

"JESUS IS THE CHRIST THE SON OF GOD"

Before approaching our subject, dear friends, I would like to refer to the apparent omission of verse 7 in 1 John 5. One always dreads lest there should be a misunderstanding of anything as to God's words. How verse 7 is perfectly true doctrine, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are ~~one~~ God, yet that verse is not in the oldest manuscripts of the Scripture but was evidently put in the margin by an annotator, thinking that it was a beautiful parallel with the three witnesses on earth to say there were three witnesses in heaven.

As it is, therefore, a human comment, however beautiful be the teaching of it, we cannot put it on a level with the words of God, hence the omission. We do not wish for a moment to omit the teaching of it, we rejoice in it, we rejoice that from the beginning to the end of Scripture there is a stress on the triune nature of our glorious God. But this verse is merely a human addition in this place. Moreover, I am inclined to think that like all human additions it hinders the real argument being clearly seen. Verse 6 reads on to verse 8. In verse 6 we have

the water and the blood and the Spirit, and that goes on to verse 8 with a beautiful link. In verse 6 we behold the Lord Jesus Christ, going through baptism, and dying, and the Spirit witnessing. In verse 8 we have "There are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, the water and the blood". Moreover, I am not sure that in this context it is quite accurate to speak of the Spirit bearing record in heaven. It seems that this context is dealing with the Spirit of God as having come down to earth to bear record, and that the interpolation of men in verse 7 professing and intending perhaps to honour the Holy Spirit really puts into the background His beautiful work of witnessing, to continue the work of the Lord Jesus Christ on this earth.

One step further, - I am sure that the thought of witnessing in heaven is before us at all in this passage. Witnessing is usually a term that belongs to earth (and of course the word BEAR RECORD is the same as the word BEAR WITNESS). So we see how that man may put right doctrine in a wrong place, and so inadvertently cover up the fulness of the teaching of our gracious God. Nevertheless I would repeat, it is right doctrine that God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit are one God. That is perfectly true doctrine, and we rejoice to believe, but the verse must be omitted because it was evidently not in the original manuscripts but is the comment of a man.

Now we come to our subject for this evening:- Jesus is the Christ the Son of God. The title is a Scriptural title, and we look back to John 20.31. There we read that what was written in the Gospel was written that readers might believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God and that believing they might have life through His Name. Here we have brought before us the object of this portion of Scripture, - and indeed every portion of Scripture in some way centres round the Person and work of the Lord Jesus. He said concerning Moses, "Moses wrote of Me", and again of the Scriptures generally, - THESE ARE THEY WHICH TESTIFY OF ME. And the later Scriptures of course are full of Himself. So that whether we speak of the earlier portion or that which is later, we may find, as He Himself did, in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. The Scripture without Christ would not be the Scriptures. He Who is central in the view of heaven in Revelation, He Who is central in the gathering of His redeemed, one

"IN THE MIDST", He is in the midst of the word of truth. I want just to take it this evening first of all as a personal exhortation and encouragement to believers secondly, as a witness concerning the way of Salvation to any who do not know the Lord, thirdly, as a testimony against Judaism, and fourthly, as a Divine attack on what I might just summarize as Gnosticism, an early creed against the Truth, which I hope to explain more fully.

1. Let us take this passage, this statement, this definition as it applies to those of us who know the Name of the Lord, with its comforting and instructive power. Definitions are not dry definitions to those who know the Lord - The Word was God; God is a Spirit; Jesus is the Christ; the Life was the Light. These definitions with which John's Gospel and the epistle abound, - these definitions are precious food to us. "GOD IS LOVE" is not only a text for our wall but a text in our heart, and "GOD IS LIGHT" is not only a statement of fact, but a realization. So is it with this definition, Jesus is the Christ the Son of God. This is full of encouragement to those of us who know and rejoice in His worthy Name. We are like Peter, flesh and blood did not reveal Christ unto him but the Father Who is in heaven. And like Peter, we reply, these words with a certain exultation - THOU ART THE CHRIST THE SON OF THE LIVING GOD. JESUS IS THE CHRIST THE SON OF GOD. For this statement brings home to our hearts that the One Who walked this earth, despised and rejected of men, was the Anointed of God, Who had come as anointed Prophet to tell the Truth, as anointed Priest to make a sacrifice, and Who will return as Anointed King that He may have the glory which is His, and which we, by grace, shall share, with Him. Oh to be faithful in view of that Day.

JESUS IS THE CHRIST THE SON OF GOD. We do not believe a mere man. Jesus is the Christ the SON of God. He is essentially God. We rejoice and should rejoice more, for when we praise most we are assured of our praiseLESS-ness. We delight and would delight more in the precious fact that underlies this statement, that the One Who came down to the depths of sacrifice and suffering was none other than the Lord of glory, the Son of God Himself. Our hearts feel that we have no need to be ashamed of such a Saviour, but we have need to be ashamed of those who need such a Saviour, even of ourselves. Our hearts feel that we

have in these words an assurance of a personal security. Our salvation does not depend on a mental doctrine, our eternal blessing is not holding to a mere 'thing'.

JESUS IS THE CHRIST THE SON OF GOD. Precious were the prophets whom God sent to Israel, but when the people, said that He was Jeremiah or one of the prophets, they missed the mark, and they lost the Divine teaching: He is the Christ the Son of God. The Prince of the prophets, and above the prophets, the Glorious Saviour, Who has so graciously saved us, with a condescension and might which have no parallel and can have no equal. But how important it is to go a step further, and to seek by grace to apply these words to any who may not know the Lord with the assurance of having passed out of death into life. JESUS IS THE CHRIST THE SON OF GOD is the message that we have to give those in whose heart God has begun to work, we tell them facts, not theories, and facts concerning a Person, and not merely a system or a creed. Jesus is the Christ the Son of God. God has fulfilled His word. Jesus is the Christ the Son of God. Jesus was not merely an example Who walked this earth, but the Saviour Who came to this earth. Not merely a hero, but the Redeemer, not merely a great man, but the God-man. JESUS IS THE CHRIST THE SON OF GOD. Thus there is a salvation that He has wrought, and His work is sufficient for all who feel their need of it, their need of Him. We do not invite to a prophet, great though that prophet may be, but to the Son of God, and if anyone feels something of a 'lostness' and something of a hopelessness there is music and a reminder of merit, even eternal and divine merit in these precious words JESUS IS THE CHRIST THE SON OF GOD. Otherwise Scripture would be confusion, and we should have no ring of certainty in the Gospel we preach, but because JESUS IS THE CHRIST THE SON OF GOD we have no uncertainty in the precious Gospel of Christ, the Gospel of our salvation. We are able to invite helpless sinners to One Who is fully competent to the work that He undertook, and He not merely undertook it, but carried it through, and he ever lives to plead its merits. But our wonderful Saviour is a Saviour Who is sufficient, and efficient, for all who feel their need and desire, by grace, to avail themselves of Him. Christ is the Foundation of the Gospel, the Background for the Gospel, the Gospel Himself.

(to be continued, if the Lord will)

"THE THINGS CONCERNING HIMSELF"

Part 3.

"JESUS IS THE CHRIST THE SON OF GOD"
(Continued)

We go a step further, apart from the general witness to the one who feels himself or herself lost, there is a peculiar witness to Judaism in this statement. I have no doubt that the Holy Spirit through John meant this peculiar witness when the Gospel of John was penned. There were many of Israel about, and the writer was an Israelite by birth himself, and many of them of Israel shrank from the idea that Messiah had come, they believed in a Messiah as some of Israel still do. They acknowledged, many of them, that the Messiah would be the Son of God, though denying this to-day, for Judaism has drifted further and further from the Truth, as every religion without the Lord abiding in it. Thus John as Paul his brother apostle went to these Hebrews to bring before them the evidences of the Messiahship of Christ, and the Gospel of John was written with that object, to show Christ as the Messiah, to show that the Lord Jesus was not merely a Saviour of Gentiles, but the promised Messiah of the earlier Scriptures.

You recollect how Paul went forth ministering the word, and in the synagogue dealt thus, - Opening and alleging that Christ must needs have suffered, first point; and risen from the dead, second point; and that this Jesus Whom I preach unto you is Christ, third point. A precious dividing of the subject in ministering to Israel. The first point to be proved is that the Messiah must needs suffer, - that can be proved from the sacrificial passages, and from portions as Isaiah 53. That He must rise again from the dead - Isaiah 53 and Psalm 16 demonstrate this. Then having proved the character of the Messiah the next point is to prove that there is Someone Who has come Who has fulfilled that character, here was Paul's third point.

The Gospel of John was written with the same object and with God's glory in that object, even that some by grace might see that "Jesus is the Christ the Son of God". That Jesus is the Messiah. In accord with this the whole of the

Gospel of John is framed. We find, for example, in the first chapter John denying that he was the Messiah, but pointing out Someone else. In John 2 we find the beginning of miracles that the Lord Jesus did, to manifest His glory. In John 3 we have a teacher of the Jews, even Nicodemus who came to acknowledge Christ as a Rabbi, but nothing more, and he went away apparently silenced, for we do not read that Nicodemus ever answered the Lord's word to him at the end. Later on in the book we find Nicodemus saying a word or two in defence of the Lord Jesus at the end of chapter 7, and, further, we find finally in John 19,39 Nicodemus coming to help in the burial of the Lord Jesus. You see how the Gospel traces the history of Nicodemus. He thinks Christ is a Rabbi first, he goes a step further, he says "Hear this Man, do not condemn Him unheard". Then he severs himself from the others of Israel, and associates himself with the rejected Lord Jesus. So we get a Jewish teacher being brought to acknowledge that Jesus is the Messiah. You can almost trace Nicodemus' line of thought, and the way God dealt with Nicodemus through this Gospel. It is a faint outlined biography of Nicodemus to show how a Jewish teacher was brought to recognize that Jesus was the Messiah. Then we find the 4th chapter has the woman of Samaria who said "WE KNOW THAT MESSIAH COMETH". The Lord Jesus demonstrated to her that He was Messiah. Then we find the miracle of John 5, and the subsequent miracles of John's gospel to demonstrate Christ's glory at Jerusalem particularly; for the man who had been lying 38 years, and the man born blind and Lazarus were all brought to these miracles at or near Jerusalem. We have Christ's demonstration at Jerusalem that He was the Messiah, so the Gospel of John was a Gospel tract for circulation among the Jews for evidence that Jesus was the Messiah (as the term CHRIST signifies), the Son of God (John 20, 31). And we may well use that Gospel in the same way still, as a witness to that poor nation of Israel concerning the precious Lord Jesus in Whom we believe.

But the book went further. There came about at the time John lived the beginning of a very subtle teaching. I have characterized it as Gnosticism, and said that this verse is a witness against Gnosticism. Gnosticism means knowledge, and there became at the time of John and for some considerable period afterwards a certain knowledge-party who claimed to have a monopoly of knowledge, although divided into various sects and divisions which all had a kinship one to the other. Paul alludes to them in the epistle to

the Colossians where he speaks of these who were intruding into various things, and who adopted a worshipping of angels.

Gnosticism briefly involved a belief in certain emanations, as men viewed them so that certain powers were supposed to emanate and come forth from God, which they called 'eons', - The word which is translated AGES. The Holy Spirit through Paul takes up this word in various epistles; see also the anonymous epistle to the Hebrews, which is the witness of the Holy Spirit, and may be Paul's ministry. Men spoke about these different eons and gave them names as 'life' and 'light'. Thus the Holy Spirit takes up the word with a contrast - THROUGH WHOM ALSO HE MADE THE EONS. God as it were takes the very words out of the mouth and uses it in a Divine and different way, emphasising that Christ is Greater than all creatures. He made the eons, the ages, which men misconstrued into semi-gods, - these were the fallen angels whom they worshipped. Nominally true angels, actually demoniacal angels. For every worship that is not the true worshipping of the Lord goes off to the worshipping of an evil angel. May I just illustrate this? Take heathenism, an idol is nothing in the world, yet the things that the nations sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God, says Paul. Thus though an idol is nothing, behind the idol there is a demon and the idol worship which is given to the lump of wood or stone in intention, is actually attracted to the demon who is behind that mere image, and who wants to draw worship to itself. Take spiritualism, so called, in which there is a professed dealing with those who are departed from this world. Scripture shows that it is a dealing with evil angels, and thus a worshipping of such. We find a reference to it even before the flood; in Genesis 6, where there was a link with evil angels, and Gnosticism was a worshipping of angels. As we have noted men said that one of these angels was LIFE and another was LIGHT. John takes up the words - IN HIM WAS LIFE AND THE LIFE WAS THE LIGHT; they were names of One and He was greater than all creation.

Let no one, says the apostle, let no one lead you astray. With what? Ah, he says, let no one lead you astray through philosophy, the love of wisdom. Many liked the idea of wisdom and a wisdom party. Again he says, "In Christ are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge", - another answer to this knowledge party, who boasted of their profound knowledge. In Christ are all these things. This party, of course, denied the atoning

death of the Lord Jesus Christ. But how could they deal with it? They wanted to accept certain parts of Scripture, How then could they get rid of the death of the Lord Jesus Christ? Ah, they said, Jesus was a man, upon that man after his baptism there came an eon, one of their favourite expressions, and that eon they regarded as Christ. Then they added that the eon left Him just before He died, so that it was only a man Jesus who died on the cross, nothing more than that, and they turned to the Scripture, which the evil heart can always pervert. They misused the expression "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me" They imagined some eon had left that Man who was hanging on the Cross. Thus they distinguished Jesus and Christ, and made Jesus man, and Christ Divine, the human heart always likes to pry into mysteries and to explain them in self's own way and to separate what God has joined.

You will not be surprised to hear that these same people separated God and the Creator of the world. They said in effect - The world contains a lot of evil, therefore the Creator of the world is different from the real God. He is only one in-between who has made it. They separated what God has formed. You will not be surprised next to hear that they also separated the older Scriptures and the later Scriptures; yes, what God had joined, they put apart, and so they separated that wonderful incomprehensible and glorious person of our beloved Lord, as Christian Science and Russellism sinfully divide Him today, for they contain revived Gnosticism. They had the colour of wisdom in the way in which they quoted some distorted fragments of Scripture glibly for what they affirmed. Now John felt the awful blasphemy of this teaching, and in answer to it he witnessed as we have here in the first epistle - THIS IS HE WHO CAME THROUGH WATER AND BLOOD, JESUS THE CHRIST. Not in the water only, but in the water and blood, and it is the Spirit That witnesseth, you see the force of that. This is He Who came through water. Jesus the Christ was the Christ before He passed through the water of baptism. THROUGH the water, and THROUGH the blood. Christ when He died, Jesus the Christ, not in the water only, (the water of baptism), but in the water and in the blood. He made an atoning work and it is the Spirit That witnesseth. Men said that the dove who came down to witness was Christ. No, says John, Christ was in the water being baptised, it is the Spirit That witnesseth. It was the Holy Spirit who came down on that wonderful perfect Person, the Lord Jesus Christ. Then John added "And there are three that are keeping on bearing witness in the

earth". He did witness then, but He keeps on bearing witness to the unity of the person of Christ, and if there is any denial of that wondrous unity of the person of Christ, then the doctrine is a doctrine of demons, and of seducing spirits. It is not of the Spirit of God. There are three that keep on bearing the witness that Jesus is the Christ, for the water of baptism declares that a perfect Saviour has borne wrath for sinners. If Christ had not died for me under wrath, my baptism is mere child's play, merely a theatrical performance, but if He took wrath for me, my baptism is a type of a wondrous fact. The Spirit and the water still bear witness, and the blood still bears witness. What blood is bearing witness on earth? Is there material blood bearing witness on earth? No, but He said concerning the Cup of blessing which we bless, "This is My blood of the New Covenant". This still bears witness. The cup at the Lord's table bears witness to the unity of the person of Christ. If He was simply a man Jesus who died as an example, away with the Lord's table! but if He was One Who took wrath for me, then that blood poured out that is pictured in the fruit of the vine at the table of the Lord is a constant reminder to my heart that He was not merely a man, but the Christ of God, the Substitute for guilty sinners: - and so that baptism, and the fruit of the vine at the Lord's table keep on bearing witness; and 1 John 5 adds "These Three agree in one" or rather literally, - These Three are toward the unity, - undoubtedly toward the unity of the Lord's people, but that is not the chief thought - toward the unity of the Person of Christ. These Three, the Spirit and the Water and the Blood declare that Jesus is the Christ; here is the unity, not two Persons. The gnostics taught a duality, but these three are toward the unity, and set forth that Jesus is the Christ.

Perhaps someone says, But what is the value of all such teaching now? He may say or she may say, I have often read the epistle of John, and I never needed to know that to get food for my heart and soul. No, dear fellow saved one, of course not. God does not make your knowledge of false teaching a necessity before you can receive a blessing from His words. His words are food to every one of His people in every circumstance, and He has so arranged that the very controversial portions of Scripture are exceedingly devotional, and a controversy that is mere words is a poor thing before God. Well, one may say, What is the good of bringing up all these old blasphemous teachings? These old

blasphemous teachings have never been buried. At the present time we can find sect after sect which is re-introducing the teaching that separates Jesus and Christ, which makes out they are two distinct persons. You may not have come across the false teaching; if so, you can praise God for being spared from coming across some of the abominations of today, but that teaching has been found in much literature, and in much preaching; - to separate Jesus and Christ. And why? To take away from the atoning efficacy of His finished work. Anything will Satan do to take away that precious blood of the Lord Jesus which is such a sure resting place of His redeemed ones. It is amazing to think that any can be led astray for one moment with an open Bible to think that Jesus is distinct from the Christ. "Jesus is the Christ", is the utterance of the Gospel of John. "Jesus is the Christ" is the utterance of his epistles, "Jesus is the Christ" is the witness of the apostle, and throughout the whole of Scripture the same teaching and thus the Name comes in its fulness THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. And this just shows us how Scripture was written to meet every possible difficulty that may come across the path of a child of God. We shall encounter false teaching as well as false practice if we are the Lord's people, and to whom can we turn for instruction in this matter? We have the word of God to anticipate everything that is wrong and refute it. God's words are not only to guide us as to a few things, but as to everything. There is not a false teaching to be found today which is not dealt with in the word of God. Our eyes are blind in measure if we do not see the fulness, and the appropriateness of the word of God, applied by the Spirit.

If, as it is sadly probable, we shall come across those who deny this wondrous teaching, let us not listen to their plausible language, let us not be attracted by anything that they suggest or propose. As soon as a man denies the plain statement of Scripture concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, let us beware lest we be engulfed in doctrine that is against God. Let us be jealous for the person of Him Whose Name we bear. There is even danger in curiosity, there is a danger in natural desire for something fresh; if we want something fresh, much of the word of God has been forgotten. We can find enough that is truly fresh there. Let us not be attracted to something which sounds plausible, but resting our faith on Divine statements, Divine definitions, Divine declarations, let us maintain the whole of the truth of God, which is at once His revelation and the

pledge of salvation, and our joyous confession.

JESUS IS THE CHRIST THE SON OF GOD! To sum up, here is the resting place for our faith at all times. God has kept His word, the Messiah has come, the Saviour of sinners was not a mere man but very God. Jesus is the Christ the Son of God, here is the witness that is to be given, without modification, to poor Israel. We are not to meet them on their level, but to tell them of God's way of salvation. Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God - here is God's answer to "knowledge", falsely so-called; here is God's answer to those who would separate the Person of His beloved Son. We know that Christ became Man, and that ^{He} was God, but we dare not ever seek to refine away the statements of Scripture to explain the union of these two natures. We know that He was God-Man, yet as to His humanity He was the Son of man Who IS in heaven, and, as to His Godhead, we read of the church of God which He hath purchased with His own blood. So wondrously entwined are the Godhead and the Humanity of Him Who is God blessed for ever, and the Man Christ Jesus, - so wondrously are they entwined in that wondrous personality, that we dread almost to speak of the two natures of our beloved Lord in a way of our own, lest we would sever or confuse. Rather must we keep to the language of Scripture, for His glories, His nature, His salvation, His everything, are beyond mere natural understanding, and are more a call to our praise than a call to our defining.

Oh that we might not at any time be taken off our guard to become mere reasoners. God's definitions are always devotional, and this portion of truth as the apostle adds, was set forth, that believing there might be life, and the joy of it. The more that truth is grasped in the enabling of the Holy Spirit, the more will spiritual life be enjoyed to the praise and the glory of Him Who has given such a wondrous salvation.

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