

1 Timothy Chapter 5 v 18 - 20

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[0 : 0 0] That's Isaiah and chapter 11. Over the past few weeks and in the studies as well on the Wednesday we've been thinking about those parts of the Old Testament which prophesy, promise, look forward to the coming of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Messiah into the world.

And Isaiah 11, Isaiah has many, many of those promises and prophecies and chapter 11 is one of them. So I'm going to read from chapter 11 of Isaiah verse 1 through to verse 9.

Chapter 11 verse 1. A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse. From his roots a branch will bear fruit.

The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him. The Spirit of wisdom and of understanding. The Spirit of counsel and of power. The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.

And he will delight in the fear of the Lord. He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes or decide by what he hears with his ears. But with righteousness he will judge the needy.

[1 : 1 9] With justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth. He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth. With the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked.

Righteousness will be his belt. And faithfulness the sash around his waist. The wolf will lie down with the lamb. The leopard will lie down with the goat.

The calf and the lion and the yearling together. And a little child will lead them. The cow will feed with the bear. Their young will lie down together.

And the lion will eat straw like the ox. The infant will play near the hole of the cobra. And the young child put his hand into the viper's nest.

They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain. For the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

[2 : 2 2] The young child put his hand into the sea.

The young child put his hand into the sea.

till the morning few saw the glory heard the story tidings of the gospel true as rejoicing free from sorrow gracious voice with the moral Christ the name was God for you Christ the name was God for you I'm going to ask you if you've got a Bible to hand if you'd turn to the first letter of John, that's 1 John and chapter 5 1 John and chapter 5 the very end of that chapter verse 18 to verse 20 so the first letter of John chapter 5 verse 18 verse 20 here's what John writes to believers verse 19 verse 20 we know that anyone born of God does not continue to sin the one who is born of God keeps him safe and the evil one cannot harm him we know that we are children of God and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one we know also that the son of God has come and has given us understanding so that we may know him who is true and we are in him who is true even in his son

Jesus Christ he is the true God and eternal life if you've been out choosing and looking for presents for your children or grandchildren or nieces or nephews then the presents you buy will tend to fall into one of two categories first of all there are those what we might call educational toys those things that you buy for your grandchildren or children or whatever like a chemistry set or a microscope or an encyclopedia or a book about facts something which has a dual purpose something that you hope they'll enjoy but you also expect that it'll be something that will stimulate them in their thinking and teach them something that they can learn these are the sort of toys that adults tend to choose for children then there are the toys that children would choose for themselves if they could toys with no ulterior motive except to play with a football a doll a nerf gun a games console these are the gifts that children want they have no ulterior purpose now the gift that God chose to give us at Christmas his son the Lord

Jesus Christ has a purpose but what is that purpose we've been thinking the last few Sunday mornings over the past weeks about why did Jesus Christ come why Christmas what's it all about and we looked at different reasons that the Bible gives concerning that he came to do God's will he came to enlighten which we thought about last week and this morning I want us to think about another reason why Jesus came into the world one that naturally follows on from last week where we looked at Jesus coming to give light to those in darkness to enlighten to illuminate and the reason that Jesus came that we're going to think about is given here in 1 John chapter 5 verse 20 where John says we know also that the Son of God has come and has given understanding the Son of God has come and given understanding the birth of the Lord

[7 : 35] Jesus Christ in the world was so that he might give us understanding now for many people they would be in agreement with that many people would say yes we think that Jesus Christ was a good teacher he came to teach us about God teach us about life to teach us morality and many people would read things like the Sermon on the Mount and say yes loving your neighbor that's a good thing and caring for people and being considerate and so on but of course there's much much more to that than simply being a great teacher in fact a great teacher a good teacher whether a school teacher or any type of teacher does much more than simply pass on information in fact it's a very poor teacher who does nothing more than the bare essentials of repeating the things that they know a teacher who simply reads from a book or a teacher that simply gives information is a poor teacher a good teacher is someone who gives the student understanding and understanding is to be able to grasp hold of and take on board what has been taught them so that they can explain it to somebody else in their own words it's not just knowledge it's understanding and so the things that Jesus came to teach us are things that we cannot understand apart from his work and the reality is that even the greatest teacher the Lord Jesus

Christ when he lived and when he taught there are many who did not understand not because he was poor teacher because he was the greatest and the reason why people do not understand the things of God the reason why people do not understand what Jesus taught and do not understand what God is like is not because they are incapacitated mentally it's not because we are thick it's not because we are stupid it's not because we are uneducated in that way rather it's because to understand the things of God we require something more than our brain this is what Paul writes when he talks about the gospel the good news being spoken and about people not understanding he says this is what we speak not in words taught by human wisdom but in words taught by the spirit expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words the person without the spirit does not accept the things that come from the spirit of God they are foolishness to him he cannot understand them because they are spiritually discerned elsewhere in this letter

John talks about those who are believers who have received an anointing to give them knowledge he says in 1 John chapter 2 verse 20 you have an anointing from the holy one and all of you know the truth what John is talking about is the work of God's holy spirit the one that Jesus promised to send to his disciples one of the lovely things about reading the gospels is of course is that when you read about the disciples the apostles who are often in some quarters elevated as great saints you realise that when they were with Jesus they were the most stupid people on earth they were just like us I'm not saying that they were terrible and I'm putting them down they were just like us they didn't grasp anything that Jesus said Jesus often had to say to them don't you yet understand don't you yet see don't you yet believe how foolish you are he would say but they spent three years being taught by Jesus seeing the things of God in the life of

Jesus but it wasn't until Jesus sent his spirit into their hearts and lives on the day of Pentecost that wow the light came on and they understood without the understanding that Jesus gives every single one of us remains ignorant and confused about God that's why we have so many religions in the world that's why we have so many different faiths and faith beliefs that's why you can speak to people today I spoke to people and each one of them had their own different view about God their own different view about life the world now it's not because as some would think in all of these different religions in all of these different beliefs they all contain some truth about God rather it's because every single one of us in our own understanding have foolishly thought that we can work God out for ourselves thought that we can come up with the answer the idea the wisdom on our own relying upon our knowledge of life and experience but the reality is is that we cannot we cannot understand God or know God by our own understanding we can't work him out we can't figure him out if I can put it that way what we need and what we must have is a knowledge of God that comes from what he's revealed in creation what he's revealed in his word which is the

Bible to us and especially what he's revealed in the person of Jesus Christ here again in the New Testament Paul explains on a couple of occasions what's happened to the thinking of people he says this the world through its wisdom did not know God later on in Romans he says although they that's people humanity claim to be wise they've become fools exchanging the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like men birds animals and so forth and that's the case if you look at the religions of the world on the whole they are simply doing this they are taking God and making him into their own image we want a God who's like this so we want a God who's like that and that's exactly what we have in our present society we have a God who's made in the image of what we want him to be and people will say well I've got every right to believe in God just as I think he is yes you do but it doesn't mean you're right it doesn't mean that's the true

[14 : 04] God Jesus by his understanding the understanding he came to bring into the world and that he gives is the understanding that goes beyond just a revelation of the person of God just an understanding to know what God is like that's the first thing that Jesus did and it's a wonderful thing as well but Jesus goes beyond that in his life we see God as he really is we see him merciful gracious patient loving yes just we see him just as much in the turning over the tables at the temple when he's angry with people who are cheating others and using God's house to thieve and to and to rob others and we see him just as much we see him in feeding the five thousand people who are hungry and needy healing the sick and raising the dead you see the understanding Jesus came to bring was not just outward to see what God is like but more than that for John goes on to say this we know also that the son of

God has come has given us understanding so that we may know him who is true there's many things of course in life that we can only understand through experience take for instance the wonderful blessing of love between a husband and wife you can read as many romantic Mills and Boons novels as you like you can watch as many soppy chick flicks as you want you can study psychology you can interview married couples you can get a doctorate as a married counselor but until you experience love for yourself then you haven't a clue what it's like you don't understand it and there's many other emotions and feelings like that in life and experiences in life that we go through that we can only understand when we've gone through them and though it's well meant and well intentioned one of the most annoying things and patronizing things we can say to somebody is to say I understand what you're going through when we have never been through it ourselves here John says that

Jesus has come so that we may give us understanding so that we may know him who is true who's that who is him who is true well it's God himself isn't it whose son is Jesus Christ the true God the real God the one and only God who exists compared to those pretend gods that people have invented created out their own imagination see whether we like it or not there is truth and there is error there is right and there is wrong there is no greyness when it comes to God he can't be the God of Islam and the God of Jesus Christ he can't be the God of the Hindu and the God of Jesus he can't be all those things at once he has to be either the true God or the false God and the reason that the son of God came the reason that Jesus Christ came into this world was this this very reason so that we can know God as he truly is so we can know what he's like rather than groping around in the darkness of our own imagination and ignorance to try and find some idea of life and the questions of life

God came to us to give us the correct the true view of himself and that's imperatively important because if we don't know the true God how can we hope and expect to be in heaven with the true God when we die if we don't know the truth how can we expect that to do us any good it's the same as anything else in the whole of life if you're given medication by your doctor to cure a particular illness whatever it may be but he foolishly or mistakenly gives you that which is not the right medication the right medication will you may take the medication think oh I'm going to get better with this this is going to do me good I'm going to be out of this illness or this disease or whatever it may be out of this pain very soon but it's not going to work is it because it's not the true medication it's not the right thing and so it is with God if we put our faith in or believe in a particular belief system where that belief system is atheism where that belief system is some other type of religion or our own making and we may think well we've got it right and that's going to be the answer to life and that's going to be the answer to when we die and the answer to what happens afterwards but we're wrong then that makes a great difference doesn't it because it means that everything that we thought everything we believed everything we've hoped in for life or death and beyond is wrong and it will all turn out badly so it's essential that we know the true God and that's exactly what

Jesus came to do not only to bring us the revelation of the true God but to bring us into relationship with the true God because that's what John means to give us understanding so that we may know him who is true not just know about him not just know facts not just know figures not just know statistics but that we might know him personally personally to know someone personally that's why we're told God's children earlier on in that verse 19 there's a world of difference isn't there between knowing about someone and knowing them personally on Friday at 3pm millions of people around the world will be watching the Queen give her Christmas speech to the Commonwealth many millions will see the Queen many millions will hear the Queen and therefore they will all know who the Queen is but only a tiny fraction of those people will know her her family her friends those who are closest to her they're the ones who know the

[20 : 08] Queen personally and so it is with God he has brought us not so that we can just find out about him but that we can be engaged with him and understand him and know him as the true God personally that's so close is that relationship that happens to the believer so close is that relationship that we have with God through Jesus Christ that John goes on to explain what he means at the end of verse 20 and we are in him who is true even in his son Jesus Christ we are in him who is true we sometimes speak don't we about someone who we love very much being very dear to us or close to us we may even go so far as saying they're in my heart they're in my heart we feel ourselves to be so united with them and bound to them that they are part of us and we are part of them and of course particularly in a loving relationship like of marriage we can feel as if and I haven't experienced this so I don't understand it but from what others have told me to lose your life partner your husband or your wife is to lose part of yourself you lose part of who you are because they have become such a part of you well dear friends that's what happens when you become a believer when you come into this knowledge and understanding of

God you become part of him and he becomes part of you now please don't misunderstand me I'm not saying that we become God or that God is somehow essentially we are essentially part of God no no I'm not saying that and I'm not saying that we have become God because we have been trained in that way but we have been brought together into this relationship with God one in which we receive from him everything we need a poor example but one I can think of only is this like a child in the womb that umbilical cord to their mother everything their blood their food that life itself is all supplied to them they are part of so this is what John says Christ came into the world to give us understanding but that understanding is to lead to and to bring about a knowledge of God which is a personal relationship with him which is again even closer than anything we've ever known in our human experience so that we are in him who is true and in Jesus Christ his son he is the true

God and eternal life so everyone who's been born of God because that's what it means that's the beginning of that Christian life the beginning of the Christian life begins with us being born of God God giving us life God raising us from the dead God meeting with us in a very real way so that we see things that we've never seen before we taste things we hear things we never heard before we become children of God brought into his family and for that very reason the Lord Jesus Christ the son of God came as a human being into the world at Christmas so that we could be one with this God and enter into the fullness of his love and life that's the goal the goal of Jesus' life death and resurrection was this we talk to the children about Christ coming to save and rescue us and that's so important that we know that it's so important that we remember that that Jesus Christ came to be the saviour of sinners he came so that we could be forgiven our sins against the holy God he came so that we could be saved from judgment and hell which we deserve and we we must all face judgment there's no there's no way out of that you and I will die and we will be judged by how we have lived and how we've related to

God how we've related to Jesus Christ his son yes yes God has done that in Christ to save us and rescue us and to save us from death itself so that there's not just obliteration or annihilation when we die there is existence which is either in hell from judgment or either in heaven from mercy and grace but above all dear friends the Lord Jesus Christ came into the world for this reason so that you and I could be brought into a living relationship with God he sent his son so that he could have us for himself such was his longing such was his desire such was his love for you and I that we might know him and enjoy him and relate to him and be part of him that Jesus Christ came into the world to live to die to rise again let me ask you dear friends as we get near to Christmas do you know this this is this is the thing about

John's letter he talks so much about no he says we know that we live in him and he in us we know that we are children of God we know that anyone born of God you know you could say well John you seem to be so arrogant you seem to be so certain of what you believe in how can you be so certain John how can you be so confident when many other people would say differently because he knows that he knows that he knows and there are some things that you know that you know that you know and it doesn't matter what other people say or think or imagine or contradict you just know and for the Christian that is the case we have entered into and we've been brought into this relationship with God which is not simply about us knowing something in our heads or being convinced of something by a theory or by some brain washing it's because we have come into a living dynamic breathing moving experience of the person of God himself and so Jesus has come in the world the son of

[26 : 23] God has come to give us understanding because we are ignorant and we can never work God out for ourselves from that understanding we've been brought to know him who is true that's a real well that's really to know the truth about who God is yes we've got so much more to learn about God there's so much more to be revealed about God and we shall see him as he truly is in heaven and all of his splendour and glory and be captivated by him but he's especially brought us into this place that we might be in him and him in us and as he says at the end there he is the true God and eternal life do you know that to be true of yourself this Christmas see John wrote this letter for our confidence our assurance God doesn't want us to be airy fairy about what we believe he doesn't want us just to be well I hope I think or perhaps he wants us to be sure as I was talking to people yesterday on the street one of the things that came across again is that people aren't sure they don't know they hope they think maybe perhaps they're not definite and that's really because in their minds and hearts their conscience is saying to them there's something iffy about this there's something uncertain about this it's like poor old Mr. Dawkins Richard

Dawkins with his great advert on the London buses there probably is no God man's not convinced is he there probably is no God so enjoy your life as Christians we can say there definitely is God and he wants you to enjoy life but it's through Jesus Christ his son do you know dear friends John writes his letter here earlier in chapter five I write these things to you who believe in the name of the son of God so that you may know you have eternal life it's not being arrogant saying I know that I put my faith in Jesus and I'm a Christian I'm going to heaven it's not self-confidence because our confidence is in him the true God God's desire dear friends is that we should have such confidence that we should know the devil wants us to doubt he wants us to be uncertain but Christ came so that we can have understanding and be sure this great gift that God has given in Jesus is that we might know that he is the true God and that we are his children let's just pray together for a moment before we sing our final hymn

Lord all of us this morning readily confess we don't know everything we readily confess there are many things that are a mystery to us many things that Lord we were frustrated with in one sense in not being sure of but we know you we know that you are faithful we know you are trustworthy we know you are good we know that you are gracious we know you because you've given us such evidence to the fact that you are the true God it's indisputable we can't argue with that but we know there's some of us Lord who struggle with this assurance we struggle with assurance that we're really Christians we don't feel worthy well we're not worthy we don't feel good enough no we'll never be good enough we look at ourselves and we have doubts and we struggle and we find things tough and and we feel ourselves to be sinful Lord all these things are normal for us but yet your desire is that we should know and have confidence in you and not in what we've done or what we believe or who we are in that sense but in you so I pray oh Lord that you would take this the words that we've been thinking about your word and that Lord Jesus you would give to each of us who is a believer who's put our faith in you that absolute assurance and confidence that we are yours and that you will keep us and save us and bring us into eternal life and though we stutter and fall at times and get it wrong that Lord your grace and your power is sufficient and I do want to pray because there's some of us here who've never known you Lord never never known that assurance never known that forgiveness never known that the reality of faith in Jesus and I pray that you would give us understanding we've got loads of questions loads of concerns loads of mixed feelings and thoughts rushing through our minds but Lord I ask that you would open our minds and give us understanding that Jesus Christ is the Son of

God and that he came into the world to be my Savior continue with us then through this day and especially as we come back together this afternoon for we ask it in Jesus name Amen Amen Now unto him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his presence in glory without fault and with great joy to the only God our Savior be glory majesty power and authority through Jesus Christ our Lord before all of time now today forevermore Amen