

1 John 5:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.

Analysis

And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life. John concludes with Christological affirmation. "And we know that the Son of God is come" (oidamen de hoti ho huioi tou theou hēkei)—the perfect tense emphasizes Christ came and remains, referring to the incarnation's permanent effects. This is certain knowledge (oida), not speculation—the Son of God truly came in history.

"And hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true" (kai dedōken hēmin dianoian hina ginōskōmen ton alēthinon). Dianoia (διάνοια) means understanding, mind, or perception. Christ has given believers capacity to know God truly. "Him that is true" (ton alēthinon) is God the Father, the true God as opposed to false gods. This knowledge is Christ's gift, enabling what was previously impossible—fallen humanity couldn't know God, but Christ's revelation and the Spirit's illumination enable true knowledge.

"And we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life" (kai esmen en tō alēthinō en tō huiō autou Iēsou Christō houtos estin ho alēthinos theos kai zōē aiōnios). Believers are in God through union with Christ. The final clause "This is the true God, and eternal life" likely refers to Jesus Christ (nearest antecedent), explicitly affirming His deity and identifying Him with

eternal life (John 1:1, 14:6). Christ is the true God incarnate and is Himself eternal life. This concluding Christological confession grounds all previous teaching—we know God, possess life, and overcome the world through Jesus Christ, who is true God and eternal life.

Historical Context

This verse is crucial for establishing Christ's deity against Arian and modern denials. "This is the true God, and eternal life" identifies Jesus Christ as *ho alēthinos theos*—the true God. John's Gospel prologue similarly affirms "the Word was God" (John 1:1) and Thomas's confession "My Lord and my God" (John 20:28). The early church's Christology developed from such clear biblical affirmations of Christ's full deity alongside His true humanity.

The phrase "we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ" establishes union with Christ as the means of relationship with God. No one comes to the Father except through Christ (John 14:6). This exclusive mediation through Christ challenged Jewish expectations of direct covenantal relationship and Gentile philosophical speculation about accessing the divine through reason or mysticism. Christianity maintains that knowing God and possessing life come exclusively through Jesus Christ, who is Himself the true God and eternal life.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How does Christ's giving you understanding enable you to know God truly, which was impossible before His coming?
2. What does it mean practically that you 'are in Him that is true' through union with Jesus Christ?

3. How does this clear affirmation that Jesus Christ 'is the true God and eternal life' affect your worship and confidence in salvation?

Interlinear Text

οἶδμεν δὲ ὅτι ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ Θεός, ἦκει καὶ δέδωκεν
we know **And** **that** ^{G3588} **Son** ^{G3588} **God** **is come** **and** **hath given**
G1492 G1161 G3754 G5207 G2316 G2240 G2532 G1325

ἡμῖν διάνοιαν ἵνα γινώσκωμεν τὸν ἀληθινὸς καὶ
us **an understanding** **that** **we may know** ^{G3588} **him that is true** **and**
G2254 G1271 G2443 G1097 G228 G2532

ἐσμεν ἐν τῷ ἀληθινὸς ἐν τῷ υἱὸς αὐτοῦ Ἰησοῦ
we are **even in** ^{G3588} **him that is true** **even in** ^{G3588} **Son** **his** **Jesus**
G2070 G1722 G228 G1722 G5207 G846 G2424

Χριστῷ οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ ἀληθινὸς Θεός, καὶ ἡ ζωὴ
Christ **This** **is** ^{G3588} **him that is true** **God** **and** ^{G3588} **life**
G5547 G3778 G2076 G228 G2316 G2532 G2222

αἰώνιος.
eternal
G166

Additional Cross-References

John 17:3 (Eternal Life): And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.

Luke 24:45 (Parallel theme): Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures,

John 14:9 (References Jesus): Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?

1 Timothy 3:16 (References God): And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.

Isaiah 44:6 (References God): Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God.

1 John 5:1 (References Jesus): Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.

1 John 4:16 (References God): And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.

John 20:28 (References God): And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.

Revelation 3:7 (Truth): And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth;

Isaiah 9:6 (Eternal Life): For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.