirit of the World	1 Cor. 2:12
Seducing Spirits	1 Timothy 4:1
Spirits of Devils	Revelation 16:14

The Spirit Test

We are called on to give the spirits a “test.”

“Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God...” (1 John 4:1).

This verse seems to indicate that each of us has the ability to try the spirits. Sometimes we see a demon manifesting itself by foaming at the mouth or speaking utterances through a person’s mouth. Neither of these is the “Discerning of Spirits”. In some cases even the general public

would be able to tell that a person is demon possessed. Is this “Discerning of Spirits”? No, of course not.

In the example given below you will quickly be able to see that it did not take a “Discerning of Spirits” to know that this man was demon possessed. How can you tell that he was demon possessed? What were some of the signs?

“As Jesus got out of the boat, a madman from the cemetery came up to him. He lived there among the tombs and graves. No one could restrain him—he couldn’t be chained, couldn’t be tied down. He had been tied up many times with chains and ropes, but he broke the chains, snapped the ropes. No one was strong enough to tame him. Night and day he roamed through the graves and the hills, screaming out and slashing himself with sharp stones” (Mark 5; The Message).

A demon possessed person can discern someone who has a godly spirit or who is spirit filled. Legion identified Jesus in Mark 5:7.

“And cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God? I adjure thee by God that thou torment me not.”

In Acts 16:17 there was a young girl, demon possessed, that cried, “These men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation.” Most would think that this was great. The girl was drawing attention to the men of God. Paul sensed that this was the devil at work in her and cast out the evil spirit immediately.

Examples From the Book of Acts

- The “Discerning of Spirits” was used to reveal Elymas in Acts 13:8-12.
- Paul was also able to discern that the girl in Acts 16:17 was demon possessed.
- Peter was able to discern the spirit of Simon a sorcerer who became a believer and in Acts 8:12-13 he was baptized. When Simon saw “...that through laying on of the apostles’ hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money.” (Verse 18) Peter discerned that his heart was not right, that he was “in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.” (8: 23)
- In Acts 5:1-3 Peter also discerns that “...Hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost?” When Ananias came with his money the man of God immediately discerned wrongdoing and lying.

We need the “Discerning of Spirits” to be able to know whether certain miracles, signs, and wonders are of God or not.

“...For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles...” (Revelation 16:13-14).

“...For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders: insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect” (Matthew 24:24).

Therefore, it is necessary to have the “Discerning of Spirits” in times of supernatural manifestations to determine what is of the devil and what is of God. Not everything that happens supernaturally is of God. The devil is a supernatural being also. Some things that appear to be miracles may not come from God at all. With this gift we can determine the spirit behind the manifestation.

This gift would be of absolute necessity to ministers that are involved in deliverance ministry.

This gift would also enable us to judge prophecy to know whether the prophecy is of the Holy Ghost or not (1 Corinthians 14:29).

Of course, it does not always take some with the “Discerning of Spirits” to judge prophetic utterances. If a prophecy were not in line with the Word of God anyone would know that it is a false utterance.

“Discerning of Spirits” would come by a supernatural revelation and you would need to be born again as a prerequisite of receiving any of the “Gifts of the Spirit.”

Like the “Word Twins” the “Discerning of Spirits” is a “Knowing Gift.” It reveals what God knows or what He is thinking.

Study Questions

1. What does the “Discerning of Spirits” give us a glimpse of? _____

2. What is meant by the “Discerning of Spirits”? _____

3. The “Discerning of Spirits” is not what? _____

4. List ten different types of spirits found in the Word of God.

