

"The Son of God is come."

1 John 5: 20-21.

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When we remember that these words are the last words of apostolic instruction that the Church of God has had, we at once feel that they are worthy of very great attention. The apostles have spoken to us by the Spirit of God, as He indicated in His farewell words in the upper chamber in Jerusalem. He indicated that He had many things to say to His disciples, which He could not say at that moment, but that when the Holy Spirit was come He would lead us in all truth. The Holy Ghost is viewed as acting on behalf of the risen Lord Jesus Christ. The One who has gone on high has received the anointing, and shed the anointing forth; so that in the energy of His Spirit and as the fruit of redemption there has been through the apostles this telling out of all that which the Lord Jesus, in the nature of things, could not say while He was still here upon earth.

We all know that the second and third Epistles of John are little supplementary ones of a more private nature, but the first is a general Epistle written to all the saints. Here we have the last apostolic instruction, for the very last words of the Spirit are those given to us through the Apostle John. When he laid down his pen the apostolic writings ceased.

I say again, we have got to pay very great attention to the last word, for right down through the ages there has been ringing in the ears of the church this word, "Children, keep yourselves from idols." Oh, how little have we obeyed that word! But you see the apostle gives us that which will help us to obey it; he gives us that which really received would so fill our hearts that we should say like Ephraim, "What have I to do any more with idols?"

Now the Apostle John closes his Epistle with a very confident note. Again and again he says, "we know." Here are things which are proper Christian knowledge, but I only ask you to look at that which we know according to the twentieth verse.

First of all he says, "We know that the Son of God is come." There you have a most amazing fact — a fact indeed that we get in his Gospel. Nothing in this world can be the same again if that be true. Into this world, which had broken away from God in rebellion, the Son of God is come. Is that true? Why, it carries everything with it, does it not? If I believe that the Jesus, the rejected Jesus, the prophet of Nazareth, who was treated as of no account and refused — if I believe that He was indeed the mighty Son of God, then I say no event in this world's history is worthy of mention in the same breath with that! So we say, "We know that the Son of God is come!"

Supposing we could have got John aside, and said, "How do we know it? What can you give us to show that the Son of God is come?" Well, he tells us why he wrote his Gospel. He says, "These are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name." So we read his Gospel from this standpoint, and see how he points out for us the features of the Lord Jesus. All His miracles are signs of the Son of God. All His words and works indelibly stamp Him as the Son of God. His Gospel really falls into three sections. First we have the great "life" section, John 1 to 7; then the great "light" section, John 8 to 12; and then the great "love" section, John 13 to 17.

He sets before us the Lord Jesus Christ as the One in whom is life and who is the Life-giver. He gives the life, for if any man comes to Him and drinks the water which He gives, he is so satisfied that he shall never thirst again for ever; and further, out of his inner parts shall flow rivers of living water. Who then is this One who brings with Him the solution of the great "life" question, being Himself the Giver of life? Why, we bow down before Him and say, "Lord, Thou art the Son of God."

Again He was here as the Light of the world; and men felt it, too — proud, religious men though they were. They came into His presence gloating over a case of sin, but the Lord turned the light, the effectual search-light of His presence, upon them and that sent them scrambling out of it like creatures of darkness. They rendered testimony to His light: they could not stand it. Who is He? He is the Son of God; for who can bring light into the scene like Jesus? Then we bow down before Him and say, "Thou art the Light as well as the Life-giver. Thou art the Son of God."

Who can bring the love? We are in a world of hatred. Who is the embodiment of love? Jesus. Then we bow down before Him and say, "Lord Jesus, Thou art the Son of God." We have got the Father delineated in the Son.

There is a very striking story in European history which suddenly springs into my mind. In the days when Sweden was a great power in Europe and was using its strength in the Protestant cause, one of her kings fell and, as far as the people knew, he died without any successor to the throne. It was announced when all the nobles assembled in council that there was an heir. The nobles said, "Can he be produced?" "Yes," said one who was in the secret, and he retired, drew aside a curtain, and in came the Queen leading a little boy. She stopped and lifted him on to a table, and said, "There he is." The story is that one of the old nobles, feeble though he was, got up at the head of them all, came up to the child and peered at him. He looked into his eyes, looked him up and down, and then he said, "Nobles, the likeness is unmistakable; that is the son of our king." They all raised their swords and shouted, and they put the crown royal on his head. They were right. The life of the king was there, for they saw it reproduced. They knew the son because they knew the father — there was no mistaking him.

I merely use that story as an illustration of this point: there was the delineation of the life, and they said, "We know him." We know that the Son of God is come, because God has been manifested in Him; His life has been delineated in the Son. Divine life, divine light, and divine love have been manifested in Him.

Well now, knowing *that*, we are in the simple truth of Christianity. But not only do "we know that the Son of God is come," but He has given us an understanding that we may know Him that is true. In Him we have the setting forth of truth itself; all truth is come to light in a world which is very much not what it appears to be. It is the most difficult thing, as you may know, to get at truth of any sort in this world. It is most difficult in most ordinary matters to get what you want. You try to buy something of a special sort — no matter what. Well *you may* get it, but you *may not*. *You* are living in a world, you may depend upon it, where you do not usually get what you want to get, and the more you get the faked thing, the more you realize things are not what they appear to be in this world of unreality. We all see the vain show of this world; but, says John, do not love the world, and do not love the things that are in the world: they are all passing away. It is only he who does the will of God that abides for ever.

Now the Son of God is come and hath given us an understanding that we may know Him that is true. He has brought us a revelation, but — blessed be God! — He has given us an understanding so that the revelation may be received by us, otherwise it had been displayed before our eyes and we had received nothing. You may have the loveliest scenery imaginable, and you may have a very costly camera with a lens which costs a great many guineas, but you must have the plate or film chemically

treated so that it has a sensitized surface; and only then can you capture the picture. You might throw the image through the most expensive lens on to a clear sheet of glass a thousand times and nothing would happen. Throw it once on to a sensitized surface for a tenth part of a second and you have caught it: it is sensitized so that it can capture the thing that it sees.

Now apply that to our Scripture. Not only have we in the Lord Jesus Christ the full setting forth of God Himself — "the Son of God is come" — but we have *seen* the light, we have *seen* the life, and all that is characteristic of love. He has given us the understanding. We are born of God; we have received His Spirit. In John's Gospel we have an indication of this in that being come forth in resurrection He breathed into His disciples and said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost," that is life in the power of the Spirit of God. John tells us that, you remember, at the end of his Gospel; Luke tells us at the end of his Gospel that He opened their understanding that they might understand the Scriptures. We may connect together those two things: the inbreathing of the Spirit, and the opening of the understanding. At any rate, we are born of God and, possessing as the fruit of His work the Spirit of God, we have an understanding that we may know Him that is true.

Even that is not all, for it says, "We are in Him that is true." We are in Him, that is Himself the truth. We are of His life, nature, and order; we have not been created into the old but into the new; we stand in another order. Once we were in Adam — the man of sin and disorder, and failure and rebellion — but not today, for we are in Him that is true. That at once gives us a very personal connection with Him. We may see wonderful things like a man walking round a gallery and seeing the pictures, but yet have no vital connection with the wonderful things that we see. The marvellous thing is, however, that if the Son of God is come, we have got the understanding that we may know Him that is true, and we are *in Him that is true*, even in His Son Jesus Christ.

Here at the end of the Epistle we have God Himself and the Son of God so brought together as to be almost indistinguishable; we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ, and, says John, "This One is the true God and eternal life." I say again, here you have the last bit of apostolic instruction. Thus the apostle sums up the whole situation for us in few words, in a succession of brief sentences.

This One, who is the Son of God, who has given us an understanding, in whom we stand, *this One* is the true God and eternal life. Everything that goes to make up life is found in Him: He is the life, to be known and enjoyed by us forever. You must remember, dear friends, that not only is there the life by which we live, but there is the life we live; and when you read of the eternal life, you have to take both these things into consideration. How many people today are saying, "I want to see life." Well, we want to see life, and the Christian through grace has the power to see and know it and enjoy it. If we had not life in our souls of course we could not see it. But then we are *to see life*; we are to know what the life is, and it is summed up for us in the Son of God Himself. He is the true God and eternal life.

No wonder the apostle says that last word "children" — not "little children," for it is the whole family of God — "Children, keep yourselves from idols." Somebody may say, What is an idol? I do not want to attempt a definition, but I am sure I can say that an idol is that which creeps into the affections and usurps in the heart that unique place that belongs to God alone. God is only revealed to us in Jesus; if anything creeps into my heart and usurps that supreme place that has been kept for the Son of God and He whom the Son of God has revealed, then it is an idol.

Do not idolise your business, or your children; let nothing grip you and hold you and dominate you until your mind and thoughts are subject to it. There is only one Son of God; He is made known to us, we know Him, we are in Him: He has set before us the true God and eternal life. If you want life, go

in for the things that centre in Jesus. "Children, keep yourselves from idols."