



Distinguishing Between The Spirit And The Person

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In the gospel of Matthew, we read a very interesting exchange of words between the Master, Jesus, and his disciple Peter.

Jesus asked his disciples in Matthew 16:15: ***“But whom say ye that I am?”***

Peter answered in the next verse by saying: ***“Thou art the Christ (the Anointed one), the Son of the living God.***

Jesus then responded by saying: ***“Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed (this) to thee, but my Father which is in heaven.***

Peter was given a revelation from the Father about the true identity of Jesus, the Son of the living God. The Spirit of God had revealed something wonderful to Simon Peter, and Jesus confirmed that this was indeed a true revelation from God about who he really was.

So, we could say that Peter was right on the mark, he had indeed heard from the Lord and he was at the time, like many good Christians, walking in the Spirit of God.

Let us move further into the same chapter starting with verse 21. Here we can read how Jesus is starting to prepare his disciple for what was to come regarding his death, burial, and resurrection.

Peter did not like what he was hearing since it was contrary to his image of Jesus, so he began to rebuke Jesus for what he was saying. ***“Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee.”*** (Matthew 16:22)

Jesus, who knew how to distinguish between Peter, who he loved, and the spirit in which he was speaking, said: ***“Get thee behind me Satan. Thou art an offense unto me, for thou art not looking to the things of God, but to the things of men.”*** (Matthew 16:23) (Reina Valera)

At that moment, Peter was no longer hearing from God or walking in the Spirit but rather in the flesh. He was looking at what Jesus was saying not through the eyes of God, but through the eyes of mere men, and was therefore an instrument of Satan.

This tells us, contrary to popular belief, that Christian people who, at times, really hear from God and yield to the Spirit of God can also, at times, really miss it and resist God's work and His Spirit. This is the reason why we, as disciples of Jesus, are in need of the spiritual gift of discerning of spirit, and that we are not to judge by appearance, like the unbelievers do.

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

-Roger Wågsjö