

More on 1 John 5:20

“And we know that the Son of God comes and has given us understanding so that we might know Him who is true, and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.”

The Trinitarian Claim

Many Trinitarians claim this verse identifies Jesus as “the true God.” They do this by insisting the antecedent to the word “this” is a reference back to “Jesus Christ” in the previous sentence. The claim involves implying the nearest antecedent for the word “this” should most readily be understood as the closest person mentioned in the preceding context.

Examination of the Claim

The word translated as “This” is the Greek word houtos. The word “this” requires an antecedent. It refers to something which has been mentioned or will be immediately mentioned. An antecedent is a noun or noun phrase to which the word “this” is referring. Trinitarians are attempting to suggest that the nearest person mentioned in the preceding context is always the most likely antecedent to the word “This” (houtos). However, grammatically speaking, the Trinitarian claim is very disingenuous, and in their passion to promote Trinitarian doctrine, they are simply not being honest with themselves. In both English and Greek, the antecedent is not the nearest word in the preceding context. The antecedent is rather the most recent subject under discussion. The most recent subject under discussion just might be the last thing mentioned prior to the word “This” but it commonly is not. And so Trinitarians are really resorting to a wishful thinking pattern in order to have it the way their desires want it to be.

In other words, if we used this Trinitarian line of reasoning, what would happen with the following statement?

”In New York city was a superb Chef in a fine restaurant. However, they had to fire the chef. He blinded the dishwasher by poking him in the eye with a fork from the customer. This was New York’s finest cook.”

If we used the Trinitarian line of reasoning, the customer is the very last thing mentioned, and according to their wishful argument, the customer is therefore “the nearest antecedent,” and we would all need to conclude that the word This really meant that this particular customer was the finest cook in New York city. It is a ridiculous claim. By just reviewing how people speak in both English and in Greek, we can easily see that the nearest antecedent is the most recent subject under discussion not the very last thing mentioned.

The Ludicrous Implications of the Trinitarian Claim

The Trinitarian claim is that we should consider the nearest word to “this” to be the antecedent to the word “This.” Notice carefully what happens if we use the Trinitarian method in these two verses from John:

Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This (houtos) is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son. 1 John 2:22.

For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This (houtos) is the deceiver and the antichrist. 2 John 1:7

Here are two passages, one from this selfsame letter of John, and one from his next letter. If we used the same Trinitarian line of reasoning for these two verses, we would need to conclude that the referent for the word “This” at 1 John 2:22 is the Christ and we would therefore have John saying that Christ is the antichrist and Christ denies the Father and the Son. We would need to conclude at 2 John 1:7 that the referent for “This” is the flesh of Jesus and we would therefore have John saying that Jesus’ flesh is the deceiver and the antichrist. The Trinitarian line of reasoning results in preposterous implications.

The following is a more literal translation:

“And we know that the Son of God comes and has given us understanding, to know the true one, and we are in the true one, in the son of him Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.”

It is quite clear that “Him who is true” is the Father for two reasons:

- 1) We read that the Son comes to give us understanding so that we might know “Him who is true.” Jesus has come to give us understanding of the Father that we might know God the Father through His Son.
- 2) We also read “we are in Him who is true, in HIS son Jesus Christ. Here we see that Him who is true has a son named Jesus, “HIS son Jesus Christ.” This is necessarily a reference to God the Father.

The Vocabulary of 1 John 5:20

The language of 1 John 5:20 militates against the Trinitarian claim. John is talking about “Him who is True” or more literally, “the One who is True,” or “the True One.”

And we know 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**, in **His** Son Jesus Christ. **This is the True God and eternal life.**

It is quite clear that the “Him” and “His” refers to the Father because we read that “Him who is true” is also the one who has a son named Jesus Christ, “HIS son Jesus Christ.”

It is therefore abundantly clear that “Him who is true” or “the True One” is the Father because we read that this identity has a son named Jesus, “HIS son Jesus Christ. Therefore, when we read, “This is the TRUE God,” we should most readily identify this with “Him who is TRUE,” that is, the Father.

It becomes quite clear that the person Jesus is not the antecedent to the word “This.” Rather, the antecedent is the one who has a son Jesus Christ, namely, God the Father.

If we read this with honesty and integrity, it is quite clear that the person Jesus Christ is not the antecedent.

The prayer of Jesus:

Father.... this is eternal life, that they **may know You, the only true God**, and Jesus Christ whom you sent. John 17:3 (see also 5:43-44).

Jesus is sent by the **only true God, the Father**.

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I would also like to add:

[Paul states] “To us there is **one God, the Father and no other God besides Him.**” That is precisely what the Jewish scribe had echoed back to Jesus, **agreeing with Jesus** [see Mark 12:29,32] on the unitary creed of Israel. Paul repeats the same view of God as a single Person: “There is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Messiah Jesus” (1 Tim. 2:5). “God is one person” (Gal. 3:20). God is in the Greek eis, one, masculine, i.e. one person, just as Jesus is the one seed, the one (eis) person who is the seed (Gal. 3:16), and the one (eis) teacher of the faithful (Matt. 23:8).” Anthony F. Buzzard