

*Nuggets and Gems from the Bible*

ETERNITY PAST,  
ETERNITY FUTURE,  
AND THE  
BRIDGE OF TIME

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***Living Stream Ministry***

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# ETERNITY PAST, ETERNITY FUTURE, AND THE BRIDGE OF TIME

[John chapter one](#) reveals the two sections of eternity. [John 1:1](#) refers to eternity in the past, for “the beginning” denotes eternity in the past. [Verse 51](#) refers to eternity in the future, for when the Lord told Nathanael that he would see the heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man, He was not speaking about the present, but about eternity in the future. If we put together these two sections of eternity, we have the whole of eternity.

In eternity past, Christ, as the Word, was with God and was God. In eternity past He was only God and only had divinity. Since the Word had not yet been incarnated, He was not a man and had no humanity.

In eternity future, Christ will not only be God, but also man. He will not only be the Son of God, but also the Son of Man. Since the Word has been incarnated in the flesh ([v. 14](#)), He is also a man, the Son of Man with humanity forever.

After the incarnation, He is still God, but God and man. He is still the Son of God, but the Son of God and the Son of Man. In addition to being the Son of God, for eternity in the future He will be the Son of Man. In eternity past He was God, solely and merely divine, having no humanity. However, in eternity future He will be God and man, the Son of God and the Son of Man, both divine and human, having divinity as well as humanity. He will have two natures, two essences, and two substances—divinity and humanity.

When Nathanael said to the Lord, “You are the Son of God; You are the King of Israel” (v. 49), Jesus told him that he would see “the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.” Who is greater—the Son of God or the Son of Man? Logically speaking, everyone would say that the Son of God is much greater than the Son of Man. Let me ask you, do you prefer to be the sons of man or the sons of God? Surely you would answer that you prefer to be the sons of God. Everyone desires to be a son of God. It certainly was wonderful for Nathanael to realize that Jesus, a little man from Nazareth, was the Son of God. Nevertheless, Jesus immediately replied that He was the Son of Man. Although men attempt to make Him great, He likes to remain small.

Which is more important—for Jesus to be the son of God or to be the Son of Man? If you are not careful in giving an answer, you may be involved in heresy. How difficult it is to answer such a question! The Lord is both the Son of God and the Son of Man. If He were not the Son of God, He could never be our life. If He were not the Son of Man, He could never be the essence of the building of God. The Son of God is for life, and the Son of Man is for building. The Bible never requires that we believe that Jesus is the Son of Man before we can have life. In order to have life, we must believe that Jesus is the Son of God. We all must believe that Jesus, the little Nazarene, is the Son of God. If we believe this, we have eternal life. After we have received eternal life, we must further realize that this Jesus who is the Son of God is also the Son of Man. His divinity is life to us, but His humanity is for the building of God. God's building needs His humanity. We need Jesus as the Son of God, but God needs Him as the Son of Man.

To us, Jesus is the Son of God, but to God and to the Devil, Satan, Jesus is the Son of Man. The Devil is not afraid of Jesus being the Son of God. He is afraid of Jesus being the Son of Man. A number of times when Jesus was casting demons

out of people and the demons addressed Him as the Son of God, Jesus silenced them ([Matt. 8:29](#); [Mark 3:11-12](#)), for, in front of them, He was acting as the Son of Man. When the Devil tempted Jesus in the wilderness by saying, “If You are the Son of God, speak that these stones may become loaves of bread” ([Matt. 4:3](#)), Jesus, resisting the temptation to forsake His position as the Son of Man, said, “*Man* shall not live on bread alone” ([Matt. 4:4](#)). Jesus maintained His standing as a man. Satan is not afraid of the Son of God; he is afraid of man. Why is Satan afraid of man? Because God, in His economy, has decided that Satan must be defeated by man.

God has no intention of dwelling in Himself. Divinity cannot be God’s dwelling. God’s intention in His economy is to dwell in humanity. God’s intention is to defeat His enemy, Satan, by man and to make humanity His dwelling place. Thus, both for the defeat of Satan and for the dwelling place of God, there is the need of humanity. If the Lord Jesus were only the Son of God, He would only be qualified to impart life into man. He would have no substance by which to defeat the enemy or to become the dwelling place of God. Praise the Lord that He is the Son

of God for us to have life, and He is the Son of Man for God to have a dwelling place.

Did God have a dwelling place of humanity in eternity past? Surely the answer is no. In [Isaiah 66:1](#), God says, “The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool:... where is the place of my rest?” Heaven is considered as God’s habitation ([Deut. 26:15](#); [1 Kings 8:49](#); [Psa. 33:13-14](#); [Isa. 63:15](#)); yet God says, “Where is the place of my rest?” God’s resting place is man gained by Him ([Isa. 57:15](#); [66:2](#)). Today God dwells in the heavens, but the heavens will not be His habitation for eternity in the new heaven and the new earth. In the new heaven and the new earth, God’s habitation for eternity will be the New Jerusalem, which is composed of all His redeemed saints and which will come down from heaven ([Rev. 21:1-3](#)). What will be God’s eternal habitation? The regenerated, transformed, uplifted, and built up humanity which will eventually become God’s dwelling place. God will not dwell with a natural humanity, but with a regenerated, transformed, uplifted, and built up humanity. This humanity is regenerated, transformed, united, and built together by the divine life. The divine life will uplift our humanity to such a standard that we will become God’s dwelling place.

**John 1** reveals Christ as both the Son of God and the Son of Man. He is the Son of God to impart God into us as our life, and He is the Son of Man to be the very essence of the building of God's house. In eternity past there was no humanity, and there was no dwelling place for God. In eternity future there will be humanity, and God will have a dwelling place.

## **ON THE BRIDGE OF TIME**

**John 1** reveals the two sections of eternity. How can God, who had no humanity in eternity past, have humanity in eternity future as His dwelling place? This will not happen overnight. Between these two sections of eternity is the bridge of time. In eternity past God planned and purposed, but He did not do anything. In eternity future God will not do anything, because, at that time, everything will have been accomplished. In eternity future He will simply enjoy His finished work. In eternity past He planned, and in eternity future He will enjoy. Everything that God needs to accomplish He accomplishes on the bridge of time. God is driving the car of His economy from the first section of eternity, through the bridge of time, into the last section of eternity. By driving His car across



the bridge of time, all the necessary work is completed. Once God has traveled from eternity past, through the bridge of time, and into eternity future, He will declare, “Finished!” In eternity future God will enjoy His finished work.

How long is this bridge of time? It may be more or less than six thousand years long. On this bridge of time God accomplishes five things, and we need to consider each of them in turn. We begin with creation.

## CREATION

[John 1:3](#) says, “All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being which has come into being.” Creation brings things into being. The meaning of creation is to call things not being as being ([Rom. 4:17](#)). The purpose of creation is to produce a receptacle to receive God as life. Consider the items in creation: the heavens, the earth, the billions of physical things, and man. What is the most important item in creation? Nothing is more important than man. Man is a V.I.P., a very important person. According to the Bible, the heavens are for the earth, and the earth is for man ([Zech. 12:1](#)). Everything is for man. The minerals, the vegetable life, and the animal life

are all for man. The air, sunshine, and rain supply the vegetable life; the vegetable life is for the animal life, and both the vegetable life and the animal life are for man. All the living things on the earth are for man. Man, for whom all these things are, is for God, receiving God and fulfilling His purpose. There is a spirit within man which is the very receiver of God. By His creation, God produced the heavens for the earth, the earth for man, and man with a spirit as a receiver to receive God as his life.

Man is the center of the universe. Man, the center of the universe, has a mouth for eating and for calling. Eating is our most important daily activity. Regardless of how busy a person may be, he will take time to eat every day. Most people eat several times a day. Do not feel ashamed to say that your most important daily activity is eating. I am a good eater. I eat both material food and spiritual food, which is Christ. I eat the Lord by calling, "O Lord Jesus." Eating the Lord is an important matter. All the silent Christians are being starved to death. I was such a dumb, silent Christian for years, and I nearly died. But today I am an eating Christian. I eat by calling on the name of the Lord. God created

us with a spirit and with a mouth that we might receive Him as our life.

Have you ever thanked God for His creation? You need to say, “O God, my Creator, I thank You that You have created the heavens, the earth, and everything in it. I thank You for creating me. I thank You, Lord, that You created me with a spirit and a mouth.” Many Christians have never thanked the Lord for creating them with a spirit and a mouth.

[Romans 8:16](#) shows the importance of our spirit, and [Romans 10:9-10](#) shows the importance of our mouth. Justification is related to our heart, and salvation is related to our mouth. Although many Christians say that it is sufficient to have a believing heart, [Romans 10](#) makes it clear that we also need a mouth. We need to believe with our heart and call on the Lord with our mouth. The more you say, “O Lord Jesus,” the more you will be saved. Why are you so weak? Because you do not call on the name of the Lord Jesus. If you call on Him, you will be empowered. Many Christians only know how to talk about their weaknesses. They do not realize that the reason they are so weak is that they do not use their lips and their tongue to confess the name of the Lord. “Every tongue should openly

confess that Jesus Christ is Lord” (Phil. 2:11). Hallelujah for our spirit and our mouth! We have a spirit within and a mouth without. Our spirit, our mouth, and our whole being come from God’s creation. Oh, how we need to worship God for His creation. We owe Him a debt of thanks for creating us. Even at the Lord’s table we need to thank the Lord for His creation. Creation was the first item on the bridge of time.

## **INCARNATION:**

### ***To Bring God into His Creation—Man***

The second item was incarnation (1:14). Without creation there would have been no way for God to be incarnated. Creation prepared the way and afforded Him the means to be incarnated. Creation brought things into being, and incarnation brought God into His creation. God waited approximately four thousand years after the creation of Adam before becoming incarnated. One day, He was incarnated, and there was on earth the little man Jesus with God in Him. God was wrought into that man. That was the greatest miracle of all. By incarnation, God was brought into mankind and became one with man. Divinity and humanity became one unit.

Between eternity in the past and eternity in the future is a gap, with time as a bridge to span it. On this bridge called time, Christ as the Word of God, through whom all things were created, was incarnated as a man. Creation was the first event on the bridge of time, and incarnation was the second. Creation means that things not being are brought into being through the Word. Before creation, nothing existed, but by Christ's creation all things came into existence. Incarnation is God coming into His creation. Although everything created by God was perfect and good, yet nothing of creation had been joined to God. Creation was but a preparatory step for incarnation. God firstly brought all created things into existence so that He could later become one with His creation. This is the reason that God created the heavens, the earth, and man as the center of the universe. It was His design to prepare creation so that He could join Himself to it. "The Word became flesh" means that God joined Himself to His creation by His incarnation. In incarnation, the flesh which God put on became His tabernacle (1:14). This tabernacle was the building of God on a small scale; it was a miniature of the New Jerusalem, God's tabernacle in eternity (Rev. 21:2-3). By creation,

God brought all things of the universe into existence; by incarnation, He mingled Himself with man, who is the center of His creation. The purpose of God in creation and incarnation is to fulfill His desire of mingling Himself with humanity and to make humanity a living habitation for Himself. He is not satisfied with heaven as His abode. He desires to build a living dwelling place with living people. Thus, He created man as the center of His creation and mingled Himself with man by incarnation so that He might make man His living habitation in the universe.

### *To Declare God*

Incarnation is not only to bring God into His creation, but also to declare God to man in the Word, in life, in light, in grace, and in truth. In the incarnation, the Word, which is Christ as God, became flesh. The Word is God expressed, explained, and defined so that man may understand God. Life is God imparted that man may receive Him. Light is God shining that man may be enlightened to apprehend Him. Grace is God enjoyed by man that man may share His riches. Truth is God realized by man that man may have Him as reality. In total, it is through these five things that God is fully declared to

man in order that man may partake of and enjoy Him as everything.

## REDEMPTION

The third item on the bridge of time is redemption ([John 1:29](#)). After living on the earth for thirty-three and a half years, the Lord went to the cross as the Lamb of God. The Lamb of God is for redemption. Through redemption, the Lord recovered fallen man and separated him from sin. By means of redemption, God not only removed sin, but also terminated the entire old creation. The very Jesus who was crucified on the cross took the old creation with Him into the tomb. When He was raised from the dead, He left the old creation in the tomb and came out in resurrection as the head of the new creation.

## ANOINTING

Anointing follows redemption. The anointing comes by way of the dove, the Spirit, which is the continuation of the Lamb ([John 1:32](#)). The Lamb has removed sin and terminated the old creation, and the dove, the Spirit, has come to regenerate; impart life, transform, unite, and build. The dove, the Spirit, regenerates the created

man, transforms the natural man, and unites the transformed man. We may be in any one of three situations. We may be a created man who needs to be regenerated. We may be a regenerated man who is still quite natural and who needs to be transformed. We may be a transformed man who is still separate and individualistic and who needs to be united with others. If we are properly transformed, we would be willing to be united with others. So, firstly, we need to be regenerated; secondly, we need to be transformed; and thirdly, we need to be united for the building. The dove, the Spirit, regenerates, transforms, and unites. We are all under the anointing of the dove, the Spirit. Although we may not realize it or may be ignorant of it, the Lord is working to transform us.

I have the full assurance that all of the Lord's people eventually will be transformed. Sooner or later, we shall all be transformed. Transformation does not depend on us; it depends on Him. He has chosen us and ordained us, and we cannot escape Him. If we try to escape, we will simply waste our time and give Him a little trouble. Do not even say that you can delay Him, for with Him a thousand years are as one day. It is easy for Him to be patient with you.



Eventually, every brother and sister will be transformed. When we enter into the New Jerusalem, we shall see that everyone is jasper, precious stone ([Rev. 21:11](#)).

The Lord is truly doing a transforming work within us. He is not a great eagle, but a little dove—the life-giving Spirit ([1 Cor. 15:45](#)). This little dove is the continuation of the little Lamb. Since the Lamb has died on the cross, the dove now in resurrection has His turn to work. Day by day, the little dove as the life-imparting Spirit speaks within you, rebuking you and touching your heart or conscience. Often, as you are in a department store, the dove bothers you from within. Do not expect a big experience or a sudden change. Expect the little dove to move and work within you all the time. We have become involved in a process from which there is no escape. This involvement is continuous and permanent. In a sense, we have inward rest; in another sense, the little dove troubles us constantly. The inward working of this little dove is the anointing.

We all are under the process of transformation. I have observed that certain brothers and sisters have experienced a significant change due to the dove's transforming work. If you say that

you do not like the church life and decide to leave it, you will find that you cannot escape the transforming work of the indwelling dove. Who can escape the way of the Lord? Once we are caught, there is no escape. We may say, “I don’t like it,” but He says, “I like you so much. You don’t like Me, but I like you. The more you dislike Me, the more I like you.” What shall we do? What shall we say? We should do nothing and should just say, “O Lord Jesus.” Once you have been captured by the Lord for the church life, you are “hooked” for transformation, and there is nothing that you can do to escape it. You may not like it, but what can you do? Where will you go? There is no place to go. This is our destiny. God has destined us to be transformed for His building.

## **BUILDING**

After creation, incarnation, redemption, and anointing, we have building. This building is for the house of God. God is building a dwelling place for Himself, and He is using transformed people as the stones ([John 1:42](#)). Praise the Lord that we are not only undergoing the work of transformation, but are also in the process of building. What God needs is not a great number

of stones, but a house. For eternity God needs a builded house, a Bethel, as His habitation.

In order for the Lord to come back, He needs the nation of Israel to be prepared and the church to be built. Look at Israel: she is nearly ready. But Israel needs the church to match her. Although Israel is nearly ready, the church is not yet prepared. The Lord does not care for the number of people. Even if only a small number are completely processed, saturated, transformed, and built by and with Him, it will be sufficient. I do not speak this lightly.

The coming of the Lord will not be according to our natural concept. The religionists did not understand His first coming and neither will they understand His second. Do not follow the religious way of understanding the Lord's coming. You must take the way of life. If you are in the way of life, then you know the way in which He will come. It will be a "sneaky" way. The Bible tells us that the Lord will return as a thief ([Rev. 3:3](#); [16:15](#)). He will not come as a visitor who knocks at your door. He will come in a stealthy way as a thief. You may miss Him. If you keep yourself in the way of life, you will see that the Lord will come in such a hidden way. He will come in a mysterious way, in the way of life.

The Lord's coming back needs a solid building of His seekers. This building will be a stepping stone, a beach-head, for Him to take the earth, and it will be a mutual abode for both God and man. It will be the mingling of divinity with humanity and of humanity with divinity forever. Christ once was only divine. In order for Him to be the Son of Man, He must have the human life and the human nature. We are human, but we can be born of God to become the children of God (1:12-13). In order for us to be the children of God, we must have the divine life and the divine nature. Eventually, He, the divine One, has the human life and the human nature, and we, the human ones, will have the divine life and the divine nature. Thus, He and we, we and He, will be exactly the same in life and in nature. This is the mingling of divinity with humanity, and this is the mutual abode of God's building. This building will be the ultimate fulfillment not only of Jacob's dream, but of God's eternal plan. It will terminate the bridge of time and usher in the blessed eternity in the future. We must be for that building and we must be that building!

After all of these five items have transpired, we shall enter into eternity future with the Lord.

At that time, He will be both the Son of God and the Son of Man. As the Son of God, He will be life to us, and as the Son of Man, He will be the dwelling place for God. We shall be joined to and even mingled with Him, and we shall enjoy eternity with Him forever. Nathanael, and all of us with him, will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man. This is the revelation found in [John chapter one](#).

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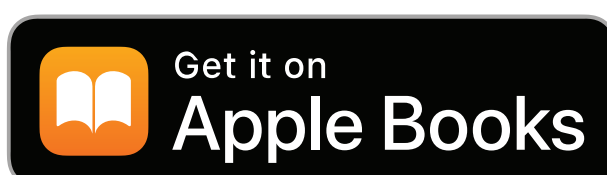
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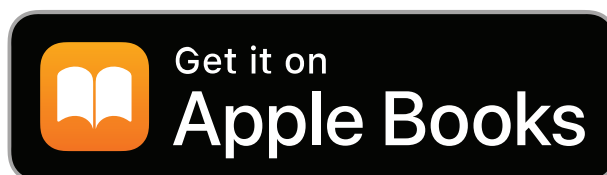
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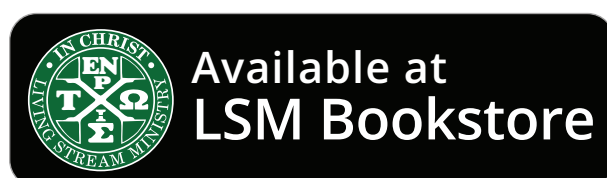


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## **LIFE'S PRINCIPLE— TO CHANGE DEATH INTO LIFE**

The book of John presents several cases to illustrate the matter of life. Although Jesus did a great many signs in the presence of His disciples (20:30-31), John selected not more than twelve of them to illustrate the matter of life. Beginning with the case of Nicodemus in [chapter 3](#) and ending with the resurrection of Lazarus in [chapter 11](#), nine cases are presented. If we add the incidents of the changing of water into wine, of the cleansing of the temple, and of the washing of feet, we have a total of twelve events. All the cases recorded by John prove that Christ is life to meet our need. Based upon this principle, we must realize that the incident of changing water into wine (2:1-11) is not merely the account of a story; it has spiritual meaning with a special significance. We need to find out the spiritual significance of this event.

### **THE PRINCIPLE OF CHANGING DEATH INTO LIFE**

When I first heard the story of Jesus' changing water into wine, I did not know the meaning

behind this event. Later, I came to understand that this was not simply a story but an event accomplished by the Lord Jesus to establish the principle of life. What is the principle of life? The principle of life is to change death into life. In each of the nine cases recorded from [chapters 3 through 11](#), the principle is to change death into life. This is especially clear with the case of Lazarus. Lazarus was dead and had been buried for four days. He even smelled. He was full of death from top to bottom and from the inside to the outside. In every layer and corner of his being there was nothing but death. As the record of [chapter 11](#) tells us, when the Lord Jesus learned that Lazarus was sick, He did not go to see him. He waited until he was full of death, until he was dead and buried. Then He came to raise Lazarus from the dead. If we apply the principle of life to that case, we see that Jesus changed death into life.

This principle applies not only to the last case, that of Lazarus, but also to the first case, that of Nicodemus. Do you think that Nicodemus was not a person full of death? Because he was full of death, the Lord told him that he needed to be born again so that he might have the eternal life, which is God Himself ([3:3, 5-6](#)). In a sense, Nicodemus was living, but in the eyes of God, he was a living

dead person. In God's eyes, Nicodemus was dead. He also needed his death to be changed into life. Nicodemus did not even realize that he was sinful, much less that he was dead. Nevertheless, in the eyes of God, he was sinful, serpentine, and dead. As such a person, he needed the changing of death into life.

The same is true with the Samaritan woman in [chapter 4](#). The Samaritan woman was thirsty, and thirst is a sign of death. When you are thirsty, it means that you are going to die. The fact that you are thirsty indicates that you have death's element within you. Only the Lord Jesus can quench that thirst. To quench thirst means to change death into life. And so it is with every case recorded by John. Each incident illustrates the principle established in the event of changing water into wine—the principle of changing death into life.

## **JESUS COMING IN RESURRECTION**

Now we need to see that Jesus came in resurrection to weak and fragile people. Some may ask, "How could Jesus come in resurrection when He had not been crucified yet? To say this is to allegorize." Yes, the whole story of changing water into wine is an allegory, and we need to allegorize every part of it.

The day upon which this sign was accomplished was “the third day” (2:1). “The third day” signifies the day of resurrection (Acts 10:40; 1 Cor. 15:4). In John 1 the words *the next day* are used three times, in verses 29, 35, and 43. Why does it say “the next day” three times in chapter 1 and then speak of “the third day” in 2:1? “The third day” in chapter 2 should not actually be called the third day, but the fifth. Perhaps you should go to John and argue with him, saying, “Brother John, you did something wrong. You have three ‘next days,’ and so the day mentioned in 2:1 should be the fifth day.” John would reply, “Dear brother, that was why I did not speak of the second day, third day, and fourth day in chapter 1, but called each of them ‘the next day’ until I called the day in chapter 2 ‘the third day.’” None of the events which transpired on the “next days” in chapter 1 were in resurrection.

Let us look at the three “next days” in chapter 1. “The next day [John] saw Jesus coming to him and said, Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (v. 29). Was that in resurrection? Certainly not. How can you say that was in resurrection? “Again the next day John was standing with two of his disciples, and looking at Jesus walking, he said, Behold, the Lamb of

God!” (vv. 35-36). Although this happened on the second “next day,” it did not occur on “the third day.” The third “next day” is found in [verse 43](#). “The next day He wanted to go forth into Galilee, and He found Philip. And Jesus said to him, Follow Me.” This did not happen on “the third day,” because “the third day” is the day of resurrection. None of the events mentioned in [chapter 1](#) transpired on “the third day,” that is, in resurrection. Only as we come to the changing of water into wine in [chapter 2](#) do we find mention of “the third day.”

### COMING TO WEAK AND FRAGILE PEOPLE IN A DESPISED PLACE

How do we know that in [John 2](#) Jesus came to weak and fragile people? We know it by the fact that He went to Cana and that *Cana* in Hebrew means “reed.” A reed in the Scriptures signifies weak and fragile people. Both Isaiah and Matthew say that we, the weak people, are the “bruised reed,” which the Lord will not break ([Isa. 42:3](#); [Matt. 12:20](#)). In [Matthew 11:7](#) the Lord, when referring to John the Baptist, asked the Jews if they went out into the wilderness to see a reed shaken by the wind. Of course, John the Baptist was not such a weak, fragile person who could be shaken by the wind.

The whole world is a Cana, full of weak and fragile people to whom the Lord came. The Lord's coming to Cana signifies His coming into a world full of weak and fragile people. Although the people of this earth, like reeds, are weak and fragile, the Lord came to them in resurrection.

The wedding that Jesus attended in [John 2](#) was in Cana of Galilee. Galilee was a place despised by people ([7:52](#)). As a despised place, Galilee signifies the low and mean condition of the world.

## **THE CONTINUATION AND ENJOYMENT OF HUMAN LIFE**

We must allegorize the wedding and the wedding feast. Marriage is very significant and essential to human life, for without it human life is hindered. If you eliminate marriage, you terminate human life. Marriage signifies the continuation of human life. What does the wedding feast signify? It signifies the enjoyment and pleasure of human life. Nothing on earth is a more joyful occasion than a wedding. Have you ever seen people weep mournfully at a wedding? If you were to weep in such a way at a wedding, it would mean that you are impolite or uncultured. When attending a funeral, on the contrary, you are not permitted to be joyful. When attending a wedding, however, you

must be happy. According to human culture, a wedding is a joyful occasion.

The marriage feast, whether in ancient times or in the present, whether in the East or in the West, depends primarily on wine, which typifies that all human pleasure depends on life. Since wine, unlike water, derives its source from grapes, it comes from something living. Wine signifies life, for the wine of the grapes is the life of the grapes. Thus, the enjoyment of man depends upon the life of man. When life is brought to an end, all enjoyment is gone.

## **HUMAN LIFE RUNNING OUT**

Although a wedding is a very joyful occasion, its joy is temporary. No wedding lasts very long. Recently, I attended a wedding that lasted a little longer than half an hour. We were happy there for only half an hour. This is the human wedding, the human enjoyment.

The wine, which was the center of the enjoyment of the wedding feast, ran out (2:3). This signifies that the enjoyment of human life will be terminated when human life runs out. When the wine runs out, the pleasure of the marriage feast is gone. This signifies not only that the enjoyment of life is over but also that human life is

finished. Regardless of how much pleasure you are enjoying, when your human life is ended, all your human enjoyment also is gone. Regardless of how good your wife, your husband, your parents, your children, or your job may be, if your life has come to an end, your pleasure is gone. When the wine has been exhausted, the feast is over, for the feast is dependent upon the wine. All your enjoyment depends upon your life. If your life is terminated, your enjoyment is brought to an end. Regardless of the kind of wedding you are in, when your human life runs out, your wedding is terminated and the enjoyment is over. That is what happened that day in Cana of Galilee.

Do you not believe that before the Lord Jesus went to Cana, He realized that the wine would run out? Surely He knew it ahead of time, for that was the reason that He went to Cana. The wine did not run out by accident. The Lord Jesus foreknew that the wine would be exhausted, and He went to Cana to establish the principle of life—changing death into life. By coming to the marriage feast, He came to deal with and to heal the situation. The Lord healed death in the human situation by turning it into life, in the same way that Elisha healed the bad water by making it fresh ([2 Kings 2:19-22](#)).

When the Lord came into the world, He came



into a situation where human enjoyment existed but was not lasting. He came into a situation where the death of human life terminates all human enjoyment. The changing of water into wine is a sign that must be understood figuratively. When our wine is about to run out, we know that our marriage feast will soon be over. But, praise the Lord, it is at such a time that the Lord comes into our situation. In our marriage feast we have the Lord! We need not be afraid, for He can change the water into wine.

## **MANKIND FILLED WITH DEATH**

Before doing the miracle, the Lord told the people to fill the waterpots with water ([John 2:6-7](#)). These water containers, made of stone, were six in number. The number six represents created man, because it was on the sixth day that man was created ([Gen. 1:27, 31](#)). Therefore, the six stone waterpots signify the natural man, who was created on the sixth day. Naturally speaking, we are nothing but “waterpots,” vessels to contain something. We, the “waterpots,” were located in Cana, the land of reeds, full of weak and fragile people. We were the waterpots in Cana, weak and fragile.

The waterpots were used in the Jewish rites of purification ([John 2:6](#)), a practice of the Jewish

religion. The Jewish rites of purification with water signify religion's attempt to make people clean by certain dead practices. The ancient Jews took care of washing themselves and of keeping themselves clean and pure in God's worship. The Lord, on the contrary, changes death into life. The ritual purification with water is outward, without life, but the Lord's changing death into life is from within and is full of life.

The Lord told the servants to fill the waterpots with water, and they filled them up to the brim (v. 7). What does this mean? As we will see, it signifies that human beings are filled with death. The waterpots, that is, mankind created on the sixth day, are filled with the waters of death.

## **JESUS CHANGING DEATH INTO LIFE ETERNAL**

The Lord's commanding the people to fill the six vessels with water indicated that the natural man is full of death. Water in the Scriptures has two symbolic meanings. In some cases it stands for life (4:14; 7:38); in others, for death (Gen. 1:2, 6; Exo. 14:21; Matt. 3:16). The waters in Genesis 1 and the water of baptism signify death. Similarly, in the instance at Cana, water signifies death. All the stone vessels were full of water, meaning that

all humanity is naturally full of death. Just as the waterpots were filled to the brim with water, so we were filled with death.

The Lord Jesus marvelously changed this death water into wine ([John 2:8-9](#)). This miracle shows not only that the Lord Jesus can call things not being as being ([Rom. 4:17](#)) but also that He can change death into life.

The Lord's miraculous changing of water into wine signifies that He changes our death into life. The water signifies death, and the wine signifies life. When the Lord changes our water into wine, that wine in our marriage feast will never end. The Lord changes our water into wine by regenerating us with the divine, eternal life ([John 3:6](#)). Since we have been regenerated, the divine life with its spiritual enjoyment will last forever. We will have an eternal marriage feast that will never end. This feast is not in our original life but in the new life that we received through regeneration. Even as the master of the feast discovered that the new wine was better than the former wine ([2:9-10](#)), so we too will find that the life we receive through regeneration is much better than our natural life. Our former life, symbolized by the poor wine, was greatly inferior. The Lord did not give us the best first but the best last. The first

life, the human, created life, is an inferior life; the best life is the second life, the divine and everlasting one. This life is the best because it is the life of God Himself in Christ. So, our pleasure will last forever and ever. We have everlasting enjoyment, for Christ has translated us from death into life (5:24). He, as our everlasting, eternal life, can maintain our pleasures and enjoyment forever and ever. A new marriage feast began when we were saved, and it will never end. There is always joy within, and there is always a marriage feast within, because we have the divine wine, which is the divine life—the Lord Himself (11:25).

We all have had this kind of experience. Before we were saved, we were waterpots filled with death water. One day we said, “Lord Jesus,” and He came and changed our death water into life. Regardless of the kind of death situation we might be in, if we turn our case over to the Lord Jesus, He will change that death into life. For example, even Christian husbands and wives may reach a point in their married life when the life runs out of their marriage. It seems that they are unable to go on in their married life. However, if they open to the Lord Jesus, He will change that death into life. In many marriages the Lord has changed death water into life wine.

## THE BEGINNING OF SIGNS

In the Gospel of John all the miracles done by the Lord are called signs (2:23; 3:2; 4:54; 6:2, 14, 26, 30; 7:31; 9:16; 10:41; 11:47; 12:18, 37; 20:30). They are miracles, but they are used as signs to signify the matter of life. The word translated “miracles” in the King James Version is a word that means “signs” in Greek. A sign is that which signifies something. For instance, a red light is a sign that tells us to stop. All the miracles performed by the Lord Jesus as recorded in the Gospel of John were not only miracles but also signs.

The first mentioning of anything in the Scriptures sets forth the principle of that particular matter. Therefore, the first sign here sets forth the principle of all the following signs, that is, to change death into life. The Lord’s changing water into wine establishes the principle of life—changing death into life. Since this is the first sign, the principle of life that is set forth in it can be applied to all the other cases. For example, it can be applied to Nicodemus, a person full of death, who needed to be born again so that he might have the eternal life, which is God Himself (3:2-16).

We may also apply this principle to the case of the Samaritan woman in [chapter 4](#). Do you think

that the Samaritan woman had a life full of pleasure and enjoyment? No, but the Lord came into her life, and He changed her. That woman was simply a vessel in which the wine of human enjoyment had run out. She tried five husbands, but eventually her human enjoyment ended with no wine. She tried her best to enjoy the wine of human pleasures, but finally she felt only emptiness and death. Then the Lord turned that death into life and filled her with the divine wine of His eternal life.

**Chapter 5** shows a man who was sick for thirty-eight years. His sickness indicated that the wine was gone, but the Lord came to change his death into life. In the eyes of the Lord, he was not only sick but also dead, because later in **verse 25** the Lord said that the dead will hear His voice and will live. He was not only a sick man healed by the Lord but also a dead man raised by the Lord. He was even weak and dead in religion. Although religion may be quite good, it requires energy. How could a dead man have energy? Consequently, he could do nothing with religion, for his wine had run out. But the Lord came to apply the principle of changing the death into life, as seen in the first sign.

We may also apply this principle to the other

cases. The hunger of the multitude in [chapter 6](#) reveals that their human enjoyment had come to an end, but the Lord came to them as the bread of life. The sinful woman in [chapter 8](#) also was one whose wine of enjoyment had run out. The blind man in [chapter 9](#) also had no enjoyment of the human life. This is especially true with the case of Lazarus in [chapter 11](#). The main points of the case of Lazarus, in principle, are the same as those of the first case, the marriage feast at Cana. In the first case there was the enjoyment of the marriage feast. In the case of Lazarus there was the pleasure of the family love between Lazarus and his two sisters. In the wedding feast the wine ran out; in the case of Lazarus the human life ran out. Lazarus died, indicating that the wine of human life had run out. In both cases the principle of life was exactly the same: the Lord came into both situations and changed death into life. Therefore, the principle of life set forth in the incident of changing water into wine can be applied to every case throughout the Gospel of John.

In the Scriptures, figuratively speaking, the tree of life is the source of life, and the tree of knowledge is the source of death, as revealed in [Genesis 2:9](#) and [17](#). In all the cases recorded in the Gospel of John, the significance always corresponds,

in principle, with the tree of life resulting in life and the tree of knowledge resulting in death.

[John 2:11](#) says that in this beginning of signs that Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, He also manifested His glory, and His disciples believed into Him. The Lord's divinity was manifested in His changing death into life.

## **MARY SIGNIFYING THE NATURAL MAN**

In the incident of the marriage feast in Cana, Mary, the mother of Jesus, signifies the natural man, which has nothing to do with life and which must be subdued by the divine life ([vv. 3-5](#)). When the wine was exhausted, the natural man came out and even prayed to the Lord. When Mary told the Lord, "They have no wine," He said to her, "Woman, what do I have in this that concerns you? My hour has not yet come" ([vv. 3-4](#)). Often we are exactly like the mother of Jesus. We are today's Mary, praying as a natural man according to our natural life. Frequently, the Lord will allow the wine in certain situations to run out in order that He may have an opportunity to change death into life. In such a case the natural man will pray, "O Lord, do something to rescue the situation." If you pray in this way, the Lord will turn to you and say, "What have I to do with you?"



You have nothing to do with Me in this matter.” Nearly all of us would act the same way Mary did. What then should we do? We should not do anything. Let the death come to the surface and be exposed. Then the Lord Jesus will come in.

Quite often I have received letters from individuals or from churches who are crying for help, saying, “Brother, we are so weak. Please come to help us.” Whenever I have received such a letter, I said, “You are weak, but you are not yet dead. Even if you are dead, you have not yet begun to smell.” We need to wait until the death situation comes to the surface; then the Lord Jesus will come in to change death into life. Everything that the Lord does is according to this principle of changing death into life.

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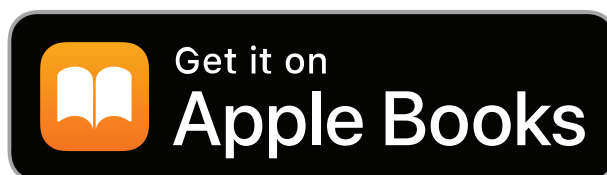
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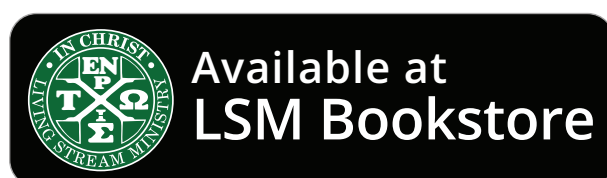


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## LIFE'S PURPOSE— TO BUILD THE HOUSE OF GOD

It is quite interesting to see that in [John 2](#) we first have the case of changing water into wine ([vv. 1-11](#)) and then, following that, the case of dealing with the temple ([vv. 12-22](#)). We must believe that both of these cases were recorded for the purpose of signifying something beyond the mere account of historical events. In the incident of the Lord's changing water into wine, we can see the principle of life, that is, to change death into life. Why does the dealing with the temple then follow the changing of death into life? It shows that life is for God's temple. In other words, life is for God's building. So, in the case of the dealing with the temple, we see the goal, the purpose of life, that is, to build the house of God.

### JESUS CLEANSING THE TEMPLE

[John 2:12-22](#) shows two aspects of the Lord's dealing with the temple—the cleansing aspect and the building aspect. Satan, the enemy of God, is always trying to damage or to frustrate the temple of God. He attempts to defile it with many

sinful things. This is the reason that the house of God needs cleansing.

Jesus cleansed the temple at a time when “the Passover of the Jews was near” (v. 13). The Passover at that time was a remembrance of God’s salvation (Exo. 12:2-11; Deut. 16:1-3), through which remembrance the Jews worshipped God in their temple. But when the Lord Jesus went up to Jerusalem, their temple was filled with oxen, sheep, doves, and money-changers. Thus, the temple needed a cleansing, and the Lord Jesus did it.

The Passover was a prefigure of our remembrance of the Lord (1 Cor. 11:24-25). And we are the temple of God (3:16). It is very possible that when we come to the Lord’s table meeting to remember Him, we are filled with earthly things. Thus, we also need a cleansing so that we may be the proper temple of God.

## **THE CLEANSING OF THE TEMPLE**

Let us read [John 2:14-16](#): “He found in the temple those selling oxen and sheep and doves, and the moneychangers sitting there. And having made a whip out of cords, He drove them all out of the temple, as well as the sheep and the oxen, and He poured out the money of the money-changers and overturned the tables. And to those

who were selling the doves He said, Take these things away from here; do not make My Father's house a house of merchandise." The Lord dealt with the house of God by cleansing it with a scourge, or a whip, made of cords. The King James Version says that the Lord made "a scourge of small cords," but some versions say that the Lord made a scourge, or whip, out of rushes, which are inexpensive and ordinary. The Lord made a scourge or whip of ordinary things, of rushes, and used it to cleanse the temple. He drove out the sheep and oxen and poured out the coins of the moneychangers. That signified the casting out of all earthly occupations. We are the temple of God, yet we are not filled with God. We are filled with so many things other than God. Although we, as the house of God, should be filled with God, yet the fact is that we are filled with merchandise, money, and tables of the moneychangers. Therefore, the Lord must make a whip out of cords to drive these things out of us.

Often the Lord uses the ordinary and common things, like the rushes, to cleanse us. Sometimes He uses someone common to purge you—such as your wife or husband, your parents or children, your employer or employees. We all have experienced the whip of cords that the Lord has made

out of common persons or ordinary things to purge us. Sometimes the Lord comes to interfere with our lives by turning things upside down. He comes to cast out the sheep, oxen, and doves and to overthrow the tables in order to bring confusion into the whole situation. For example, last year you might have gained a lot of money in business, but this year you may lose everything—this is a scourge that the Lord may use to purge you. With every seeking Christian someone or something is always being used by the Lord to purge him.

Generally speaking, a wife who is a seeking child of God always longs for her husband to be spiritual and to love the Lord, but it sometimes turns out to be just the opposite. A husband who loves the Lord always looks to the Lord that his wife may be spiritual and love the Lord, but it is sometimes contrary to his desire. Also, parents who sincerely seek after the Lord and pray daily for their children sometimes suffer to see their children going astray. The scourge you experience is made by the Lord. If your husband or wife is quite spiritual, the Lord may have no scourge to purge you. If your sons are like Peter and John and your daughter is like Mary, there may be no rushes available for the Lord to make a scourge. If your parents are like Abraham and Sarah,



nothing may purge you. On the one hand, you may daily enjoy the Lord as a feast, but on the other hand, the Lord will send a scourge a number of times to purge you. Many times the Lord will even use the brothers and sisters in the church as a whip of cords to purge away the merchandise and the moneychangers that exist within you.

## **THE LORD'S ZEAL FOR GOD'S HOUSE**

**Verse 17** says, “His disciples remembered that it was written, ‘The zeal of Your house shall devour Me.’” Within the Lord Jesus there was a zeal for the house of God. This zeal devoured Him, ate Him up, consumed Him. He was absolutely for the Father’s house. The Father’s house was His heart’s desire. When He saw the corrupted situation within the temple, He could not tolerate it but cleansed it, even with a whip. He was driven by zeal for His Father’s house to drive all the defilement out of it. His heart was pure for the Father. He could not suffer to see that the temple, His Father’s house, was defiled, contaminated by the things of man’s greed, so He cleansed it.

Satan tries his best to defile and to contaminate the church life with so many sinful and worldly things. But praise the Lord that Satan’s contamination brings in the Lord’s cleansing. The

enemy, Satan, is always busy. He never sleeps. Wherever a local church has been established, Satan will try to defile it. We should not be discouraged. We should say, “Lord, now is Your time. Lord, come in. Satan’s contamination only brings in Your cleansing.”

## **THE BODY OF JESUS BEING THE TEMPLE**

Satan’s goal was not only to contaminate the temple but to destroy it. His ultimate aim was to destroy the house of God. But what the enemy destroyed, the Lord raised up in three days. This means that in His resurrection life the Lord built up what was destroyed by the enemy. It is needless for us to worry about the Lord’s recovery of the church, because the more the enemy damages, the more the Lord will build up in resurrection. The Lord’s word is, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up” (v. 19). In other words, the enemy may damage and destroy the church, which is the house of God, but the Lord will build it up in resurrection and by resurrection. After the enemy has caused damage, the Lord, in resurrection, will rear up a building on a much larger scale. We should not worry about the confusion that may exist in the church, for the Lord’s Body, the church, is in the process of resurrection.

The damage done by the enemy is necessary, because everything natural must be destroyed. Only that which is natural can be destroyed by the enemy. Afterward, the Lord will raise up His church in resurrection. Every time after trouble damages the church, the church will be recovered and raised up in the newness of resurrection life. During the past I have seen much damage that really hurt the church, but the more the enemy damaged, the more the Lord built up His church in and by His resurrection.

Do not be disappointed at today's Christian situation. Do not say that the situation is pitiful. That is only one aspect of the picture. Praise the Lord that during the past twenty centuries there has always been another aspect. Do you believe that Satan can defeat the Lord Jesus? This is impossible. Do you believe that Satan is stronger than the Lord Jesus? The answer, of course, is no. Based upon this fact, I have always been restful. I have the full assurance that Satan can never defeat the Lord Jesus and that the Lord will always prevail over Satan.

The Lord Jesus told His opponents that if they destroyed this temple, He would raise it again in three days. They did not understand what He was talking about. The Lord was saying, "You may put

Me to death and you may kill My body on the cross, but I will raise it up again in three days.” Do not try to understand the Bible merely according to the black and white letters, for if you do, you will find yourself in difficulty. On the one hand, the Lord Jesus told the people that after they killed Him, He would resurrect Himself ([Matt. 20:19](#); [Mark 10:34](#)). On the other hand, we are told elsewhere in the New Testament that God raised Him up ([Acts 2:24](#)). In the New Testament there are two ways of recording the Lord’s resurrection—that God raised Him up and that He raised Himself up. How shall we understand or interpret this? Did God raise Him up, or did He raise Himself up? In the Gospel of Luke, which shows the Lord Jesus as the Savior who was sacrificed for our sins, we see that the Lord needed God to raise Him up ([9:22](#)). In the Gospel of John the situation is different. In John, the Lord was not slain as a sacrifice for sins. Rather, He Himself laid down His life. Jesus said, “I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it away from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it again” ([10:17-18](#)). In the Gospel of John there was no need for God to raise Him up. As the sacrifice for sins, He needed God to raise Him up; as the One who is

the Giver of life, He could lay down His life and take it up again. He could walk into death and walk out again. The Lord seemed to be saying, “In a sense, it is you who kill Me. But in My sense, it is I who walk into death, take a tour of it, and walk out again.” Each year many tourists come to Washington, D.C., and look at the White House. Likewise, the Lord Jesus took a tour of the region of death and visited the Black House. The Lord seemed to be saying, “Black House, I have come to have a look at you and to see what you can do. Can you do anything with Me? Since you can do nothing with Me, after My tour I will bid you farewell and return to life again.” This is the resurrection in the Gospel of John. The Lord Jesus laid Himself down and raised Himself up again.

## **THE BODY OF JESUS DESTROYED ON THE CROSS**

The physical body of Jesus was destroyed on the cross by the Jews. When Christ became flesh, He took on a physical body. In [John 1:14](#) we are told clearly that His physical body was a tabernacle. According to [chapter 2 of John](#), His physical body was also the temple. I wish to point out that throughout the New Testament, the temple of God does not denote a place; it denotes a person.

When Jesus was in the flesh, His body was the tabernacle and temple of God. Both the tabernacle and the temple are God's dwelling place. Satan knew this. Since Satan realized that the physical body of Jesus was God's dwelling place on earth, he did his best to destroy that body. And he did destroy it on the cross through the Jews. In a sense, Satan destroyed the Lord's physical body; in another sense, the Lord Jesus gave up His body to death. The Lord seemed to be saying to Satan, "Satan, do your best. Let Me see what you can do. Whatever you do will just give Me an opportunity to do something further."

## **RAISED UP TO BE THE HOUSE OF GOD**

After Satan destroyed the Lord's physical body on the cross, His body was put into a tomb to rest there. The Lord Jesus then went into death, took a tour of the Black House, and came out in resurrection. When Jesus arose, He Himself raised up His dead and buried body. The body of Jesus that was destroyed on the cross was small and weak; the Body of Christ in resurrection is vast and powerful. Which do you prefer to have—the body of Jesus or the Body of Christ? After the Lord's resurrection, His Body, that is, the temple, was reared up on a much larger scale. The body

that the enemy destroyed by crucifixion was merely the body of Jesus; what was raised by the Lord in resurrection was not only His own body but everyone who is joined to Him by faith (1 Pet. 1:3; Eph. 2:6). After the Lord's resurrection, Satan had to say, "I lost my case. I was stupid. I shouldn't have destroyed Him." Nevertheless, it was too late for Satan to repent.

The Lord Jesus is always more prevailing than the enemy. Do not be frightened by Satan's work. We should simply say, "Satan, do your best. Whatever you do will simply afford the opportunity for our Lord Jesus to overcome you." Whenever a problem comes to the church, many brothers feel that they should immediately call a meeting and pray. However, you do not need to be that hasty. Be at peace. Do not be terrified by Satan's activity. When the Lord Jesus knew that the Jews were attempting to destroy Him, He did not pray, "O Father, kill all these Jews. Father, save Me and protect Me." Instead of praying that way, the Lord seemed to tell them, "Do your best to kill Me. Be assured that after you put Me to death, I will have the opportunity to increase." No one can frustrate the purpose of the Lord. The more the enemy tries to do, the more he affords the opportunity for the Lord to do something more. Whatever the

Lord does is always in resurrection. The Lord builds the temple “in three days,” signifying that He builds it in resurrection.

## **THE UNIQUE SIGN**

The Jews asked the Lord Jesus to show them a sign. The Lord answered, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up” ([John 2:19](#)). The resurrection of the Lord is the unique sign. In the building up of the church, often people will challenge us, as the Jews challenged the Lord, to see what miracles we can do. We should not be tempted to try to perform miracles. We have to follow the Lord Jesus and let ourselves be put to death. Then Christ will be manifested in resurrection. This is the miracle, the sign, that is needed in the building up of the church. The unique sign for the building up of the church is life in resurrection.

## **ENLARGING HIS BODY IN RESURRECTION**

Since the day of His physical resurrection, the Lord Jesus has been enlarging His Body in resurrection life. What an immense Body Christ has today in His resurrection! Can you measure the size of the Body of Christ? Although it once was



possible to measure the size of the physical body of Jesus, it is impossible to measure the immensity of the Body of Christ. The Lord continues to build His Body in resurrection, and Satan keeps on helping this. The house of God is still increasing in resurrection with the Body of Christ (1 Tim. 3:15; 1 Pet. 2:5; 1 Cor. 3:9; Eph. 2:21-22). Today we are still within “the three days,” because the Lord is still working for the building of His Body under the process of resurrection. A great part of the Lord’s Body has already been raised, but there are still some members of His Body who are not yet raised. Therefore, the Lord’s Body is still in the process of resurrection. Even with yourself, only a part has been transformed, which means that only a part has been resurrected. The Lord continues to work on you through the process of transformation. You are still in the process of resurrection. The church today is still in the three days’ process of resurrection.

All the damage that the enemy does to the church simply offers the Lord the opportunity to enlarge His Body in resurrection. Let the enemy do whatever he can, for his work simply gives the Lord the opportunity to do His increasing work in resurrection. Praise the Lord! We all must worship Him for His prevailing way. The

enemy can never defeat the Lord Jesus. The gates of Hades can never prevail against the builded church ([Matt. 16:18](#)). The church is still going on and is still growing. Although the enemy may try his best to tear it down, we will see the victory. We will see not only that the Lord Jesus Himself is prevailing but that the church also is prevailing.

## THE BUILDING OF GOD'S HOUSE

In the changing of water into wine, the principle of life was set forth. Now, in the dealing with the temple, the purpose of life is shown. The principle of life is to change death into life. The purpose of life is to build the house of God. The principle of life is for the purpose of life. The changing of death into life is for life's building, the building of God's house. These two points govern the whole Gospel of John. This is why after the introduction in the first chapter, the second chapter follows to show us these two points by two events. Then [chapter 3 through chapter 11](#) is the record of the nine cases proving how the Lord came into all kinds of human situations and changed death into life. After all the cases have been related and after the last message has been given in [chapters 14, 15, and 16](#), the Lord offered a prayer in [chapter 17](#) to the Father about oneness. This prayer

for oneness was simply a prayer for the building. If we are not built together, we can never be one. For example, a heap of materials is not one, because the materials are not built together. A house is composed of many materials, and these materials are one because they are built together. Only when the materials are built up together as one building is there oneness. Oneness means to be built up together. Therefore, the purpose of life is to build up God's house, God's temple, for God's habitation. The purpose of the Lord being life to us is to build the church as God's dwelling place. Life is for the building. Life is for the church. It is for the building of the church, Christ's Body and God's house, that the Lord has come to be our life.

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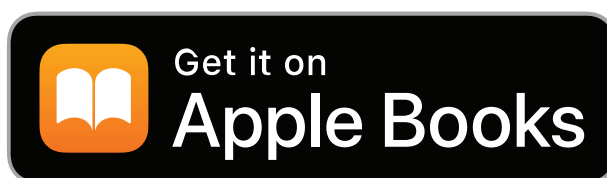
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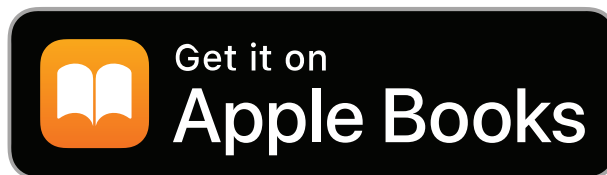
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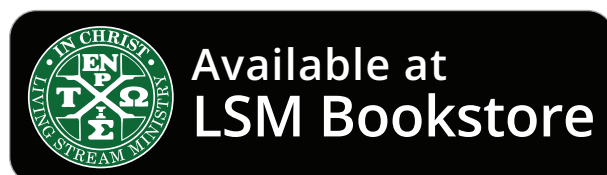


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*Nuggets and Gems from the Bible*

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REGENERATING —  
THE NEED  
OF  
THE MORAL

WITNESS LEE

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***Living Stream Ministry***

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## **LIFE'S REGENERATING— THE NEED OF THE MORAL**

In [chapter two](#) of the Gospel of John, we see the principle of life and the purpose of life set forth. The principle of life is to change death into life, and the purpose of life is to build the house of God. From [chapter three through chapter eleven](#) the writer then relates nine cases to prove the principle of life set forth in the first sign in [chapter two](#). He uses these cases to signify some spiritual and meaningful points. These cases first expose the condition and need of man, and then they reveal how the Lord can deal with all the conditions and meet all the needs of man. Life meets the need of man's every case. We must realize that life here means the Lord Himself, the Word which was God and which became flesh. Although the Lord might have dealt with thousands of human cases, John selected only nine of them to illustrate how the Lord as life could and still can meet the need of every human case.

### **MAN'S CONDITION AND NEED**

Let us see, first of all, the condition of man in

each case. The first case in [chapter three](#) is about a high-class, moral person who came to the Lord. He was a superior gentleman, highly cultured, very religious, God-seeking, and God-fearing. The second case in [chapter four](#) shows forth exactly the opposite condition. The first case is about a moral man; the second case is about an immoral woman. The former is about a mild, high-class person, while the latter is about a wild, low-class person. This wicked woman had five husbands and was living with a sixth who was not her husband. The third case in [chapter four](#) is about a young man who was sick and about to die. The fourth case in [chapter five](#) is about a man who had been sick for thirty-eight years. He was utterly weak and unable to move even one step. The fifth case in [chapter six](#) is about the hungry multitude who were seeking something to feed on. The sixth case in [chapter seven](#) is about the thirsty people whose thirst could not be quenched by the best religion or by anything of this life. The seventh case in [chapter eight](#) sets forth a sinful woman who committed a terrible sin and who was under the condemnation and bondage of her sin. The eighth case in [chapters nine and ten](#) concerns a blind man who was born blind. Finally, the ninth



case in [chapter eleven](#) is about Lazarus who died and was buried for four days.

The conditions of the people mentioned in these nine cases represent the conditions of all men. Some men are good like Nicodemus, while others are wicked like the Samaritan woman. Others, like the young man in Capernaum, are dying. Most are weak like the man who was sick for thirty-eight years. They desire to do good, but they do not have the strength to fulfill that desire. They know religion, but, because they are weak, they do not have the power to live out its standards or fulfill its regulations. Other people are hungry, craving for something to enjoy, while some are thirsting for something more than their human life can offer them. There are some people whose thirst is so great that nothing in this life can satisfy them. Some people continually commit sins and are under the condemnation and bondage of their sins. Some, like the blind man, are blind, not physically, but psychologically and spiritually. Finally, the last condition of all men is death, for they are in death and, at the same time, are on the road to death. They are dead already and yet they all will die later. All men are dead men who are going to die. Therefore, these nine cases portray the true conditions of all men. These conditions

speaking of man's need, which only the Lord as life can fully meet.

## **EACH INDIVIDUAL'S CONDITION AND NEED**

All the conditions of these nine cases can also be found in each individual person. One person can possess all the conditions of all men. For example, you may be a good man, or, at least you have the intention of being a good man. You may also be quite religious, fearing God and seeking Him. At the same time, however, you may also have done something mean, something which is not honorable. You may be a religious gentleman with high morals and yet have done something low. On the one hand, you are a high-class person; on the other hand, you are a low-class person.

You are also sick and about to die morally and spiritually. You may be very living physically, but you are dying morally and spiritually. Even physically you are also dying day by day. Apparently you are living; actually you are dying.

Another condition of yours is that you are a weak person. You know that you should do good and you know what is right, but you lack the strength or the power to do it. Perhaps you are not yet twenty-five years old, but you have been

sick for “thirty-eight years.” You know that you should love others, but you are weak; you want to keep all the laws of God and you desire to please God, but you are unable to do so. In other words, you have the desire to do good, but you do not have the ability to perform what you desire. You need the proper power of life.

Hunger and thirst are also two items of your condition. Many times you feel that you are a hungry person; many times you are thirsty for a Ph.D. degree, for money, or for pleasure. You need the Lord as the bread of life to satisfy your hunger and you need the Lord’s living water to quench your thirst.

Another condition that can also be found in you as an individual is your sinfulness. You are sinful. You are a sinner and you commit sin. You need the forgiveness of the Lord as well as deliverance from the bondage of sin.

In another respect, you are in a state of blindness. Even though you may have perfect vision with your physical eyes, you cannot perceive the meaning of human life, and especially you cannot see spiritual things. You are blind and you need the Lord to open your eyes and to give you sight.

Your last condition is that of a dead man who eventually will die. Have you ever realized that

you are a dead person? No one is alive in spirit—everyone is dead. You need the resurrection life of the Lord Jesus.

Every person has, in his fallen condition, every aspect of these nine cases. Every person, to a certain degree at least, is in each of these conditions. Every condition is an indication of everyone's real need.

## **THE LORD'S SUFFICIENCY**

We have seen the condition and need of man in these nine cases. Now we must see how the Lord is able to come into man's fallen condition and meet his every need. In every case, the Lord presents Himself as the One who could fulfill the deficiencies of man. These nine cases fully prove the Lord's sufficiency to meet man's every need.

The first case shows that the Lord can afford us regeneration, which even a superior person such as Nicodemus needed that he might have the life of God for the entrance into the kingdom of God. The case of the Samaritan woman, a sinful and unsatisfied woman, reveals how much the Lord can satisfy such a person with His living water. For the case of the dying man, the Lord is the healing power of life. The case of the weak man who had been sick for thirty-eight years

demonstrates the enlivening power of the Lord's life. In the case of the hungry multitude which needed something to feed on, the Lord presents Himself as the bread of life. In the case of the thirsty people, the Lord assures them that He can quench their thirst by the flowing river of living water. In the case of the woman living in sin, we see that the Lord is able to deliver such a one from her sinful situation and release her from the bondage of sin. In the case of the blind man, the Lord opens his eyes and gives him sight. Finally, in the case of Lazarus, who had died, had been buried, and was even decaying in the grave, the power of the Lord's resurrection life is fully exhibited.

In all of these cases the Lord's sufficiency in meeting man's need is adequately proved. There is not one of man's conditions that He cannot solve. There is not a need that He cannot meet. He is able! He is sufficient! He can deal with all our problems and supply all our needs! Praise His name!

## **REGENERATION**

In [John chapter three](#) we find the first case, that of Nicodemus. Nicodemus was a person of the highest class, and we need to consider his virtues and attributes. Firstly, he was a teacher

with the highest attainment in education. As a teacher of the Jews, he taught the Old Testament, the Sacred Word. Secondly, Nicodemus was “a ruler of the Jews.” He had a position with a certain amount of honor and authority. Thirdly, he was an old man. As an old man, he had a good deal of experience. He was a man full of experiences. Fourthly, he was undoubtedly a moral man, a good man. If you look at the way he talked, you will realize that he was a moral man. Fifthly, Nicodemus was a man who was truly seeking after God. Although he was somewhat fearful of the Pharisees, he still came to the Lord Jesus by night. This indicated that he was seeking God. Sixthly, he was very humble. Nicodemus was an old man of perhaps sixty or seventy years of age, yet he came to see the Lord Jesus, who was only a little over thirty years of age. That such an experienced, educated, and elderly man would come to see someone much younger than he indicates his humility. Furthermore, although Nicodemus was a teacher, he addressed the Lord Jesus as Rabbi. Among the Jews, to call a person Rabbi means that you are humbling yourself. Seventhly, Nicodemus was an honest man. His speech reveals his honesty. Can you find a better person

than Nicodemus? He was a man of a superior standard, high attainment, and morality.

When Nicodemus came to the Lord Jesus, the Lord took the opportunity to reveal the true need of mankind. In His conversation with Nicodemus, the Lord revealed that regardless of how good we are, we still need regeneration. Regeneration is the first need of man. Moral people, as well as immoral people, need regeneration. Many Christians hold the mistaken concept that people need regeneration simply because they are fallen. However, if man had never fallen, he still would have needed regeneration. Even if Adam had not fallen he still would have needed regeneration. That is why God put him in front of the tree of life. If Adam had partaken of the tree of life, he would have been regenerated.

Since we are human beings, we all have a human life. The problem is not a matter of whether or not our human life is good or bad. Regardless of the kind of human life we have, as long as we do not have the divine life, we need to be regenerated. To be regenerated simply means to have the divine life besides our human life. God's eternal purpose is that man be a vessel to contain the divine life. Our being with our human life is a vessel to contain God as life. The divine life is

God's goal. The divine life is God Himself. God's goal is that we, as people with a human life, receive the divine life into our being as our real life. This is the true meaning of regeneration. Many Christians are not clear about this fact, thinking that regeneration is necessary simply because we are fallen and sinful. According to this concept, we need to be regenerated because our life is bad and cannot be improved. This concept is wrong. I say once again that even if Adam in the garden of Eden had never fallen, he still would have needed to be regenerated, to be born again, that he might have another life, the life of God. Therefore, to be regenerated is to receive the divine life, God Himself.

What is the meaning of regeneration? Regeneration is not any kind of outward improvement or cultivation; neither is it only a mere change or conversion without life. Regeneration is a rebirth which brings in a new life. It is absolutely a matter of life, not a matter of doing. Regeneration is simply to have life other than the life we already have. We have already received the human life from our parents; now we need to receive the divine life from God. Hence, regeneration means to have the divine life of God in addition to the human life which we already possess. Therefore,



regeneration requires another birth in order to possess another life. To be regenerated, to be born again, does not mean to adjust or correct ourselves. It means to have the life of God, just as to be born of our parents means to have the life of our parents. To be regenerated is to be born of God ([John 1:13](#)), and to be born of God is to have the life of God, that is the eternal life ([John 3:15-16](#)). If we have the life of God, we are the sons of God. The life of God gives us the right to become the sons of God ([John 1:12](#)), because by this life we have the divine nature of God ([2 Pet. 1:4](#)) and have the life-relationship with God, that is the sonship ([Rom. 8:15](#); [Gal. 4:5-6](#); “adoption” in Greek is “sonship”).

## **MAN’S AND RELIGION’S FALSE CONCEPT**

Due to human culture and Jewish religion, Nicodemus thought that man needed to behave. Since man must have good conduct and worship God in a proper way, man needs much teaching. Nicodemus considered Christ to be a teacher come from God. This indicates that he might have thought that he needed better teachings to improve himself. But the Lord’s answer in the following verse unveiled to him that his need was to be born anew. To be born anew is to be regenerated

with the divine life, a life other than the human life received by natural birth. Hence, his real need was not better teachings, but the divine life. Nicodemus was seeking for teachings which belong to the tree of knowledge, but the Lord's answer turned him to the need of life, which belongs to the tree of life (cf. [Gen. 2:9-17](#)). The Lord told Nicodemus very emphatically that what he needed was to be born again. Thus, man's real need is to be regenerated with another life. All of us must realize that what we need is not religion or teaching to regulate and correct us, but another life, the life of God, to regenerate us. Man needs regeneration because he needs the divine life. Regardless of how good you are, you still do not have the life of God. You need another birth in order to receive the life of God with His divine nature. Although you may feel that you are good, yet you must admit that you do not have the life of God with His divine nature. Another birth, regeneration, is necessary that you may receive another life, the divine life of God.

### **MAN'S REAL NEED—TO BE BORN ANEW**

When Nicodemus heard that he had to be born anew, he thought that this meant that he had to go back to his mother's womb and come out

again. His answer proves that he did not know how to exercise his spirit. He misunderstood the Lord's word. Then the Lord Jesus said that which is born of the flesh is flesh. He seemed to be saying to Nicodemus, "Regardless of the number of times you go back into your mother's womb and come out again, you still will be flesh. That which is born of the flesh is flesh. Nicodemus, there is no need for you to say that you can't go back to your mother's womb and be born a second time, for even if you could do it, you would still be the same. Even if you could be born anew in that way and be young again, after another sixty or seventy years you would be the same as you are now. You do not need that kind of rebirth." Nicodemus did not need another birth in time, but another birth in nature.

## **BORN OF WATER AND THE SPIRIT**

"Jesus answered, Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a man is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" ([John 3:5](#)). Since Christians throughout the centuries have exercised their mentality instead of their spirit, they have formulated many different interpretations of this verse. Fifty years ago I was taught that water in this verse denotes the Word and that

to be born of water and the Spirit means to be born of the Word and the Spirit. [First Peter 1:23](#) and [James 1:18](#) were given as references. Another interpretation, a most terrible way of expounding this passage of Scripture, is that the water refers to the mother's own birth water. According to this interpretation, to be born twice is firstly to be born of the water in the mother's womb, and secondly to be born of the Holy Spirit. This interpretation is utterly illogical, and we should forget it.

We need to have a logical and solid standing as we approach this verse. We must admit that Nicodemus and the Lord Jesus were speaking with plain words. If the Lord Jesus had spoken to Nicodemus with words that were not plain, He would have given him some sort of interpretation. Perhaps Nicodemus would have asked the Lord what He meant by water. However, the Lord Jesus did not interpret His words and Nicodemus did not request an interpretation of them, proving that the words were plain to them both. Thus, the words, "of water and the Spirit," should have been plain to Nicodemus, without any kind of explanation. Since the same words were spoken by John the Baptist in [Matthew 3:11](#) to the Pharisees, they should have been fully understood

among the Pharisees. John told them that he baptized in water, but that Another was coming who would baptize with the Spirit. After hearing this word of John's, the Pharisees probably discussed it among themselves, for, at that time, it was a new saying. Since the Pharisees were quite serious, after hearing such a word spoken by John the Baptist, they must have had a long talk about it. As Nicodemus was a Pharisee, he should have been familiar with these terms. Now Nicodemus, as one of the Pharisees, is talking with the Lord, and the Lord speaks these familiar words to him, saying that to be born anew is to be born of water and of the Spirit.

Water is the central sign of the ministry of John the Baptist, that is, to bury and terminate people of the old creation. In his ministry, John the Baptist came to baptize with water. He told people that they had to repent and realize that they were fallen and good for nothing except burial. Everyone who heard John's preaching and repented was baptized in water. This means that, as fallen men of the old creation, they were being terminated. That was John's ministry. Furthermore, John told people that his ministry was for the ministry of the Lord Jesus. As water is the central sign in the ministry of John the Baptist, Spirit is the central

significance of the ministry of Jesus, that is, to germinate people in the new creation. These two main concepts, water and Spirit, when put together, are the whole concept of the matter of regeneration. Regeneration, to be born anew, is the termination of the people of the old creation with all their deeds and their germination in the new creation with the divine life. What does it mean to be born again? It means to be terminated by John's ministry through water and to be germinated by Jesus' ministry through the Spirit.

How can we have the ministry of John the Baptist today? We have it by repentance. Whenever a person repents, confessing that he is a fallen being who is good for nothing, that is the acceptance of John's ministry. There is no need, of course, for John literally to be present, for his ministry is in the New Testament already. When we preach the gospel, we firstly preach the ministry of John. That is why we preach very much about sin and repentance. We are today's John the Baptist. I was a John the Baptist forty years ago, and many people repented as a result of that ministry. That was not my ministry; it was John's. Whoever accepts this ministry, in one sense, is terminated and, in another sense, is born of water. Following repentance, everyone must believe in

the Lord Jesus and accept His ministry of life in order to be germinated. In order to accept salvation, we need both repentance and faith. To repent is to receive John's ministry, and to believe is to accept the ministry of the Lord Jesus. This is regeneration. As believers we all have passed through this process of regeneration. Now we understand what it means to be born of water and of the Spirit.

The Lord made Nicodemus' situation very clear to him. Everyone, whether he is good or bad, needs to be terminated through water and then germinated with the divine life. This is the second birth, a birth not of the mother's womb, but of water and of the Spirit.

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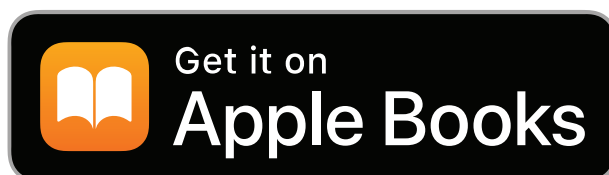
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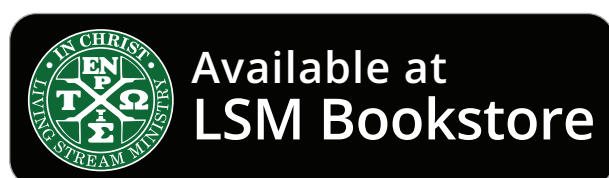


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## LIFE'S SATISFYING— THE NEED OF THE IMMORAL

In this booklet we shall consider the case of the Samaritan woman in [John chapter four](#). This case is the second of nine cases. There is a great contrast between this case and that of Nicodemus in [chapter three](#). Nicodemus was a moral, high-class man; the Samaritan woman was an immoral, low-class woman. The first case sets forth a man with superior attainments while the second sets forth a woman with dishonorable behavior. The man was a Jew whereas the woman was a Samaritan. The Jewish religion was very sound, proper, real, and genuine, but the Samaritan's religion was false and very decadent. It is also interesting to note that the Lord talked with the man at night, but that He talked with the woman at midday. In the nighttime the man came to the Lord; in the daytime the Lord came to the woman. The place where the Lord talked with the man was in a house or a building, but He talked with the woman in the open air.

In the case of Nicodemus the first need of mankind is covered. According to spiritual experience,

mankind's first need is regeneration. We must be regenerated that we may have His divine life. The Lord gives us divine life by means of a divine birth. What is man's second need? What is his need following regeneration? The second need is satisfaction. In [chapter three](#) the problem is that man is void of the divine life. As long as you have not been regenerated, you are void of the divine life having only human life. Although your human life may be wonderful, you do not have the divine life. The divine life is God Himself. You need this divine life to fill you up as your content. When this divine life is within you, it becomes your content. As your content, it will also be your satisfaction. Before we were saved, we all had the experience of being empty. Regardless of our success or attainments, there was a continual emptiness within, the sensation of having no satisfaction.

Therefore, following the case showing the need of regeneration, we have a case showing genuine satisfaction. Nothing can satisfy man except Christ Himself. As long as Christ is not the satisfaction of our human life, nothing can satisfy us. There is no satisfaction apart from Christ.

While Nicodemus was a pure-blooded Jew, the

Samaritan woman was of mixed blood. Everything related to her was a ruin; nothing was pure or good. The Samaritans claimed to be the descendants of Jacob. At most, they were his descendants by mixed blood. While the name of Nicodemus is given, no one knows the name of the Samaritan woman. Because she was mean and low, the Bible does not divulge her name. She was altogether a mixture. She was an extraordinary case among all of the cases. If you read the Bible carefully, you will find that everything about her was extraordinary. Even her coming out to the well to draw water was extraordinary. According to the custom in the Middle East, the women come to draw water in the late afternoon, not at noontime. When the sun is going down, the women come to draw water in companies. However, this Samaritan woman came to draw water at noontime by herself. Why did she do this? Because she had a bad name, and no one would keep company with her. She was afraid of being talked about, of being criticized, and she did not dare come in the late afternoon when so many other people would be there. She came at noon when the sun was blazing and when no one else would come out of the house. This woman was poor and immoral. She had five husbands

and was living with one that was not her husband. No one cared for her. She knew this and came to draw water at such a lonely time, expecting that no one would see her.

## THE SIGNIFICANCE OF A WOMAN

In the case of the Samaritan woman there are many signs. The case itself is a sign, but within this sign, there are many signs. The case itself signifies that Christ is our satisfaction, but one of the signs within the case is the woman.

According to the types and figures in the Scriptures, what does a woman signify? Firstly, a woman signifies that humanity needs to rely upon God. Man can never stand alone; he must rely upon God, who is both his Maker and Husband ([Isa. 54:5](#)). Allow me to ask you this question: Is your standing before God that of a male or a female? If you were to ask me, I would tell you that although I am a man of over sixty years of age, I do realize that my standing before God is that of a female. My position before God is not that of a man, but of a woman, because I can never stand alone. I need God to rely upon. A woman signifies a person who cannot stand alone. This is both your position and mine. In figure, we are either males or females, but in

reality we are all females. None of us can stand by himself. Man can never be independent. Nowadays people proclaim independence, but I must tell you that you can never be independent. You were created to be dependent upon God. Whenever anyone tries to be independent, he will be dissatisfied, because God created man inherently dependent.

A woman also signifies weakness ([1 Pet. 3:7](#)). We human beings must realize that we are weak. We are all weak because we are all human. Do not think that your wife is a weak vessel and that you are a strong one. Although this may be true figuratively, in fact both men and women are weak. In some cases, as far as spiritual things are concerned, the brothers are weaker than the sisters. When the Lord Jesus was about to be betrayed and put to death, the sisters in the New Testament were stronger than the brothers. The sisters were much stronger at the time of the Lord's death, resurrection, and ascension. Even in loving the Lord, Mary was the strongest. So, brothers, do not proudly think that you are the strongest. We are all human and we were all made weak and dependent so that we would have to rely upon the Lord.

The significance of a woman also includes

an inner longing and thirst, which were created by God. Of course, a man has the need for a wife as a helpmate, but a woman needs a husband much more. A woman always has the longing and desire to have satisfaction. In the human nature of both man and woman, there is always the inner thirst for satisfaction. The Lord created that thirst so that we might seek Him. You always feel thirsty and you always feel an inner lack. These are the signs that you are a woman. Your need to rely on others and your sense of dependence, weakness, and thirst for satisfaction all indicate that you are a woman.

## **THE SAVIOR “HAD TO PASS THROUGH” THE SINNER’S PLACE**

We need to pay close attention to [chapter four, verse 4](#). “And He had to pass through Samaria.” The key word in this verse is “had.” Undoubtedly, this Samaritan woman had been foreknown and predestinated by God the Father in eternity past ([Rom. 8:29](#)). Certainly she had been given by the Father to the Lord Jesus ([6:39](#)). Such a low, mean, and immoral Samaritan woman was given to the Lord by the Father. Therefore, the Lord was burdened and went to Samaria to do the will of the



Father. Later, He told His disciples, “My food is to do the will of Him Who sent Me, and to finish His work” (4:34). The Lord went to Samaria to do the will of God, which was to find the immoral Samaritan woman. He was seeking her that she might become a worshipper of the Father (4:23). That one soul was worth the Lord’s going there purposely. According to history, no Jew would ever pass through Samaria. Samaria was the leading region of the northern kingdom of Israel and the place where its capital was (1 Kings 16:24, 29). Before 700 B.C., the Assyrians captured Samaria and brought people from Babylon and other heathen countries to the cities of Samaria (2 Kings 17:6, 24). From that time, the Samaritans became a people of mixed blood, heathen mixed with Jew. History tells us that they had the Pentateuch (the five books of Moses) and worshipped God according to that part of the Old Testament, but they were never recognized by the Jews as being a part of the Jewish people.

Although the Jews would never pass through Samaria, the Lord Jesus felt burdened to do so. He had to go there, not because it was necessary geographically, but because of the will of the Father. Because of the Father’s will, He had to

go through that region. The Lord knew that at noontime an immoral woman would be at the well.

**THE SAVIOR CAME  
TO THE SINNER'S TRADITIONAL  
RELIGIOUS INHERITANCE—  
JACOB'S WELL**

Let us read [verses 5 and 6](#): “So He came to a city of Samaria called Sychar, near the land that Jacob gave to his son Joseph; and Jacob’s well was there. Jesus, therefore, being wearied from the journey, sat thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour.” Tell me, who was the first to come to Jacob’s well, the sinner or the Savior? How marvelous it is that the Savior came there first! When I read this chapter in earlier years, I became very excited with many of the points. Later, in my gospel preaching, I gave a long message about the Samaritan woman, including all the details. At that time I saw that the Lord Jesus had to go to the well ahead of that fallen, immoral Samaritan woman. He went to the well and waited for her.

The Lord was sovereign and wise. Before the woman came, He found a good excuse to send all of His disciples away. If any of the disciples had been there, it would not have been so good.

It would not have been as convenient for the Lord to talk to that immoral woman about her husbands. So the Lord, in His sovereignty and wisdom, sent His disciples away to the city to buy food. Perhaps the Lord was thinking, “Please leave Me alone. I’m waiting for that immoral woman. Because she is so immoral, she doesn’t want to see anyone or talk to anyone. But I am going to touch her conscience with the history of all her husbands. You disciples must leave.” Without the excuse of buying food, how could the Lord have sent the disciples away? While the disciples went away to purchase the food, the woman came. When I saw the picture as a young man, I worshipped the Lord. Suppose the Lord was in a house at midnight and this woman came to speak to Him during the night, and the disciples saw it. They probably would have said, “What are you doing here? Jesus, you are a man a little over thirty years of age and she is such a woman. What is going on here?” In His sovereignty and wisdom, the Lord waited for the woman to come under the bright sunshine and in the open air. Even under the open air, there was no one present to listen to the conversation. When the Lord and the Samaritan woman had finished their talk, the disciples returned and

saw them, but they had nothing to say. That conversation did not transpire in a private room; it was in the open air. How wise was the Lord Jesus!

The point here is this: the Savior knows where the sinner is. He knows the sinner's true situation. The Lord Jesus went to the well, sent all of His disciples away, and sat by the well, waiting until the woman came. If you look back into your salvation, you will realize that, to some extent at least, the same principle was operating. You did not go to heaven—the Lord came to you. He came down to the very place where you were. I was born in China, but the Lord Jesus went there. One day He was waiting for me at a certain place, and I was caught by Him. What about you? You did not go to meet the Savior, did you? The Savior came to you. Some have been saved as a result of an automobile accident. Nevertheless, they must realize that before the accident occurred, the Lord Jesus was already waiting to meet them. We all were saved in this way. This is marvelous.

While the Lord Jesus was waiting for the sinner to come, He was thirsty. Thus, in this second of the cases, we see a thirsty Savior and a thirsty sinner. You may think that you are thirsty, but your thirst is a sign that the Savior is thirsty.

The Savior is thirsty for us, for, to Him, we are the thirst-quenching water. Do you realize that you are the thirst-quenching water to the Savior? It seems that the Savior is saying, “Nothing can satisfy Me except you. I have millions of angels in the heavens, but none of them can satisfy Me. I have come to the earth to seek the thirst-quenching water. You are the water.” You may be quite humble and say, “No, He is my living water. How can I be His thirst-quenching water?” Nevertheless, the Lord needs you, for without you He can never be satisfied.

At first, both the Savior and the sinner were thirsty, and the Savior was hungry. The sinner was thirsty and came to draw water in order to satisfy her thirst. The Savior was hungry and thirsty. He sent the disciples away to buy food that He might eat and He asked the sinner for a drink of water. Eventually, neither the Savior nor the sinner drank or ate anything, yet both were satisfied. This is wonderful! The sinner drank of the Savior, the Savior drank of the sinner, and both of them were satisfied. The disciples were surprised. When they returned with the food, they urged Him to eat, but He said, “I have food to eat of which you have no knowledge” (4:32). The sinner was satisfied with the Savior’s living

water, and the Savior was satisfied with God's will in satisfying the sinner. To do the will of God to satisfy the sinner is the Savior's food. Oh, the Lord as the Savior was thirsty for you and me! One day He got us and was satisfied.

## **THE SINNER CAME TO HER RELIGIOUS INHERITANCE**

The sinner came to her religious inheritance to draw water for her satisfaction. While she was going to draw water, the Savior asked her to give Him water for His satisfaction. Whenever the Lord asks you for something, that is an indication that He needs it and that you need it also. When you are thirsty, the Lord also is thirsty. When the Lord asks you for something, you also are in need of that very thing. This is very meaningful. When you are homeless, He is homeless, and when He is homeless, you are homeless.

## **THE EMPTINESS OF RELIGION'S TRADITION AND THE FULLNESS OF LIFE'S LIVING WATER**

In [verses 9 through 14](#) we see the contrast between the emptiness of religion's tradition and the fullness of life's living water. The Samaritan woman asked the Lord Jesus, "Are you greater

than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank of it himself, and his sons, and his cattle?” (4:12). We see by this question that religion’s father is considered to be the greatest. The Samaritans thought of Jacob as the greatest. They took him as their grandfather, thinking him to be the greatest.

The Samaritan woman also considered that Jacob’s well was the best. This signifies that religion’s inheritance is always considered as the best.

The Samaritan woman said to the Lord, “You have no bucket...; where then do you get the living water?” (v. 11). This signifies that religion’s way is considered as the most prevailing. Although religion considers its way to be the most prevailing, yet religion’s “water” never quenches the thirst of religious people. This is proved by the Lord’s reply in [verse 13](#). “Everyone who drinks of this water shall thirst again.”

Christ is greater than religion’s father. “Jesus answered and said to her, If you knew the gift of God, and Who it is that says to you, Give Me a drink, you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water” (4:10). If you preach the gospel in China, people will talk to you about Confucius. Every race and tribe claims to have

someone great, but none is greater than Christ. Christ is greater than Jacob, Confucius, Plato, and every other kind of grandfather.

Furthermore, God's gift is greater than religion's inheritance. Would you like to have Jacob's well or God's gift? What is God's gift? If you say that God's gift is Christ, that answer is not totally accurate. The divine life is God's gift, for [Romans 6:23](#) says that the free gift of God is eternal life. This divine life shall become in us a spring of water welling up into eternal life ([4:14](#)). This divine life is much better than Jacob's well. If you visit Jacob's well in Palestine today, you will find it under the control of an Armenian monk. When I visited there, everyone who wanted a cup of water from Jacob's well had to pay two dollars. However, all of that is tradition and means nothing. The water in that well is the same as any other.

To "ask" is more prevailing than religion's way. The living water of God quenches our thirst and becomes a spring of water welling up into eternal life. Death's thirst is quenched by life. In principle, this is to change death into life.

The Lord Jesus said to the Samaritan woman, "Everyone who drinks of this water shall thirst again" ([4:13](#)). This statement is simple but its



meaning is profound. The “water” here signifies the enjoyment of material things and the amusement of worldly entertainment. None of these can quench the thirst deep within man. However much he drinks of this material and worldly “water,” he shall thirst again. The more he drinks of these “waters,” the more his thirst is increased. For example, in education people like to have higher and higher degrees. After receiving a bachelor’s degree, they want a master’s, and after that, a doctorate. Others may desire to accumulate ten thousand dollars in a savings account, but after that, they want to have a hundred thousand, and after a hundred thousand, a million. The more you drink of the water of this earth, the more thirsty you become. Never try to quench your thirst with any kind of worldly water. Although the Samaritan woman had had five husbands and was living with a man who was not her husband, she still was not satisfied. Nothing could quench her thirst. Some sisters love clothing. However, no woman can be satisfied with any type of garment. After you purchase one, you will want a second and a third. If you have ten pairs of shoes, you will want to have fifteen pairs. Some women who have more than fifteen pairs of shoes still are not

satisfied. This kind of “water” will never satisfy people. There is only one “water” that satisfies people for eternity—Jesus Christ. Christ satisfies today, tomorrow, and for eternity. He is ever new, ever fresh. He always satisfies. So, the Lord could tell the Samaritan woman that whoever drinks of the water that He gives will not thirst, for that water will become in him a spring welling up into eternal life.

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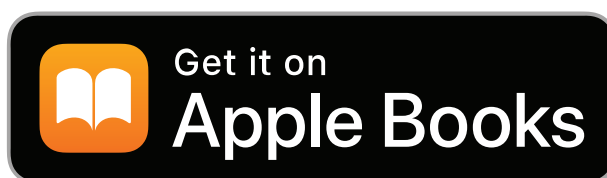
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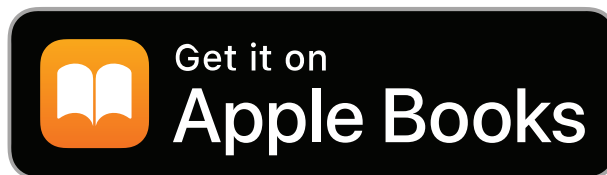
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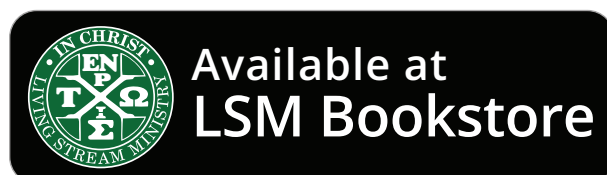


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## LIFE'S HEALING— THE NEED OF THE DYING

In this booklet we shall see the need of the dying which is life's healing. For this sign Jesus returned to Cana of Galilee, the place of the weak and fragile people ([John 4:43-46](#)). Cana means a land of reeds, and reeds signify weak and fragile people ([Isa. 42:3a](#); [Matt. 12:20a](#); [11:7](#)). Cana is in Galilee, a despised place ([John 7:41, 52](#)), which signifies the world of a low and mean condition where the weak and fragile people are. The Lord was here once during the first sign to change the death water into life wine ([John 2:1-11](#)). Now He comes back to the same place to do the second sign, which in the principle of life corresponds with the first sign—to change death into life.

### THE WEAK AND FRAGILE PEOPLE DYING

This case, the third among the nine cases presented in the Gospel of John, reveals the dying people's need of healing. This case concerns the son of a royal official who was about to die. Mankind firstly needs regeneration ([John 3](#)), secondly

satisfaction ([John 4](#)), and thirdly healing. We all need a certain amount of healing. In a sense, we are living; in another sense, we all are dying. When a baby is newly born, his mother would think that he is growing. Actually the baby is dying. Everyone on earth is dying. If you are young, still under thirty years of age, you may not have the sense that you are dying. However, when you reach the age of sixty or seventy, you realize that you are dying. A life span of seventy years may be likened to seventy dollars. Each year that is lived is the equivalent of spending a dollar. Once you have lived sixty years, you have spent sixty dollars. When you reach the age of sixty-nine, it means that you have only one dollar left. Once that dollar has been spent, you will be exhausted. So, human beings are apparently living, but actually dying. This is why I do not ask my children or grandchildren to celebrate my birthday, for my birthday tells me that I am dying. Tell me, is your age increasing or decreasing? The longer we live, the less time we have to live. I would like to stay back, but I cannot do it. We all need healing.

We have been regenerated and, day by day, we may contact the Lord, the living Spirit, for our satisfaction. In addition to this, we need

healing. We are all sick and dying people. We are fallen people, weak and fragile, who are dying and who need the Lord's healing. If you have the healing of the Lord Jesus, your dying will become living.

Let me share with you my secret prayer to the Lord. I have told the Lord, "Lord, the time of Your coming is near. Do me a favor—keep me from seeing death. Lord, I want to see You physically face to face. Keep me living until You come." Hallelujah, He is coming! While He is coming, He is healing. While He is on His way, He is healing our spirit, soul, and body. If you want to be healthy, you need to enjoy the healing of Jesus. Jesus is the real health food store. Come to Jesus, contact Him, and enjoy Him. If you participate in Jesus continually, you will have the best food, the real health food. How we need the healing of the divine life!

**Romans 8:11** says, "But if the Spirit of Him Who raised Jesus from among the dead dwells in you, He Who raised Christ Jesus from among the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit Who indwells you." If we allow the indwelling Spirit to make His home in our being, this indwelling Spirit will saturate our dying, mortal body with resurrection life. Our mortal



body will be enlivened, quickened, and healed with the divine life. [Romans 8](#) reveals that our spirit, soul, and body all may receive the divine life. When we believe in the Lord Jesus, He, as the life-giving Spirit, comes into our spirit. Since He is the life-giving Spirit, the Spirit in [Romans 8:2](#) is called the Spirit of life, meaning that the divine Spirit is life. When we called on the Lord Jesus, this divine Spirit who is life came into our spirit and enlivened it. Therefore, our spirit is life ([Rom. 8:10](#)). When we set the mind of our soul upon the spirit, our mind also becomes life ([Rom. 8:6](#)). If we give ground to the indwelling Spirit, the Spirit will spread Himself from within our spirit through our soul into our body, making our mortal body a body full of life. Eventually, this divine life becomes a fourfold life: the life in the divine Spirit, the life that fills our spirit, the life that will saturate our soul, and the life that will permeate our body. Our whole being—spirit, soul, and body—will be filled, saturated, and permeated with the divine life. This is healing. Whenever the divine life enters into a part of our being, it heals that part. This means that the divine life changes the death of that part of our being into life. Death is swallowed up by life—this is healing.

We need regeneration, satisfaction, and healing. Many of us, particularly the sisters, need the healing in our emotions. The sisters need healing in their unbalanced emotions, for there is a kind of sickness in their emotions. Why do you sisters cry so easily? Probably because of the sickness in your emotions. You need healing. The brothers need healing in their unbalanced mind and in their stubborn will. Why are you brothers so stubborn in your will? Once you make up your will, nothing on earth can change it. That is a disease, a sickness. We all need healing. Praise the Lord that He is healing! This healing is the transformation. The more we are healed in our mind, emotion, and will, the more we are transformed.

## **HEALING BY THE LIFE-GIVING WORD**

Although the royal official begged the Lord to come down and heal his son ([John 4:47, 49](#)), the Lord simply spoke the word, and the boy was healed. “Jesus said to him, Go, your son is living. The man believed the word which Jesus said to him and went his way” ([4:50](#)). The royal official believed the word out of the mouth of the Lord. When he learned from his slaves that the boy was living, he and his whole household

believed (4:51-53). Hallelujah for the life-giving word! We love the life-giving word, not the word in dead letters, but the word that is the Spirit. The Lord simply spoke the life-giving word, and the dying boy was healed. Today the Lord is still sending forth His healing word. When the dying people receive this word through believing, they are healed with life. Once the life-giving word has been transfused into us, whether or not we are conscious of it, we can never be the same. The life-giving word brings about a real change in our life.

When dying people receive the word through believing and are healed with life, this, in principle, is changing death into life. Death's deadening power is overcome by life. Praise the Lord for His healing life and for the life-giving word that heals all our sicknesses! Death is of the source of the tree of knowledge, and life is of the source of the tree of life (Gen. 2:9). We were born into the sickness of death. The Lord's word of life heals our death. All we need is to receive and believe in His life-giving and healing word.

The case of the healing of the son of the royal official signifies that there is no need for us to contact the Lord physically. As long as we have the Lord's word, it is sufficient. Even though we

do not have the Lord's physical presence, as long as we have His word and work, it is good enough, and nothing more is needed. When we have the word of the Lord, we shall be saved and filled with the Lord. Just His word is enough to heal and save us. May we all daily contact this life-giving, healing word.

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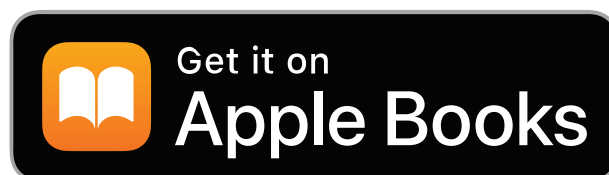
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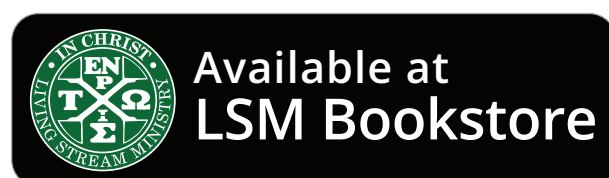


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## **LIFE'S ENLIVENING— THE NEED OF THE IMPOTENT**

In this booklet we shall consider the fourth case in the Gospel of John—the need of the impotent ([John 5:1-47](#)). This case exposes the vanity of religion and reveals the sufficiency of Christ as life to enliven us.

## **RELIGION'S LAW-KEEPING AND THE SON'S LIFE-GIVING**

When the Lord Jesus came, He came as the One who was prophesied in the Old Testament. He was the One who came to be salvation, life, righteousness, holiness, redemption, glory, and everything to God's people. But, when He came, God's people, the Jews, were fully occupied with their religion. They had no room in their hearts for this coming One. If you read the four Gospels, you will see that wherever the Lord went and wherever He was, He was opposed by that typical religion formed according to God's Holy Word. Those religionists opposed this living One according to their religion. They thought that they were opposing Christ for God. They



even sentenced this living One to death in their attempt to protect God. According to their realization, when Jesus said that He was the Son of God, He was speaking blasphemy, making Himself equal to God (5:18).

## **THE GOOD THINGS OF THE TYPICAL RELIGION**

The Jewish religion includes at least seven items: the holy city Jerusalem, the holy temple, the holy feast, the holy Sabbath, the angels, Moses, and the Holy Scriptures. When you add these seven items together, they equal Judaism, the Jewish religion. These items are excellent and wonderful things.

Along with these seven items of Judaism, there was also the means of healing, because there was the healing pool of water. The significance of this picture is that the means of healing is always with the typical religion. Judaism is the typical religion which has something that can heal you. The pool in Jerusalem signifies that the means of healing is in that typical religion.

But there is a requirement—you must have strength in order to walk and act. Whenever a chance is given for you to receive the benefits of this religion you must have the strength to be

first and the ability to walk. This case is a sign, showing us that here is a typical religion with many good and holy items which can heal you, but it requires your strength to walk and act. Even though you are second, you will not obtain the benefits of this good religion because you are not first.

## THE PRACTICE OF THE LAW-KEEPING

Let us now consider some aspects of the practice of law-keeping. The sheepgate (5:2) signifies the entrance to the law-keeping religion's sheepfold (10:1). The name of the pool, Bethesda, means house of mercy, signifying that the people who practiced law-keeping realized that they needed the mercy of God because they were impotent, weak, and wretched, as portrayed in [Romans 7:7-24](#). The porches, like a sheepfold, signify the law-keeping religion's shelter, and the number five denotes responsibility. The angel who stirred up the water signifies the agent through which the law, which could not give life, was given ([Gal. 3:19, 21](#)). The stirring up of the water to make people well signifies the practice of the law-keeping trying to make people perfect. By considering these aspects, we can see

the situation of law-keeping, which is the major thing in the typical religion.

## THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF THE LAW-KEEPING

It is impossible for man to keep the law. No one can do it. Just as people cannot walk up to the heavens, neither can they keep the law. [Romans 8:3](#) says that it is impossible to keep the law, because the law is weak through the flesh. All flesh is too weak to keep the law. This is clearly portrayed in the case of the impotent man.

The impotent man had been sick for thirty eight years. He was unable to move. He was filled with expectation when he saw the waters stirring, but it was impossible for him to get there in time. Because he was impotent, unable to move, he could not receive healing. Likewise, due to our impotence, we cannot keep the law. The law is good, holy, and spiritual. There is no problem with the law; the problem is with us.

Man is not only sick, but also dead. We know from [5:25](#) that, in the eyes of the Lord, the impotent man was a dead person. How can a dead person walk? If he is to walk, he must first be made alive. As long as you cannot make a dead person live, he can do nothing. [Galatians 3:21](#)

says that the law cannot give life. The law only makes demands upon people; it never supplies them with life. Due to the lack of life, man is absolutely unable to keep the law. If you are still religious, still trying to keep the law, let me ask you a question. Are you dead or alive? You must admit that you are dead. Since you are a dead person, how can you keep the law? A dead person can do nothing.

Because of the weakness of the flesh and because of the lack of life, it is impossible for man to keep the law. Although there are an angel, the water, and the stirring of the water, there is no way for you to fulfill the requirement of getting to the water to be healed. This is a clear picture showing us that the impotent and dead people find it impossible to keep the law. There is no hope for man with the law. With respect to the law, we are helpless and hopeless cases.

Today, we have an even better religion—even the best religion. But do you realize that the best religion requires you to do something? It requires you to walk, to act, and to be the first before you can obtain its benefits. Perhaps you have discovered that you are too weak to obtain what your religion has to offer. This indicates that you are where the impotent man was—under the five

porches. We are like the impotent people under the law-keeping shelter.

## **THE SICK PEOPLE UNDER THE LAW-KEEPING SHELTER**

A multitude of sick people lay in the porches. This signifies that under the law-keeping shelter, in religion's fold, there are many people who are blind, unable to see; lame, unable to walk; and withered, being short of life. They have no joy or peace, only suffering. The impotent man had no joy, even on the joyful day of the feast (5:1), and he had no rest, even on the Sabbath day (5:9). The sick people were helpless and hopeless, dead in the eyes of the Lord.

There was the means of healing in the law-keeping religion, but it did not profit the impotent man, because he had no strength to fulfill its requirement. In the eyes of the Lord, he was a dead person in need not only of healing, but also of enlivening. With the Lord's enlivening there is no requirement. As we shall see, the impotent man heard His voice and was enlivened. The significance of this sign is that when the practice of law-keeping in the Jewish religion became an impossibility due to the impotence of man, the Son of God came to enliven the dead. The law

could not give life, but the Son of God gives life to the dead (5:21). “While we were yet weak” (Rom. 5:6), He came to enliven us.

## THE SUFFICIENCY OF THE SON’S LIFE-GIVING

We have seen that this case on the negative side exposes the inadequacy and vanity of the law-keeping religion. The holy city could not help the impotent man; neither could the holy temple, the Holy Scriptures, nor the holy days. Although it was a feast day, he had no joy, and although it was the Sabbath day, he had no rest. Nothing could help him. He was a hopeless and helpless case. Suddenly, a little man came into this situation. It was not an archangel, but a little man named Jesus. He had no beauty or attraction, and no one paid attention to Him. He came directly to the sick man. Just as the Father in eternity past foresaw the Samaritan woman and the Son went to find her at Jacob’s well (John 4), so the Father also foresaw the impotent man, and the Son came to him while he was lying at the pool. He asked him, “Do you want to get well?” That meant, “Would you like to be healed?” The impotent man knew nothing beyond the pool, the water, and the angel who stirred the water.

He also knew that he had no hope or ability in himself. So he explained the situation to the Lord Jesus. Then the Lord Jesus said, “Rise, pick up your bed, and walk.” The impotent man heard the enlivening word of the living, life-giving Lord and was healed. We may think that he rose up and walked before he was healed. But this is not true. He was healed before he rose up, took his bed, and walked. Note the sequence in [verse 9](#). “And immediately the man became well, and picked up his bed and walked.” “And immediately the man became well” precedes “picked up his bed and walked.” He was cured before he rose up. He was cured when he heard the voice of the living Son of God. It was his hearing of the living word of the Lord that quickened him. Formerly the bed carried the impotent man, but now the enlivened man carried the bed.

If I had been the impotent man, I probably would have said, “Sir, I can’t make it. I have been relying upon this bed for thirty-eight years. The bed has been carrying me all this time. How can you tell me to pick it up? I can’t do what you say.” We should never argue with the Lord’s word. We should simply say, “Amen,” to whatever He says and do it accordingly. Do not argue or reason. If you reason, you will lose His blessing. How good

it was that the impotent man not only rose up, but also picked up his bed and walked. He was not only healed; he was enlivened. According to [verses 24 and 25](#), this is for him as a dead man to pass out of death into life and live.

We do not need religion's pool with its water and we do not need the angel. When we have Jesus, we do not need anything else. It is Jesus who enlivens. We all have to see this. This is life's enlivening. This is the central point of this case on the positive side.

## **LIFE'S ENLIVENING BREAKING RELIGION'S RITUAL**

In [5:10-16](#) we see religion's opposition to life. "The Jews then said to the one who was healed, It is the Sabbath, and it is not lawful for you to pick up your bed" ([5:10](#)). Life's enlivening breaks religion's ritual. Religion is offended by life and begins its opposition to life from this point. The Sabbath is for man ([Mark 2:27](#)) and should be a rest to man. Religion's law-keeping did not bring rest to the man sick for thirty-eight years, but life's enlivening did it in one second. Yet, the religious people cared only for the ritual of Sabbath-keeping; they had no concern for the sick man's rest. What a life we have! We do not



need any religious things. As long as we have Jesus, all religious things mean nothing. As long as we have Jesus, we have life. Let religion with all its things go. They could not give us life, but Jesus does. Jesus enlivens us. Jesus gives us life. Life brings us joy. Life brings us rest. Life brings us light and everything we need. Praise the Lord!

The real significance of this case is the difference between religion and Christ, which is the difference between the law-keeping of religion and the enlivening of Christ. Religion's law-keeping is good, but we are weak. Religion's law-keeping may be effective, but we cannot meet its requirements. There is no requirement with Christ, for when He comes to us, He speaks His living word so that we can hear His voice. If there is any requirement, it is simply to hear His living word. When we hear His voice, we pass from death into life. The contrast in this case is that religion requires, but Christ's word quickens.

## **RELIGION TRYING TO QUENCH LIFE**

The law-keeping religion could not give life to the impotent man. When Christ enlivened this man with life, that religion persecuted Him, trying to quench life, because He did it on the

Sabbath (5:16). That religion cared for the keeping of its Sabbath at the sacrifice of the impotent man's rest. But Christ cared for the man's rest at the sacrifice of their Sabbath-keeping. This surely offended that religion. In principle, the situation of today's religion is the same. The religious people still care for their religious rituals at the sacrifice of people's life matters. The Lord is still the same, caring at any cost for people's life matters at the sacrifice of all religious rituals. All those who have been enlivened by Christ will be opposed and persecuted by the people who cling to their religious rituals.

## **THE SON BEING EQUAL WITH THE FATHER**

The religious Jews persecuted Jesus because on their Sabbath He worked to enliven the impotent man. Jesus answered them, "My Father is working until now, and I am working" (5:17). In their religious concept, they were resting in keeping their Sabbath. But they did not know that there was no rest for the Father and the Son as long as the poor sinners were not saved. While they were resting in keeping their Sabbath, the Father and the Son were still working that the sinners might receive life and have rest. This not

only offended the religious Jews, but also caused them to consider that Jesus was blaspheming, because, according to their concept, He “not only broke the Sabbath, but also called God His own Father, making Himself equal with God” (5:18). In their consideration, that was a blasphemy to God. Yet, it was this “blaspheming” One who enlivened the impotent man. His enlivening of that man testifies that He is equal with God the Father in giving life to people.

## **BOTH THE FATHER AND THE SON WORKING**

Although God’s work in creation was finished (Gen. 2:1-3), the Father and the Son were still working for redemption and building (John 5:17, 19-20). The religious Jews kept the Sabbath of creation. They did not know that because of man’s fall the rest of that Sabbath was broken. Neither did they know that the Father and the Son were still working for fallen man’s redemption in order to fulfill God’s original purpose, which is the building of God’s eternal habitation. What God did was the old creation. What the Father and the Son are doing is the new creation through redemption for God’s building. This work includes the Son’s life-giving, which is manifested in this

case. In this matter, the Father and the Son are one. Whatever the Father wants to do in the matter of life-giving, the Son does it accordingly.

## THE SON OF GOD GIVING LIFE TO THE DEAD

The Son gives life to the dead. [Verse 21](#) says, “For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom He wills.” In [verse 24](#) we see that whoever hears the word of the Son and believes in Him who sent Him has eternal life and has passed out of death into life. [Verse 25](#) says, “Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear shall live.” The dead persons mentioned in this verse are not those who are buried in their graves, but the living dead ones. They are not dead physically, but, according to [Ephesians 2:1-5](#) and [Colossians 2:13](#), are dead in their spirit. In the eyes of the Lord, all of the people living on earth are dead in their spirit. The phrase, “An hour is coming and now is,” refers to the very time when the Lord spoke these words. Many at that time heard His living words and consequently were made alive. Hence, “shall live” in this verse means to be

alive in their spirit. It is not the resurrection in the physical body as is mentioned in [John chapter 5 verses 28 and 29](#). For twenty centuries, from the time that the Lord spoke these words until the present, thousands and thousands of people have heard the living voice of the Son of God and have been enlivened with life. We also have heard the living word of the Lord and have been made alive. We also were the impotent persons under the five porches, for we were blind, lame, and withered. In short, we were dead. Then the Lord came to visit us, and we heard the living word of the gospel that enlivened us and made us alive.

In the matter of life the Son is the same as the Father. “As the Father has life in Himself, so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself” ([5:26](#)). Both the Father and the Son have life in themselves. So the Son can and does enliven people with life as the Father desires. In life’s enlivening, the Son is truly one with the Father.

## **THE SON OF MAN EXECUTING JUDGMENT**

The Son of Man will execute judgment over all the unbelieving ones ([5:22-23, 27, 30](#)). As the

Son of God (5:25), the Lord can give life (5:21), and as the Son of Man, He can execute judgment (5:27). Since He is a man, He is fully qualified to judge man. Acts 17:31 says that God will judge the world “by that man [Jesus] whom he hath ordained.” Romans 2:16 says, “God shall judge the secrets of men according to my gospel by Jesus Christ.” Second Timothy 4:1 says, “Christ Jesus, Who is about to judge the living and the dead.” The Father “gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man” (5:27). And the Father gave all judgment to the Son “that all may honor the Son even as they honor the Father” (5:22-23). The Son will judge justly according to the Father’s will (5:30). He is one with the Father in the matter of life’s enlivening. He is also one with Him in the matter of judgment.

## **TWO KINDS OF RESURRECTION**

Let us read verses 28 and 29. “Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming in which all who are in the tombs shall hear His voice, and shall come forth: those who have done the good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done the evil to the resurrection of judgment.” All of the physically dead people who have

been buried in graves will be resurrected. Please note the difference between these two verses and [verse 25](#). In [verse 25](#), the dead shall hear His voice, but in [verse 28](#) all who are in the tombs shall hear His voice. Those who are in the tombs are different from those who are dead. [Verse 25](#) refers to the dead living on the earth; [verse 28](#) refers to the dead buried in the earth. Those buried in their graves shall be resurrected at the Lord's second coming.

In addition to the resurrection in the spirit which we saw in [verse 25](#), [verse 29](#) distinguishes two kinds of physical resurrections. The resurrection in our spirit means that our spirit is made alive. This is also regeneration in our spirit. The regeneration in our spirit is a resurrection made by the Lord Jesus with the divine life, which is Himself. In addition to this, there are two kinds of physical resurrections. The "resurrection of life" is the resurrection of the saved believers before the millennium, the thousand years ([Rev. 20:4, 6](#); [1 Cor. 15:23, 52](#); [1 Thes. 4:16](#)). The dead believers will be resurrected to enjoy eternal life at the return of the Lord Jesus. Hence, it is called the resurrection of life. When the Lord Jesus comes back, all His dead believers will be resurrected and

will be taken up with the living believers to the air (1 Thes. 4:17). Then the overcoming believers will reign as kings with the Lord Jesus for a thousand years. The “resurrection of judgment” refers to the resurrection of the unbelievers after the thousand years (Rev. 20:5, 12). All the dead unbelievers will be resurrected after the thousand years to be judged at the great white throne (Rev. 20:11-15). Hence, it is called the resurrection of judgment. We, the believers, will enjoy and participate in the resurrection of life, but the unbelievers will suffer the judgment of eternal perdition at the resurrection of judgment.

## THE SON’S FOURFOLD TESTIMONY

In 5:31-47 we see the Son’s fourfold testimony: the testimony of John the Baptist (vv. 32-35); the testimony of the Son’s work (v. 36); the testimony of the Father (vv. 37-38); and the testimony of the Scriptures (vv. 39-47). It is possible to have these four witnesses and yet not have Christ Himself. The Jews at one time were joyful over John the Baptist, but they did not realize that he was only the witness of Christ. The testimony of John the Baptist was to direct them to Christ. The Jews also saw the works of Christ, yet they



would not come to Him. They saw His signs, miracles, and wonders, but they would not realize who the Lord was and come to Him. The Father testified concerning the Son, but they did not have His word abiding in them, for they did not believe the Son whom He sent. They even searched the Scriptures that testified of Him, but they failed to come to Him that they might have eternal life.

To “search the Scriptures” may be separated from “come to Me.” The Jewish religionists searched the Scriptures, but were not willing to come to the Lord. These two should be kept together. Since the Scriptures testify concerning the Lord, they should not be separated from Him. We may contact the Scriptures and yet not contact the Lord. Only the Lord can give life. We should never separate the Scriptures from the Lord Himself. Whenever we search the Word, we must come to the Lord Himself. We must make searching the Word and touching the Lord one thing. Whenever we study the Bible, we must open our spirit to the Lord. While our eyes are reading the words and our mind is understanding them, our spirit must be exercised to contact the Lord through the Scriptures. Then we shall not only have the understanding of the black

and white letters in our mentality, but also have the life in our spirit.

All of the signs, manifestations, and gifts are merely witnesses by which we may contact Christ. The problem is that people today have the testimonies, but fail to contact the Lord Himself. It is possible to have the signs, the manifestations, the gifts, and the knowledge of the Scriptures, but not come to contact the Lord Himself. It is only the Lord Himself who will give you life. It is not the signs, the gifts, or even the Scriptures, but it is the Lord Himself who will enliven you and impart life into you. May we all see this and daily come to Him that we might have life.

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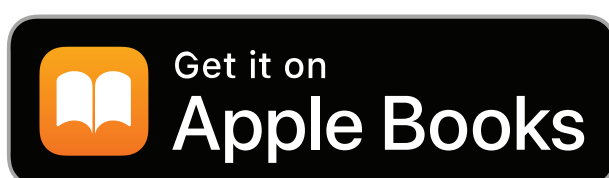
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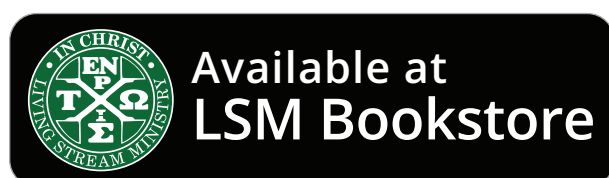


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## LIFE'S FEEDING— THE NEED OF THE HUNGRY

The Gospel of John is a book of pictures. It speaks of the divine life and of the functions of this divine life. Both the divine life and its functions are spiritual things. Since it is very difficult to describe them in human language, the Apostle John received the wisdom from the Lord to write his Gospel, not only with plain words, but also with figures. Because plain words are inadequate, John also used figures and pictures. In a sense, every case is a picture. In [chapter five](#) is a vivid picture of the enlivening of the impotent man. In [chapter six](#) we have another picture showing us the need of the hungry and life's feeding.

### THE HUNGRY WORLD AND THE FEEDING CHRIST

[Verses 1 through 15 of John 6](#) reveal to us the hungry world and the feeding Christ.

The case in [chapter six](#) portrays a scene which reveals where we are in our condition. There is a contrast between the scene of [chapter five](#) with

the one in [chapter six](#). The scene in [chapter five](#) is in the holy city, but the scene in [chapter six](#) is in the wilderness. A pool is in the scene of the previous case, and a sea is in this case. The people in the former case are associated with the pool, and the people in the latter case are involved with the sea. The pool is related to religion's healing, while the sea is related to the people's living. The person in the case of [chapter five](#) was very weak, needing healing and enlivening, but the people in the case of [chapter six](#) are hungry, needing food and satisfaction. The pool is sacred, being of the Jewish religion; the sea is secular, being of the human society. The person by the pool was impotent, needed life's enlivening, and was waiting for healing. The people in this case are hungry, need life's feeding, and are seeking for nourishment.

## **THE SATAN-CORRUPTED WORLD**

In typology, the land signifies the earth created by God for man to live upon, and the sea signifies the world corrupted by Satan in which fallen mankind lives. The sea represents Satan's organized and systematized world where humanity is occupied and enveloped. In this world mankind is hungry and has no satisfaction. In

this world mankind is troubled and has no peace. The scene in this chapter portrays all of humanity living in the world corrupted by Satan. They are not living on the land created by God. In the world corrupted by Satan there is no real satisfaction, there is always hunger. Neither is there any peace, for the wind and the waves are always on the sea making trouble for man.

## THE TRANSCENDENT POSITION

In typology, a mountain signifies a transcendent position. Moses was brought to a mountain in order to receive God's revelation ([Exo. 24:12](#)). The Lord Jesus went to the top of a mountain when He was transfigured ([Matt. 17:1-2](#)). The Apostle John was also brought to the transcendent position of a mountain when he saw the eternal vision concerning the New Jerusalem ([Rev. 21:10](#)). So, in this picture, the sea is on a low level, and the mountain is in a transcendent position. The sea signifies the world corrupted by Satan, and the mountain signifies the high, transcendent position where Christ is and where we must be with Him. The Lord did not feed the people by the sea. He led the multitude to the top of a mountain. If you



wish to be fed by Christ and to be satisfied with Christ, you must go with Him to a high place. Satisfaction with Christ depends upon our being led to and fed with Christ on the mountain. The mountain is above both the Satan-corrupted world and the God-created earth. Neither the sea nor the earth is a suitable place for us to feed on Christ. If we are going to feed on Him, we must be transcendent above the Satan-corrupted world and above the God-created earth. If we are to enjoy His feeding, we must be on the mountain with Him.

## **THE REDEEMING LAMB OF GOD**

The Passover in [verse 4](#) signifies Christ as the redeeming Lamb of God who shed His blood for our redemption and gave His flesh for our feeding ([1 Cor. 5:7](#)). At the Passover, people slay the redeeming lamb, strike its blood, and eat its flesh ([Exo. 12:3-11](#)). This typifies Christ as the redeeming Lamb of God who was slain that we might eat His flesh and drink His blood ([John 6:51-56](#)), thus taking Him in as the life supply for us to live by.

In [Genesis 2:9](#), Christ was typified by the tree of life. The tree of life, belonging to the vegetable life, is good for producing and generating, but

has no blood for redeeming. At the time of [Genesis 2](#), man was not yet involved with sin and thus had no need for redemption. However, in [Genesis 3](#) man fell. Immediately after man's fall, God came in to deal with that fall by slaying sacrificial lambs to redeem Adam and Eve and to make coats of skins to cover their nakedness ([Gen. 3:21](#)). Thus, the vegetable life itself is no longer adequate for fallen man; there is the need of the animal life. We need life not only for feeding, but also for redeeming. So, in [chapter six](#) of John we firstly have the barley loaf, which belongs to the vegetable life and is good for feeding. As we shall see, since man has fallen and needs redeeming as well as feeding, the Lord Jesus turned the bread into flesh ([6:51b](#)). The bread is made from barley, while the flesh contains blood. Barley bread is of the vegetable life, but the flesh with the blood is of the animal life. Eventually, in [John 6](#) Christ is shown not only as the tree of life signified by the bread, but also as the Lamb of God signified by the flesh and blood. In the Lamb of God there are two elements: the blood for redeeming and the meat, the flesh, for feeding. At the Passover, the people struck the blood and ate the meat. It is the same with us today. We accept Christ in

the way of redeeming as well as in the way of feeding. He is both the vegetable life and the animal life, the feeding life and the redeeming life.

## THE GENERATING ASPECT OF CHRIST'S LIFE

The loaves are of the vegetable life, signifying the generating aspect of Christ's life. As the generating life, Christ grows in the land, the God-created earth. In order to regenerate us, He grew on the God-created earth for reproducing.

Barley signifies Christ resurrected. According to the Scriptures, barley represents the firstfruit of resurrection. The Lord told His people in [Leviticus 23](#) to offer the firstfruits of their harvest each year. In the land of Palestine, barley ripens earlier than any other crop and is the first of the harvest. Hence, it typifies the resurrected Christ ([Lev. 23:10](#)). Therefore, barley signifies the resurrected Christ, who is our life supply. As the firstfruit, He can become our bread of life. So, barley loaves represent Christ in resurrection as food to us. The feeding Christ is the resurrected Christ.

Perhaps someone will ask how Christ could have been resurrected in [John 6](#) when He had

not yet been crucified. Even before His crucifixion, Christ was the resurrection. In [John 11:25](#) He said, “I am the resurrection and the life.” He did not say, “I shall be the resurrection,” for He was the resurrection already. When the Lord told Martha that her brother would rise again, she, through her poor expounding of the Scriptures, postponed the resurrection for two thousand years to the coming age. When she did that, the Lord seemed to say, “I am the resurrection now. With Me, the eternal One, there is no time element. The past, present, and future are all the same to Me.” Eternal means to have no time element. Both before and after His crucifixion, He is the resurrected Christ. It is the resurrected Christ who can be life to us and can be bread to feed us. We are feeding on the resurrected Christ.

The number five signifies responsibility, the responsibility of Christ in feeding us. The number five is composed of four plus one. The number four represents the creatures ([Rev. 4:6](#)), and the number one represents the Creator ([1 Cor. 8:6](#)). The Creator and the creatures added together take responsibility. The number five is not composed of three plus two, but of four plus one. Look at your hand. It is composed of four

fingers and a thumb. It would be very awkward if your hand had three fingers and two thumbs. Four fingers with one thumb enable the hand to do many things. The five barley loaves signify that the Lord as the Creator (one) added to the creatures (four) bears the responsibility to feed us. In His humanity, the resurrected Christ bears this responsibility.

## **THE REDEEMING ASPECT OF CHRIST'S LIFE**

The two fishes are of the animal life, signifying the redeeming aspect of Christ's life. As the redeeming life, He lives in the sea, the Satan-corrupted world. The barley comes out of the land, representing the earth created by God, while the fishes come out of the sea, signifying the world corrupted by Satan. The Lord Jesus came not only to the earth created by God, but also to the world corrupted by Satan. If He had come only to the earth created by God, He would only have been represented by the barley loaves. But since He also came into the world corrupted by Satan, He is also represented by the two fishes. He had nothing to do with the corrupted world. Just as fish are not salty though they live in salt water, so the Lord was not corrupted by Satan

though He lived in the Satan-corrupted world. The Lord is like the fish that can live in the salty environment of the sea without being salted by it. In order to redeem us, He lived in the satanic and sinful world. But yet He was sinless, unaffected by the sinful world. As the generating life, Christ lived as a proper man in the God-created earth. As the redeeming life, Christ lived in the Satan-corrupted world without being affected by its corruption.

The number two means testimony ([Rev. 11:3](#)). The two fishes are a testimony that Christ is sufficient to bear responsibility in feeding us.

We have seen that barley, which is of the vegetable life, represents the generating life and that the fish, which are of the animal life, represent the redeeming life. Now we must ask, if the human race had never fallen, would Christ as our regenerating life still have been necessary? Yes. Before the fall of Adam, God put him in front of the tree of life. The tree of life has nothing to do with sin. Therefore, man must take God as his life by eating the tree of life. Even [John 12:24](#) states that the Lord was the one grain of wheat that fell into the ground and died, after which He was raised up to become many grains. This too had nothing to do with sin, for, according to

the Scriptures, the vegetable life is to produce or to generate much fruit. The one grain of wheat bears many other grains. Hence, it represents the generating life.

As we have seen, before man fell, he ate only of the vegetable life ([Gen. 1:29](#)), but after he fell, he also ate of the animal life ([Gen. 9:3](#)). Before the fall there was no need for the shedding of blood. But after man fell he needed the animal life because redemption requires the shedding of blood. The vegetable life was sufficient before man sinned, but after he sinned the animal life became necessary.

The offerings in the Old Testament always had both the vegetable life and the animal life. For example, the Passover had the slain lamb, which represented the animal life, and the unleavened bread, which represented the vegetable life. These two different lives are necessary in order to meet all of our need. Also, the meat offerings of Leviticus were accompanied with the meal offering. The meal offerings were made of fine flour, vegetable oil, and frankincense—items of the vegetable life. In Leviticus, the meal offerings could never be accepted without the meat offerings. That was exactly what Cain did. He only offered vegetables to God and was

rejected, while his brother Abel offered the sacrifice of an animal whose blood had been shed and was accepted ([Gen. 4:3-5](#)).

We need the Lord Jesus to be both our generating life and our redeeming life. By His death on the cross two things came out of Him—the blood to redeem us and the water to generate us ([John 19:34](#)). His shed blood brought redemption to us, and the water from His wounded side imparted His life to us. The five barley loaves were accompanied by the two fishes. It is impossible for barley to shed blood; therefore, it could never redeem us. The two fishes represent the animal life for redemption. The Lord is represented by both the barley loaves and the fishes, for He is our vegetable life to generate us and our animal life to redeem us.

## **THE LIFE SUPPLY TO US**

It is interesting to note that the five barley loaves and two fishes came from a small boy, not a big man. This is very meaningful, because the Lord wants to indicate to us that He is our life, not as someone big, but as someone small. Both barley loaves and fishes are small items, signifying the smallness of Christ as the life supply to us. The miracle-seeking people considered Him



as the promised prophet (6:14; Deut. 18:15, 18) and would have forced Him to be their king (6:15), but He would not assume the position of a giant in religion. Rather, He preferred to be small loaves and little fishes that He might be small enough for people to eat. All of this reveals the smallness of Christ. He is small enough for us to eat. Whatever we eat must be considerably smaller than we are. We are much bigger than the bread and fish that we eat. We cannot eat something that is larger than we are. If it were larger than we are, it could eat us. Everything we eat is even smaller than our mouth. If it is larger than our mouth, it must first be cut into pieces. A small boy brought five small loaves and two small fishes. This means that the smallness of the Lord Jesus is most precious to us.

Most Christians, including ourselves, always think of our Lord as someone great. But in [John 6](#) the Lord Jesus does not want to be great. He wants to remain small enough to eat. There is a song that says, “How Great Thou Art,” but we have a sweeter song which praises the Lord for His smallness. If the Lord were only great, we could never touch Him. Praise Him that He has become so small! Perhaps you have been a

Christian for many years and yet have failed to realize how small the Lord is. To think of the Lord as a great prophet is merely a religious thought. If the Lord only became a great prophet and was enthroned as a great king, He never could have been a little piece of bread. He never could have been our food supply. Before He could become our food, He first had to become small. Thus, He was symbolized by five small barley loaves and two small fishes brought by one small boy. We need to be impressed with the smallness as well as with the greatness of the Lord. He was even born in a small manger, brought up in a small town, and raised in a lowly family. He did not come to be a religious giant. He was a little Nazarene, having nothing to do with greatness or bigness. Oh, He is so small!

Are you bigger or smaller than a piece of bread? You must admit, of course, that a piece of bread is smaller. Since the Lord comes to you as a piece of the bread of life, you must say to Him, "Lord, I praise You that You are smaller than I am. Now You can become my food. If You were greater than I, You could never be my food." As far as the greatness of our Lord is concerned, of course, no one is as great as He is, but we must also be impressed that as far as

the smallness of our Lord is concerned, no one is as small as He is. He is bread that is small enough for us to eat.

In [Matthew 15](#) we see that the Lord not only became the loaves, but also the crumbs, which are small fragments of a loaf. Many of us were not qualified to take Him as loaves. However, surely we are qualified to take Him as crumbs. Do you remember what the woman of Canaan said to the Lord when she asked Him to help her and He said that it was “not good to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs”? She said, “Yes, Lord; for even the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters’ table” ([Matt. 15:27](#)). The Canaanite woman was not offended by the Lord’s hard words and by the fact that He referred to her as a dog. She seemed to be telling the Lord, “Yes, Lord, I am a Gentile dog, but the Gentile dog has his portion. The children’s portion is on the table, and the dog’s portion is under the table. Lord, You must realize that now You are not on the table but under the table, because the naughty children have cast You away. Now that You are under the table, You can be my portion.” The Lord admired her faith. We all need to enjoy the Lord in such a lowly way. Do not wait to go to heaven to enjoy Him.

Get Him from under the table where He is right now. Praise the Lord that on the earth He is so small and available now! He is available at any time according to our appetite. However much we can take of Him, He will be that much to us. And the leftovers always surpass what we can eat.

## **THE OVERFLOW OF THE RICHES OF CHRIST'S LIFE SUPPLY**

This chapter not only brings out the smallness of the Lord, but also the richness of the Lord. Just five loaves are rich enough to feed five thousand people. The twelve baskets left over signify the overflow of the riches of Christ's life supply, which fed people over one thousand times. That five loaves fed five thousand people means that it fed them one thousand times. According to the Scriptures, the number one thousand signifies a complete unit. For example, one day in the court of the Lord is better than a thousand ([Psa. 84:10](#)). One thousand is a full unit. Hence, the five loaves can fill five thousand people. This reveals how rich and how unlimited the Lord is. The multitude could eat as much as they wanted, for the supply was unlimited. Even two little fishes were sufficient for all.

Twelve baskets of fragments were left over. Why were there not five, eight, or eleven baskets left over? Because the number twelve signifies eternal completeness and eternal perfectness. This means that even the fragments are eternally full and eternally complete. Even a small, fragmented Christ is full of a richness which can never be exhausted. He is so small and yet so unlimited. Have you ever compared His smallness with His unlimitedness? He is the little Nazarene, yet He has been feeding all of the generations. He has never been reduced. Before the feeding of the five thousand, there were five loaves and two fishes; after the feeding of the five thousand, there were twelve baskets left over. Therefore, after the feeding of the five thousand, more surplus remained than what was there originally. This portrays the richness of Christ, for there is always something left over after the multitude has been fed.

For twenty centuries, Christ has been feeding thousands upon thousands of people. Today, He is still rich, for there are still twelve baskets full. We need the revelation of the richness of the smallness of Christ. In form, He is the five loaves and the two fishes, yet thousands and thousands of people have been eating Him for

twenty centuries. And He is still here. He can never be reduced or exhausted. Oh, how we must praise Him for His smallness in form and for His richness without limit!

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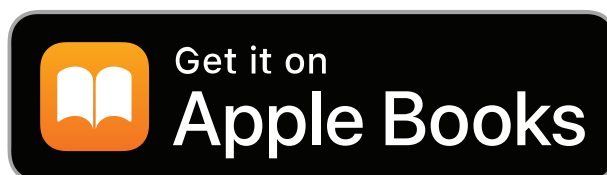
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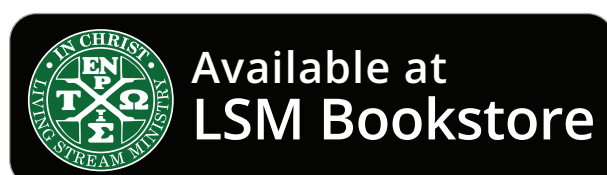


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## LIFE'S QUENCHING— THE NEED OF THE THIRSTY

From [chapter seven](#) of the Gospel of John we shall consider the need of the thirsty. This case is in contrast with [chapter six](#) of John, the need of the hungry. In [chapter six](#) the Lord is clearly revealed as the bread of life to satisfy our hunger, but here in [chapter seven](#) the Lord brings the flow of living water to quench our thirst. In [chapter six](#) the people are hungry, but in [chapter seven](#) they are thirsty. [Chapter six](#) presents the living bread, and [chapter seven](#) introduces the living water. The bread of life is for hungry people, and the rivers of living water are for thirsty people. For the thirsty, Christ is the quenching life. He is the very life that is able to quench man's thirst.

The thought that the Lord is our food and water is seen throughout the Scriptures. For example, in [Genesis 2](#) the tree of life is a picture of the Lord as our life supply of food. Beside the tree of life in [Genesis 2](#) there is the river of water, which is a portrait of the Lord bringing us the rivers of living water. In other words, this pictures the Lord's

purpose in the creation of man—man must eat and drink. If he fails to eat, he will become hungry, and if he fails to drink, he will become thirsty. The Lord is the food to satisfy our hunger, and He has the living water to quench our thirst.

Later in the Scriptures, the children of Israel, as they traveled through the wilderness, also had both food and water. On the one hand, they had the manna from heaven as their daily food ([Exo. 16:14-15](#)); on the other hand, they had the living water flowing from the smitten rock to quench their thirst ([Exo. 17:6](#)).

In the Gospel of John, the Lord also is the living bread and He offers the living water to satisfy the hunger and the thirst of the multitude. The Father, the Son, and the Spirit, the three Persons of the Triune God, are very much related to this matter of food and water. God the Father is the source, God the Son is the food, and God the Spirit is the drink. The first Person of the Triune God is the source of the second Person as the food, from whom the third Person flows out as the drink.

[First Corinthians 10:3-4](#) also points out these two things. There, Christ Himself is the spiritual food and He is the smitten rock from which flows the spiritual drink. The Holy Spirit is the spiritual

drink flowing out of the crucified Christ. Therefore, Christ is our food, and the Holy Spirit who flows out of Christ is our drink.

Finally, we come to the end of the Scriptures, where we see the New Jerusalem. Again, the flow of the living water is the Holy Spirit, and the tree of life growing in the flow is Christ ([Rev. 22:1-2](#)). Hence, there is a line running throughout the whole Scriptures showing us that Christ is our spiritual food, that the Holy Spirit is our spiritual drink, and that man needs both to eat and to drink in order to satisfy his hunger and thirst.

## THE SCENE OF THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES

[John 7](#) is a continuation of [chapter six](#), because the matter of food is related to water. In the scene of [chapter six](#), there was the feast of the Passover. In the scene in [chapter seven](#), there is the feast of Tabernacles. The feast of the Passover is the first of the annual Jewish feasts, and the feast of Tabernacles is the last ([Lev. 23:5, 34](#)). The feast of the Passover, as the first feast of the year, implies the beginning of man's life (cf. [Exo. 12:2-3, 6](#)), which involves man's seeking for satisfaction and results in man's hunger. The feast of Tabernacles, as the last feast of the year, implies the completion

and success of man's life (cf. [Exo. 23:16](#)), which will end and result in man's thirst. In the scene of the feast of the Passover, the Lord presented Himself as the bread of life, which satisfies man's hunger. In the scene of the feast of Tabernacles, the Lord promised that He would flow forth the living water, which quenches man's thirst.

The feast of the Passover occurred early in the year, when the people were working and laboring hard. The case of the feeding of the five thousand finds the people working to fill their hunger, but failing to be satisfied. They labored, they worked, they sought something to satisfy, but they failed. The feast of Tabernacles, on the contrary, occurred at a time when the harvest was over. The people had reaped the corn and the wine ([Deut. 16:13-14](#)). Everything of the harvest had been reaped, and the people were to come together at the feast of Tabernacles and enjoy everything with their families and even with their servants. We must realize that during the feast of Tabernacles the people do not labor because the work is over, the crop has been reaped, and the corn and wine have been harvested. That was the time to rejoice in their enjoyment—but they were still thirsty! This case reveals that their thirst was not quenched even by their success.

If you read the verses concerning the Passover in [Exodus 12](#), you will see that the Passover indicates or implies the beginning of life. The Passover, of course, is for salvation. When we were saved, we had a new start. The Passover was always in the first month of the year. Hence, it marked a new beginning. In a sense, all of the young people are in the Passover, for their life has just begun and they have many high expectations. Although perhaps you have not yet graduated from college, you expect that after graduation you will be a professor, doctor, or attorney. This is the feast of the Passover. We have already seen that the feast of the Passover always ends in hunger. After your graduation there will be nothing but hunger. The higher position you attain in your profession, the more hunger you feel. The more money you earn, the more dissatisfied you will be. In [John 6](#), the feast of the Passover, as the initial step in life, ends in hunger.

## **THE COMPLETION AND SUCCESS OF LIFE WITH ITS ENJOYMENT IN A RELIGIOUS WAY**

After the full harvest of their crops, the Jewish people observed the feast of Tabernacles to enjoy what they had reaped in the worship of God

(Exo. 23:16; Deut. 16:13-15). Hence, this feast signifies the completion, achievement, and success of man's career, study, and other matters of human life, including religion, with the joy and enjoyment thereof. Thus, the feast of Tabernacles implies the completion of your job, achievement, and career. Although you may be successful in your occupation or career, you must realize that it will all issue in thirst. Eventually, after working your entire life, you will be thirsty, because everything has a last day. Everything ends. The last day is always a great day. After people attain a certain success, other people will give them a memorial day. A person's memorial day is always his last day. It is the end, and the end is empty. It results in thirst. In [John 6](#) we have the beginning of life, which results in hunger; in [John 7](#) we have the success and completion of life, which end in thirst. The case in [John 6](#) sets forth the people laboring, working, seeking, and striving to find something to satisfy their hunger, but they fail to get it. This case sets forth the people already having everything they need, but they find that it does not quench their thirst. They have obtained everything; they have enjoyed everything. But with all of their success, with all of their gain, even with all of the things connected

with their feasts—their religion and their temple—their thirst cannot be quenched. Therefore, these two cases compare those who are working with those who are resting. Nevertheless, regardless of whether you are working or resting, you cannot fill your hunger or quench your thirst.

However, the Lord is the food to the people who labor and He will afford living water to those who rest. Actually, humanity exists in only one of two conditions. One is that because they lack something they must seek, work, strive, and labor; the other is that because they have everything they may rejoice and enjoy their riches. In other words, at first you find that you do not have anything; therefore, you must work and labor hard. For example, perhaps you are in the first year of college and you have to labor over your studies. This is like the feast of the Passover. After you have graduated and received your degree and have an excellent occupation, you are rich. This is like the feast of Tabernacles because the work and labor are over. Now you are at rest and are in the position to rejoice and enjoy the benefits of your labor.

Which feast are you attending—the feast of the Passover or the feast of Tabernacles? Regardless of which feast you are attending, you are still



hungry or thirsty. Whether you are in a poor or rich condition, whether you are in a state of poverty or plenty, you will realize that you are either hungry or thirsty. Many foreign students come to the rich country of the United States for an education, but in reality, they are simply hungry. After they work hard for several years and finally achieve their Ph.D. degree, some will become very wealthy, but they will still be thirsty.

Perhaps as a young person you are considering marriage. This reveals that you are hungry—hungry for a wife, hungry for a helpmate, hungry for a family and children. I must tell you that although you may marry the best wife, have the best children, and possess the best of everything, you will eventually be seventy or eighty years old. That will be your feast of Tabernacles in which you will rejoice in everything and enjoy everything. At that time, you will discover that nothing has been able to quench your thirst. At the Passover, you were hungry, but after the feast of Tabernacles, you were still thirsty. When you made out your application for college, you were hungry, but after your graduation, you were still thirsty. When you were first married, you were hungry, but now, after you are married, you sense that you are still thirsty.

Praise the Lord that Christ is the bread of life for those who are laboring at the feast of the Passover. A college education can never be the bread of life. Only the Lord Himself can be our satisfaction. Furthermore, only Christ can quench the thirst for those who are resting and rejoicing at the feast of Tabernacles. Even when people have everything, the corn and the wine, they realize that an inner thirst still persists. They may rejoice and enjoy the produce that is in their hands, yet only the Lord has the living water to quench their thirst.

If you see the thought concerning these two feasts, you will see the two phases of man's condition and the two aspects of Christ as our supply of life. On one hand, He is the bread of life while we are laboring; on the other hand, He supplies us with the living water while we are resting. Once you see this thought, you will understand the whole of [John 7](#). Although it is a long chapter, it is brief in thought. The thought is that when you have succeeded in all of your achievements, when you have enjoyed all of your possessions, when you have rejoiced in all of your best circumstances, you will then realize that your thirst has not been quenched. Nothing is adequate to quench your thirst. Only the Lord

can quench your thirst by affording you the living water.

## THE NEED OF THE ETERNAL TABERNACLE

God ordained this feast of Tabernacles so that the children of Israel would remember how their fathers, while wandering in the wilderness, lived in tents ([Lev. 23:39-43](#)) with the expectation of entering into the rest of the good land. Hence, this feast is also a reminder that people today are still in the wilderness and need to enter into the rest of the New Jerusalem, which is the eternal tabernacle ([Rev. 21:2-3](#)). Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob also lived in tents, looking forward to this eternal tabernacle ([Heb. 11:9-10](#)), in which there will be “a river of water of life,...proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb” to quench man’s thirst ([Rev. 22:1, 17](#)). At the end of such a feast with such a background, Christ cried out the promise of the rivers of living water, which will satisfy man’s expectation for eternity ([John 7:37-39](#)).

The feast of Tabernacles reminded the people of their need of the eternal tabernacle with the river of life flowing in it. Many years ago I read some articles that said that when the Israelites

celebrated the feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem in the ancient times, they set up a huge rock and over the rock they had waters flowing as a reminder that their forefathers wandered in the wilderness and drank of the waters that flowed out of the cleft rock. Near the rock there might also have been tents showing how the forefathers lived in tents and wandered in the wilderness, but had the cleft rock with the living water to quench their thirst. All of this signifies that all of human life is in the wilderness. Whether you collect the trash or are the President, a laborer or a professor, you are wandering in the wilderness. Whether you live in a high-rise apartment or a brick house, you are living in a tent. A tent signifies a temporary dwelling. Compared to the New Jerusalem, even a palace is a tent. We all are pilgrims wandering in the wilderness, living in tents, and needing to drink living water out of the rock. This reminds us that one day the real feast of Tabernacles will come. That will be in the new heaven and new earth within which the New Jerusalem will be the eternal tabernacle. [Revelation 21:3](#) says that the New Jerusalem is the tabernacle of God with man. It is the real, constant, eternal tabernacle. In the tabernacle of the New Jerusalem there will be the river of

water flowing continually to quench the thirst of God's elect. Thus, the feast of Tabernacles reminds us that we have such a future and causes us to realize that we can never be satisfied with the things of this age. Those things are the things of our pilgrimage. All of them will end. We are travelers. We are journeying toward our final goal—the eternal tabernacle of the New Jerusalem in the new heaven and the new earth. We do not have the real quenching water here; it is there in the New Jerusalem.

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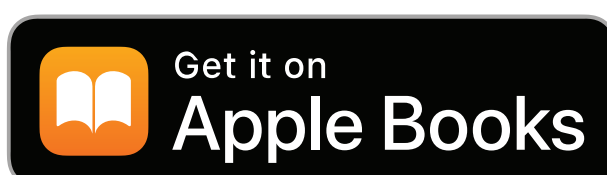
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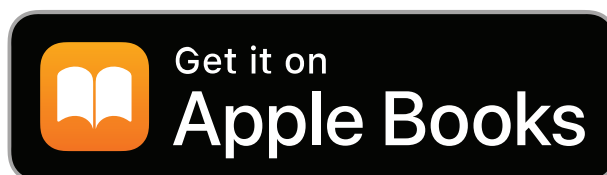
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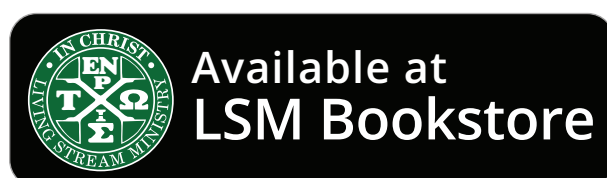


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## LIFE'S CRY TO THE THIRSTY ONES

In [chapter five of John](#) there is a contrast between life and religion, but there is no actual persecution. This persecution begins in [chapter seven](#).

While the religionists were having a feast, they plotted to kill Jesus ([John 7:1-2](#)). This is an accurate picture of today's religion, for religion, in principle, is the same today. On the one hand, the religionists worship God, while on the other hand they plot to kill God's real seekers. If you are a true seeker after life, you must be prepared to find that religion will attempt to kill you. This has happened from the first century down to the present time. In every century the real seekers after life have been persecuted by the religionists. Madame Guyon, for example, was imprisoned by the religionists of her day. As long as you go along with the Lord according to the inner life and not according to the outward things, you will be persecuted by the religious people.

The Lord is God the Creator ([1:1, 10](#)). However, as a man He suffered the persecution of

His creatures (7:1). It was not an easy thing for the Creator to suffer the persecution from His creatures. What patience He must have had! What humiliation it must have been! But the Lord did it. Even the religious feast provided an opportunity for this persecution (7:2, 11). The religionists took advantage of the religious feast to persecute the Lord Jesus.

## **LIFE'S SUFFERING OF PEOPLE'S UNBELIEF**

The persecuting Jews were seeking to kill the Lord Jesus (7:1, 19-20, 25, 30, 32). Since the Jewish religionists were plotting against the Lord Jesus, He had to be somewhat careful. If He had been even a little careless, He would have fallen into their hands. He was not able to act freely. Although the Lord is the Almighty God, He, as a man under persecution, was limited in His activity. While the religionists were seeking to kill Him on the one hand, His unbelieving brothers were challenging Him to seek worldly glory on the other hand (7:3-4). His brothers seemed to say to Him, "Why don't you go to Jerusalem? You should make a big name for yourself." Both the persecution of the Jews and the challenge from His brothers came from one enemy, Satan.

Satan stirred up the Jews to seek to kill the Lord and he stirred up His unbelieving brothers to challenge Him to go to Jerusalem and to make a name for Himself that He might receive glory. The situation is the same today. Occasionally some brothers propose that we do certain things to get a name and be publicized. But it is awful to be publicized and to have a name. If you are going to have a name, it is better to get a bad name.

## **LIFE'S LIMITATION IN TIME**

In [7:6-9](#) we see that the Lord was limited in time. The Lord said to His brothers, “My time has not yet come, but your time is always ready” ([7:6](#)). Although the Lord is the eternal, infinite, unlimited God ([Rom. 9:5](#)), He lived on earth as a man, limited even in the matter of time. The Lord was willing to lose His freedom, to be bound in the matter of time, and to do the will of the Father so that He could minister the living water of life to us. The whole of [chapter seven](#) reveals how the Lord acted as a man limited in every respect.

## **LIFE'S SEEKING OF GOD'S GLORY**

The Lord is the Almighty God ([Isa. 9:6](#)), but

as a man under persecution He was limited in His activity ([John 7:10](#)). He would not act freely. Although the Lord is the omniscient God, He, as a lowly man, appeared to be illiterate. “The Jews then marveled and said, How does this man know letters, having never learned?” ([7:15](#)). Although the Lord had little education, He knew everything. He not only knew the letters; He knew the minds, hearts, and spirits of men. The Lord would not seek His own glory, but the glory of God ([7:17-18](#)).

## **LIFE’S SOURCE AND ORIGIN— GOD THE FATHER**

The Lord’s source and origin are God the Father ([7:25-36](#); [13:3](#)). Although His source was God the Father, He came as a man from Nazareth of Galilee ([7:27](#), [41-42](#), [52](#); [1:45-46](#)). For quite a while I was not happy with the Lord concerning what I felt was His lack of frankness in [John 7](#). It seemed to me that He was somewhat sneaky. He told people that His source was God the Father, but He came from Nazareth. There is a vital principle here: with everything concerning the Lord, the outward appearance will never look good, but the inward content will be marvelous. Do not be troubled by outward

appearance. The people who looked at Jesus outwardly saw Him as just a Nazarene. He had no form, comeliness, beauty, or attraction. But within, He is the very God. Even some may not dress appropriately for the meetings. But I have come to see that there is a treasure in those earthen vessels. The Lord has told me not to care for the outward appearance. The Nazarene has an unattractive appearance but an excellent and heavenly content.

## **LIFE'S CRY TO THE THIRSTY ONES**

On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood and cried out to the thirsty ones (7:37-39). The last day signifies the ending of all the enjoyment of any success in human life. Regardless of the kind of success you have, there will be a last day. For instance, although you may have a marvelous marriage, your marriage will not last forever.

The phrase “the last day” occurs in both chapters six and seven (6:39-40; 7:37). However, these are two different kinds of last days. The last day in chapter six is the ultimate last day in the remote future when the Lord will raise us up. The last day in chapter seven refers to the many last days during our human life. The greatest last

day is in the future, but before that day, during our human life, there are many last days. There will be a last day for an article of clothing that you value; there will be a last day for your marriage. Everything has its last day. The feast of Tabernacles continued for seven days, but the seventh day was the last day of the feast. The last simply means an end. Regardless of how wealthy you are, there is an end. Regardless of how healthy you are, there is an end. There is a last day for your riches, a last day to your health, a last day with your family, a last day with your dear wife or husband, a last day with your parents, a last day with your children, a last day with all of your circumstances—in short, a last day!

When I reached the age of forty, people began to tell me, “Life begins at forty.” But others told me, “Brother, you must realize that after forty, life is in the afternoon. When you were born, life began at dawn. At forty, life has reached the noon hour. After forty, life is in the afternoon. Probably sometime after sixty, life will be ended.” Sooner or later, there will come the last day of life.

Look at the picture. Israel labored for the whole year until they harvested the corn and wine. They received everything by the labor of their hands. Finally, their labor was over, and all that

was left for them to do was to come together and enjoy their harvest for seven days. The seventh day was their biggest day, yet it was the end. The last day was the day that they were all dismissed.

## THE CRY TO COME AND DRINK

While the people were being dismissed on the last day of the feast, the Lord stood up and cried, “If anyone thirst, let him come to Me and drink” (7:37). The people were not satisfied. The things that they were enjoying during the past seven days had failed to quench their thirst. If they would come and drink of Christ, they would have rivers of living water flowing out from within their innermost being. The living water is the Holy Spirit who will flow out of the smitten rock.

As we shall see, when the Lord spoke these words, the Holy Spirit was “not yet,” because the Lord had not yet been smitten and had not yet been glorified (7:39). What does it mean for the Lord to be glorified? It simply means that He was to be resurrected (Luke 24:26). The Lord was transfigured from His frail body into a glorious Spirit by means of His death and resurrection. Before the cross, the Lord was the rock, but He was not yet smitten or crucified on the cross.

When He was crucified and resurrected, the living water flowed out of Him and into us in order to quench our thirst. At the last day of your feast—at the end of your rejoicing and enjoyment when you still feel thirsty—you must come to this Jesus and receive the living water to quench your thirst.

There was a young lady who lived in a very wealthy family. She sought enjoyment continually. Once she attended a dancing party with the highest class of people in England. She enjoyed it very much and had a wonderful time. After the party was over, she came home. As she was taking off her dancing garments, she felt so thirsty. She threw away all of her dancing garments and shoes, exclaiming, “How can these things help me!” After rejoicing in all of her enjoyments, she still felt very thirsty. Then an inner voice whispered within her, “You must pray to God.” But she said to herself, “I do not believe that there is a God, how can I pray to Him?” But the voice continued to whisper, “Just try to say something to God. Say: ‘God, if there is a God, just satisfy me.’” Finally, she prayed in such a way. The very next day her whole life was changed. She was satisfied. Her thirst was quenched by the living water given by the Lord.

If you study the biographies of the saints, you



will discover many other similar stories. Many people who were highly educated, very successful, and very wealthy had much to rejoice in, but eventually they felt that they had failed because everything became dry to them. But then came the call, “Whoever is thirsty, come to Me and drink.” Although you may be enjoying many good days, there will eventually come the last day when all of your enjoyment is over and you will feel thirsty. Remember, it is only the Lord Jesus Himself who can offer you the living water to quench your thirst.

## **THE FLOW OF RIVERS OF LIVING WATER**

The Lord Jesus said, “He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, out of his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water” (7:38). In [John 4:14](#) the Lord said that whoever drinks of the water that He gives us will have in him a spring of water welling up into eternal life. In [chapter seven](#) the Lord goes somewhat further, saying that anyone who drinks of Him will have the flow of the rivers of water of life. The Lord did not speak of just one flow but of rivers. The unique river of living water is the Holy Spirit. Out of this unique river, many rivers will flow out. These “rivers of living water” are the many

flows of the different aspects of life (cf. [Rom. 15:30](#); [1 Thes. 1:6](#); [2 Thes. 2:13](#); [Gal. 5:22-23](#)) of the one unique “river of water of life” ([Rev. 22:1](#)), which is God’s “Spirit of life” ([Rom. 8:2](#)). One river is the river of peace, and other rivers are joy, comfort, righteousness, life, holiness, love, patience, and humility. I do not know how many rivers there are. These rivers of living water flow out from the depths of our being. This is Christ as life. In the principle set forth in [chapter two](#), this flowing of the rivers of living water is also the changing of death into life. Death is of the source of the tree of knowledge, and life is of the source of the tree of life.

What would happen if we came to a meeting and we all sat there without the flow of living water? It would surely be a dead meeting. If no one had anything to flow out, death would be prevailing. However, if everyone would flow with some rivers, eventually the meeting would be flooded over. It would be full of life. This is the changing of death into life.

## **THE SPIRIT WAS NOT YET**

[Verse 39](#) says, “But this He said concerning the Spirit, Whom those who believed in Him were about to receive; for the Spirit was not

yet, because Jesus was not yet glorified.” Many Christians do not understand the words “not yet” in this verse. The King James Version adds the word “given” in italics, showing that the translators were troubled by this verse. But [verse 39](#) does not mean that the Spirit “was not yet given”; it means that the Spirit was “not yet.” The Spirit was not there yet. The Spirit of God was there from the very beginning ([Gen. 1:1-2](#)), but the Spirit as “the Spirit of Christ” ([Rom. 8:9](#)), “the Spirit of Jesus Christ” ([Phil. 1:19](#)), was “not yet” at the time the Lord Jesus spoke this word, because He was not yet glorified. Jesus was glorified when He was resurrected ([Luke 24:26](#)). After His resurrection, the Spirit of God became the Spirit of the incarnated, crucified, and resurrected Jesus Christ, who was breathed into the disciples by Christ in the evening of the day He was resurrected ([John 20:22](#)). The Spirit is now the “another Comforter,” who is “the Spirit of reality” promised by Christ before His death ([John 14:16-17](#)). When the Spirit was the Spirit of God, He had only the divine element. When He became the Spirit of Jesus Christ through Christ’s incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection, He had both the divine and human element, with all the essence and reality of the incarnation,

crucifixion, and resurrection of Christ. Hence, He is now the all-inclusive Spirit of Jesus Christ as the living water for us to receive.

We have seen that Jesus was glorified when He was resurrected. In resurrection, the Lord became the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45). The last Adam, who was Christ in the flesh, became the life-giving Spirit in resurrection. Since then, the Spirit of Jesus Christ has both the divine and human elements, including the reality of the incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection of Christ.

In [Genesis 1](#) we have the Spirit of God. The Spirit of God is just God Himself coming out to reach His creation. At the time of [Genesis 1](#), within the Spirit of God there was only divinity. One day God became incarnated to be a man who was Jesus Christ. Thirty-three and a half years later, Christ was crucified. After crucifixion, He passed through resurrection and ascension, and the Spirit of God became the Spirit of the incarnated and resurrected Jesus Christ. Now the Spirit of Jesus Christ is reaching out to touch human beings. Formerly, it was the Spirit of God reaching out to touch God's creation only with divinity, but now the Spirit of Jesus Christ comes out to reach human beings with divinity, humanity, the effectiveness of His all-inclusive death,

and with the element of resurrection. Before Christ was resurrected, such a Spirit was “not yet.”

We may use the illustration of a glass of pure water into which many other ingredients are added. The pure water passes through one stage, and the milk is added. It passes through other stages in which honey, tea, and salt are added. Eventually, it becomes an all-inclusive drink. Before the pure water passed all these stations, such a wonderful drink was “not yet,” although the pure water in the glass was there already. Now it is an all-inclusive drink. Likewise, the Spirit promised by the Lord Jesus in [7:39](#) and [14:16-17](#) is not the Spirit with only divinity as His content, but the Spirit with divinity, humanity, the all-inclusive death, resurrection, and ascension. Now we not only have the Spirit of God, but also the Spirit of Jesus Christ. It is such an all-inclusive Spirit that gives us the flow of the rivers of water of life.

Sometimes when a child needs medicine, his wise mother will hide the medicine in a drink. When the child takes the drink, he gets the medicine. There is medicine in the all-inclusive Spirit. This medicine is the killing death of Christ that is in the Holy Spirit today. The more you say, “O Lord Jesus,” the more you receive the

all-inclusive Spirit. After a few minutes, you may feel the Spirit killing your temper, pride, selfishness, and other negative things. Have you ever tried to reckon yourself dead according to [Romans 6](#)? If you have, then you know that the more you reckon yourself dead, the more you are alive. However, within the all-inclusive Spirit is the killing of the cross. The death mentioned in [Romans 6](#) is now included in the Spirit as revealed in [Romans 8](#). So, this all-inclusive Spirit constantly puts you on the cross as mentioned in [Romans 8:13](#). The killing effect of the death of Christ is not merely on the cross, for, if it were, it would not be prevailing for us. That killing effect today is in the Spirit of Jesus Christ. As this Spirit moves within us, the killing effect of the cross penetrates into our being. He will kill every negative element in our being. Furthermore, in this all-inclusive drink there is the nourishing ingredient. In this Spirit is all that we need.

## **DIVISION CAUSED BY LIFE'S APPEARANCE**

In [7:40-52](#) we see the division caused by the Lord's appearance. Jesus was truly a troublemaker. He caused divisions. Today, the life-seeking people will also make trouble and cause divisions.

Christ, the seed of David, was born in Bethlehem (7:42; [Luke 2:4-7](#)), but He appeared as a Nazarene from Galilee (7:52). Although the Lord was born in Bethlehem, He was raised in Nazareth, a town that was despised by the people of that time. He was the seed of David, but He came as a Nazarene ([Matt. 2:23](#)). He grew up as a “root out of a dry ground,” having “no form nor comeliness,” “no beauty that we should desire Him. He is despised and rejected of men” ([Isa. 53:2-3](#)). So we should not know Him according to the flesh ([2 Cor. 5:16](#)), but according to the Spirit. Because the Lord was raised in Nazareth, people did not consider Him as one born in Bethlehem.

Some comprehended Christ according to His outward appearance (7:27, [41-42, 52](#)) by taking the tree of knowledge resulting in death ([Gen. 2:17](#)). Listen to their talk. “Does then the Christ come out of Galilee? Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the seed of David, and from Bethlehem, the village where David was?” (7:41-42). This talk is simply the exercise of the mentality. This mental reasoning is in the principle of the tree of knowledge. However, some apprehended Christ according to His inward reality (7:40, [50-51](#)) by taking the tree of life resulting in life ([Gen. 2:9](#)). Do not pay attention

to the outward appearance. You must see what is inside. Is there Christ within? We all must know Christ according to the inward reality and not according to the outward appearance.

The Gospel of John as a whole gives us a very impressive picture. One day the Lord Jesus went to Bethany and stayed in a little house with Lazarus, Martha, and Mary ([John 12:1-2](#)). In Jerusalem at that time was the temple. In that holy temple were the priests dressed in their priestly robes offering the sacrifices on the altar and burning the incense in the proper way. Everything in the temple was attractive. But in that little house in Bethany there was nothing—no priests, no priestly robes, no altar, no offerings, and no incense. There were just two poor sisters and one brother. At that time, was the very God in the temple or in that little house? He was in that little house. Suppose you were seeking God at that time. Where would you have gone—to that little house or to the temple? We all would have gone to the temple. Probably none of us would have gone to that little house. However, Jesus, the very embodiment of God, was not in the temple but in that little house. Eventually, there would have been a division among us with a large number going to the temple and a small number going



to the little house where Jesus was. Those who went to the temple would have thought it foolish to go to that little house to find God. Thus, we must learn to follow the Lord Jesus according to the inward reality and not according to the outward appearance. This principle will remain forever. Praise the Lord that He is with the lowly.

While the Lord was on earth, He did not have an attractive appearance. Today in the church life in His recovery it is the same; there is no attractive appearance. However, if you get inside of the church life in the Lord's recovery, you will see the beauty of Christ there. He is not the Nazarene—He is the seed of David. This is Christ! Hallelujah!

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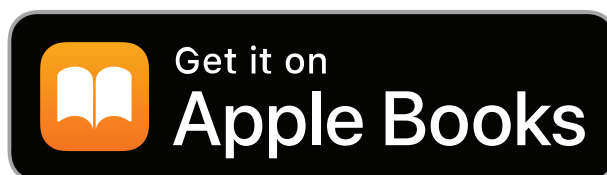
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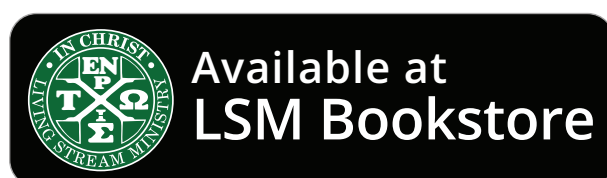


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# LIFE'S SETTING FREE— THE NEED OF THOSE UNDER THE BONDAGE OF SIN

In the record of John's Gospel, nine cases have been selected to prove that the Lord Jesus is the life and the life supply to people. The first six cases, in [chapters three through seven](#), form one group of signs, signifying, on the positive side, the aspects of the Lord as our life and life supply: the regenerating, the satisfying, the healing, the enlivening, the feeding, and the quenching. The last three cases, in [chapters eight through eleven](#), form another group of signs, signifying, on the negative side, that the Lord is life to us to deliver us from the three main negative things: sin, blindness, and death.

As fallen human beings, we are constantly troubled by sin, blindness, and death. Blindness actually means darkness. When you are blind, you are in darkness, for nothing causes so much darkness as blindness. Blindness, darkness, and death come from sin. Sin is the basic factor of blindness, darkness, and death. If we are sinful,

we are surely blind because blindness always accompanies the sinful things. Sin brings in death, but between sin and death there is always blindness. After you have sinned and before you reap death, you have darkness. Therefore, sin, blindness, and death are the three negative things that the Lord must deal with. The only way these negatives can be dealt with is by the Lord becoming our eternal and heavenly life.

The case in [John 8](#), the seventh case among the nine, fully covers the matter of sin. No chapter in the entire Bible covers the problem of sin as widely and thoroughly as does the eighth chapter of John. In this chapter we have the answer to all the problems of sin. Following this, in [chapters nine and ten](#), the matter of blindness is dealt with in a thorough way. Lastly, in [chapter eleven](#), the matter of death is thoroughly taken care of. After [chapter eleven](#), there will be no additional cases because the positive cases have been covered and the negative things have been dealt with. Now let us see how the Lord as life deals with the first negative thing—sin.

## NO MAN WITHOUT SIN

The religionists were trying their best to find fault with the Lord Jesus. After [chapters five](#)

and **seven** they attempted to put Jesus into a difficult situation. They caught a sinful woman and brought her to the Lord Jesus. According to the law, such a sinful woman had to be stoned to death, but the religionists did not do it. They brought her to the Lord in an attempt to trap Him. They said, “Teacher, this woman has been caught committing adultery. Moses commanded us to stone such a person. What do You say?” The religionists were quite bold. They asked the Lord a very tricky question. If He had said that they had to stone her to death, then He would have lost His position as the Savior and Redeemer. Could a Savior say that such a sinner must be stoned to death? Of course, the Lord, as the Redeemer and Savior, could not say this. But, on the other hand, if He said that they should not stone her to death, then they would have said that He was breaking the law. This question was a subtle trick of the enemy. The religionists thought that they were very wise. Actually they were stupid. They thought that the Lord Jesus would find it difficult to answer and that they had an excellent opportunity to catch Him.

When the Lord was asked this question, He did not say a word. The wisest way to answer a question is not to answer, to answer later on, or

to answer slowly. The Lord's first reaction to their question was not to answer it quickly. We also must learn this wisdom. When people come to you with an urgent question, you must learn from the Lord. He simply stooped to write on the ground. Silence cools people down, like cold water cools boiling water. When the Lord stooped to write, He was cooling down the situation. At the same time, by cooling down the hot situation, the sinful woman was comforted. I believe that by stooping to write on the ground the Lord Jesus was indicating to the religionists that they should not be so proud, that they had to humble themselves a little. They had to realize that they were as sinful as that woman.

When I was young, I tried to discover what it was that the Lord Jesus wrote on the ground. Throughout many generations no one has been able to tell what He wrote. I would guess that the Lord might have written, "Who is without sin among you?" While the Pharisees were asking what should be done with such a woman, the Lord Jesus might have written in big letters, "Who is without sin?" Everyone was staring at the Lord as He stooped to write on the ground. Then the Lord stood up and said, "He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to



throw a stone at her” (8:7). The Lord seemed to be saying, “You may stone her to death, but someone must take the lead. No one is qualified to take the lead in this except the one who is without sin. Let the one who is without sin among you be the first to cast a stone at her.” This word pierced their conscience. I believe that even before the Lord spoke these words, while He was still writing on the ground that their conscience was touched. What did the religionists do? Beginning with the older ones and up until the youngest, they went out one by one (8:9). The oldest, being the wisest, went away first. They knew that they were not qualified to take the lead in stoning the woman to death. But they were qualified to take the lead to run away. All the younger ones followed them.

Who is without sin? No one. Do not condemn others, for while you condemn others you are the same as they are. You are not qualified to condemn others. You are birds of the same feather. If you condemn another bird, you simply condemn yourself. Only the Lord, the great I Am (8:28, 58), is without sin, and only He is qualified to condemn sin. What wisdom the Lord Jesus has! After the religionists left, notice how lovingly and gently the Lord expressed Himself to

the sinful woman. He asked her if anyone condemned her, and she said, “No one, Lord.” Then Jesus said, “Neither do I condemn you” (8:11). That was music to the woman’s terrified soul.

This incident manifests the Lord’s wisdom. The people came to condemn the sinful woman, but the Lord’s question convicted them of their own sinfulness.

## **THE SOURCE OF SIN—THE DEVIL**

The Devil is the source of sin (8:44). Sin is the nature of the Devil, and sin, the nature of the Devil, is a lie. Sin is a lie, a falsehood. Everything that is sinful is unreal. The issue of the lie is death and darkness. Death and darkness, as falsehoods, are opposed to reality. Since the Devil is the father of liars, he is the source of sin. The divine element of God, working as life and light within man, sets man free from the slavery of sin. But the evil element of the Devil, working as sin by death and darkness within man, enslaves man to sin. His nature is a lie and brings in death and darkness. With darkness is falsehood, the opposite of the truth, the reality.

The Devil is the evil father who has brought forth sinful children (1 John 3:10). The sinful children are all the followers of the Devil. Thus,

in [1 John 3:10](#), we have the term “the children of the Devil.” Because the Devil is the father of sinners, the sinners are “the children of the Devil.” The Devil is the old serpent ([Rev. 12:9; 20:2](#)), and the sinners are also the “serpents, the generation of vipers” ([Matt. 23:33; 3:7](#)). Hence, they need the Lord to be lifted up for them in the form of the serpent on the cross ([John 3:14](#)).

## THE SLAVES OF SIN

Whoever commits sin is a slave of sin ([8:34](#)). A slave is always under a certain bondage. Satan, the Devil, has brought all humankind under the bondage of sin by imparting himself into man as the sinful nature that compels man to sin. It is impossible for anyone to free himself from such a slavery.

## THE RESULT OF SIN—DEATH

The result of sin is death ([8:24, 51-52](#)). In [verse 24](#) the Lord said, “Unless you believe that I am, you shall die in your sins.” Death came in through sin. “Death passed to all men because all have sinned” ([Rom. 5:12](#)). As long as one has sinned, he is destined for death. Thus, the result of sin is death.

## **THE MAIN ITEMS OF SIN**

The three main items of sin are adultery or fornication, murder, and lies (8:3, 41, 44). These items are the most sinful aspects of sin. Consider—can you find another aspect that is as sinful as adultery, murder, and lying? Nothing is more sinful than these three aspects, which represent the whole relationship of sin. All sinful things are included in these three categories. Adultery or fornication means confusion. Anything that confuses humankind is a type of adultery or fornication. Murder is killing, and lying is cheating. Anything that is sinful either confuses, kills, or deceives people.

## **ONLY ONE MAN WITHOUT SIN**

This chapter reveals something more on the positive side, for we are told how we can be delivered from sin. Firstly, this chapter reveals the only One who is not sinful. Throughout the whole universe, who is the One without sin? It is only the Lord Jesus Himself. He is without sin (8:7, 9).

## **QUALIFIED TO CONDEMN SIN BUT HE WOULD NOT**

Who is qualified to condemn you? Who has

this position? Only the One who is without sin. The only One who is qualified and has the position to condemn you is the Lord Jesus Himself, for He is without any spot of sin. Although He is qualified to condemn you, He would not do it.

## **LIFTED UP FOR SINNERS' SIN**

The Lord Jesus was lifted up for the sinners' sin (8:28). Sin is the embodiment of the serpent, and the sinners' sin is the poison of the serpent. For redemption, the Lord Jesus had to be the Lamb of God, but for dealing with the serpentine nature, the Lord Jesus had to be lifted up in the form of the serpent. In order to deal with the sinful, serpentine nature of mankind, He had to be lifted up on the cross in the form of a serpent.

## **QUALIFIED TO FORGIVE SIN AND ABLE TO SET FREE FROM THE SLAVERY OF SIN**

The Lord is qualified to forgive man's sin and able to set him free from the slavery of sin (8:32-34). The Lord not only gives us life, but He also enters into us as our life. Satan's subtlety was not only to cause us to do something wrong; it was to inject himself into us. Thus, sin is no

longer merely objective, an outward wrongdoing. Sin is in the very subjective nature of our being. It is no longer outside of us; it is inside of us. It has even become our very self. It is in our nature. Therefore, anything that is outside of our nature cannot help us in dealing with the sin that is in our nature. We need another life to come into us. In human history, there is only one Person who is able to come into us and be our life to encounter the serpentine nature within us. Confucius or Plato cannot do it. The only One who can do it is Jehovah, the great I Am. Only He Himself can come into us as life to counteract the serpentine nature within us. Our slavery is not an outward thing; it is inward, even in our nature. We need another life, a stronger, richer, higher life, to set us free from this slavery. Only the Lord can be such a life, and He truly is such a life because He is the divine life. The divine life is higher than the human life. It is also higher than the satanic life. When this divine life comes into us it defeats the serpentine life and nature.

### **ABLE TO SAVE FROM THE RESULT OF SIN**

The Lord is able to save man from the result of sin, which is death (8:24, 51-52). Once sin

has been dealt with, spontaneously the result of sin also will be removed. The religion of law is unable to do this, for it belongs to the tree of knowledge resulting in death ([Gen. 2:17](#)). Jesus is the tree of life resulting in life ([Gen. 2:9](#)). In principle, saving man from the result of sin is changing death into life.

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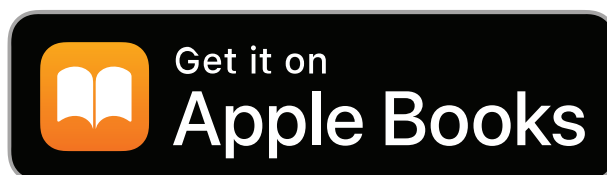
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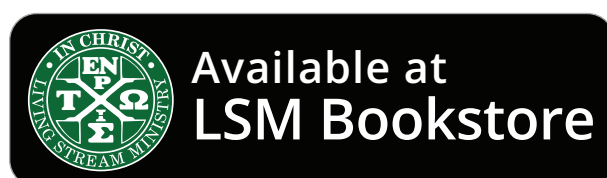


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# **LIFE'S SIGHT— THE NEED OF THE BLIND IN RELIGION**

The nine cases in the Gospel of John are divided into two groups. The first six cases signify how the Lord as our life can deal with positive things, while the last three cases signify how the Lord as our life can deal with negative things. Let us review them. The first six cases reveal that the Lord as life is for regenerating, satisfying, healing, enlivening, feeding, and quenching. These six signs compose one group because they deal with the positive aspects of His life. The last three cases deal with the negative matters of sin, blindness, and death. Sin causes blindness and results in death. Therefore, these three—sin, blindness, and death—are grouped together showing how the Lord is our life in dealing with the negative things. In the first six cases the Lord brings us to something positive, but in the last three cases the Lord delivers us from something negative because He delivers us from sin, blindness, and death.

According to [John 20:30-31](#), the writer indicated that Jesus did many signs. From all of these cases, the writer selected only nine as signs. Therefore, these signs must be very meaningful, and the order in which they are presented must also be quite significant. For example, the first case is about regeneration, and the last is about the resurrection from the dead. Thus, the first case is about the regeneration in the beginning of life, and the last is about resurrection after the end of life. Furthermore, in the last group of cases, sin is placed first among the negative things because sin is the origin of blindness and death. Blindness originates from sin, and death is the ultimate end of sin. In this booklet we shall deal with the matter of blindness.

## **LIFE'S SIGHT FOR THE BLIND**

The case in [John 9:1-41](#) continues to prove that the religion of law could not do any good to a blind man, but that the Lord Jesus, as the light of the world, could impart sight to him in the way of life ([10:10, 28](#)). This sign was performed on the Sabbath day. It seems that the Lord again did a sign purposely on the Sabbath day to expose the vanity of the rituals of religion.

Blindness, as sin in the previous chapter, is

a matter of death. A dead person surely is blind. “The god of this age has blinded the thoughts of the unbelieving.” So they need “the illumination of the gospel of the glory of Christ” to shine forth to them (2 Cor. 4:4), “to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God” (Acts 26:18). In the principle set forth in chapter two, this is also the changing of death into life.

## BORN BLIND

Let us read 9:1-3. “And as He passed by, He saw a man blind from birth. And His disciples asked Him, saying, Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he should be born blind? Jesus answered, Neither has this man sinned nor his parents, but that the works of God might be manifested in him.” The question raised by the disciples was according to their religious knowledge. They thought that the blindness must have been due to the man’s sin or the sin of his parents. This question, like those in 4:20-25 and 8:3-5, is a matter of yes or no, which belongs to the tree of knowledge resulting in death (Gen. 2:17), but the Lord’s answer in 9:3 points them to God, who is the tree of life resulting in life (Gen. 2:9). The Lord in the Gospel of John

never answers such questions with an answer of yes or no, right or wrong. This is because the Gospel of John is a book of life, not a book of the knowledge of good and evil. Therefore, the Lord said that the man's blindness was so that "the works of God might be manifested in him."

Why is it that the Lord never answers with a yes or a no? Because yes-or-no answers are from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Good and evil are just like yes and no. While both yes and no belong to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, in this Gospel the Lord comes to us as the tree of life. The tree of life is God as our life. Consequently, in this Gospel the Lord never answers people with a yes or a no. He always refers them to God. The Lord does not refer to yes or no for an answer, but to God as the tree of life. The Lord's answer in [9:3](#) brought His disciples directly to God, that is, it brought them to the tree of life. At this point, the disciples were still very religious, holding to their religious concepts, which belong to the tree of knowledge of good and evil, but the Lord was trying again and again to turn them from the tree of knowledge to the tree of life. Those disciples were under the Lord's training in this matter for three and a half years. Even after that time, one of the

disciples, Peter, had not thoroughly been delivered from the religious concepts, for in [Acts 10:9-16](#) we see that Peter was still religious, still influenced by the knowledge of good and evil. Perhaps we consider ourselves as free from the tree of knowledge, but even now we may still be mainly under its influence.

When we were sinners, we lost our sight and could not see anything. Our blindness was due to our sinful nature. In [chapter nine of John](#) the man was born blind, signifying that blindness is in the nature of a person when he is born. We sinners were blind by nature because we were born that way. Have you ever realized that every sinner was born blind? Therefore, if we confess that we are sinful, we must also admit that we are blind.

## THE LIGHT OF LIFE

When the Lord Jesus saw this blind man, He said, “While I am in the world, I am the light of the world” ([9:5](#)). The Lord is the light of life ([8:12](#)). Blindness comes from the shortage of the light of life. Every dead person is a blind man. Undoubtedly, the dead cannot see anything. Therefore, blindness indicates the lack of life. If you have life, then you have sight, for light

opens your eyes. So, first of all, the Lord pointed out that the blind man needed the light of life.

## **THE ANOINTING OF THE WORD OF LIFE MINGLED WITH HUMANITY**

**Verse 6** is very interesting. “When He had said this, He spat on the ground and made clay of the spittle and anointed his eyes with the clay.” When I was a young Christian, not understanding the meaning of this verse, I laughed at what the Lord did. What He did was very strange. No one likes to touch a person’s spittle. But the Lord Jesus mixed His spittle with the ground and made clay. Then He used the clay to anoint the man’s eyes. The Gospel of John is a book of pictures, and this incident is a picture. We should not understand it merely according to the black and white letters. We must pray and look to the Lord that we may receive the true meaning.

I cannot tell you how much time I have spent in studying this point. I consulted various books in my attempt to find an interpretation, but I did not find one. One day, not more than twenty-five years ago, I saw the matter of the mingling of the divine life with humanity. This word “mingling” has been in use by us for not



more than twenty-five years. If you go to the Christian bookstores, you will not find even one book that speaks about mingling. The most that the books speak of is union with Christ or identification with Him. Not one book discusses this matter of mingling. In 1958, when I first visited this country, I delivered a message on the mingling of the divine life with humanity. A preacher, a graduate of Oxford, immediately corrected my English, saying that mingling was not the right word and that I should use the word “co-mingling.” I replied, “Whether this word is the right English word or not I am not sure because English is not my mother tongue, but I do know that there is such a fact between the divine life and humanity.” Later, I received a confirmation from the book of Leviticus that the word was the right word.

The word mingling is used in [Leviticus 2:5](#). “And if thy oblation be a meat offering baken in a pan, it shall be of fine flour unleavened, mingled with oil.” This is a type. The fine flour typifies the humanity of the Lord Jesus, and the oil typifies the Holy Spirit, the divinity of the Lord Jesus. Therefore, in the Person of the Lord Jesus there is the mingling of divinity with humanity. Thus, when I visited this country the second

time, I began to speak boldly about the mingling of the divine life with our humanity. Some cautioned me not to speak much about this, but rather to stay within the limits of identification and union. I said, “Brothers, I don’t care for the human concept. I only care for the pure Word. How about [Leviticus 2:5](#)—the fine flour mingled with the oil? Do not come to me. You should go to Moses. He was the first one to use this word.” Again and again we have spoken about the mingling. Now many people are picking up this thought.

Now we may return to [John 9](#) and apply to it this concept of the mingling of divinity with humanity. The clay in [9:6](#), as in [Romans 9:21](#), signifies humanity. Man is clay. We all are clay. What is the spittle? Spittle here, as something “that proceeds out through the mouth” ([Matt. 4:4](#)) of the Lord, signifies His “words which...are spirit and are life” ([John 6:63](#)). Figuratively speaking, the spittle is the Word, which is spirit and life, that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord. The Word that proceeds out of the mouth of Christ is spirit. Thus, to mingle spittle with the clay signifies the mingling of humanity with the Lord’s living Word. The word “anointed” proves this, because the Lord’s Spirit is the anointing Spirit

([Luke 4:18](#); [2 Cor. 1:21-22](#); [1 John 2:27](#)). The spittle, then, signifies the Word, the outflow of the very element or essence of the Lord Himself. The clay was mingled with the spittle. This signifies that the Lord mingles His essence with us by and even with His Word. We are clay by nature, and the very essence of the Lord in the Word is the spittle. Formerly, when we were sinners, we were dead. When we heard the Word of the Lord, His Word came into us as those made of clay. When we heard and received the gospel, it was actually the spittle of the Lord that came into us, men of clay. In other words, the clay received something that proceeded out of the mouth of the Lord and was mingled with it.

The mingling of divinity with humanity is the most prevailing ointment on the whole earth. No other ointment can surpass it. The Lord anointed the man's blind eyes with the clay that was mingled with spittle. This signifies the anointing of the Spirit of life. The anointing of the Spirit of life follows the mingling of the Lord in His Word with the clay. Immediately after you receive the Lord through His Word, there is the anointing of the Spirit of life. The Lord's anointing the blind eyes with the clay made of His spittle signifies that by the anointing of

the mingling of the Lord's Word, which is His Spirit, with our humanity, our eyes, which were blinded by Satan, may have sight.

## **THE OBEDIENCE TO LIFE'S WORD AND THE WASHING AWAY OF THE OLD HUMANITY**

After the blind man's eyes had been anointed with the clay, he was more blind than before. Now a thick layer of clay covered his eyes. The Lord told him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (9:7). The man went, washed, and came seeing. To wash here is to cleanse away the clay. This signifies the washing away of our old humanity, as we have in baptism ([Rom. 6:3-4, 6](#)). That the blind man went and washed means he obeyed the life-giving Word of the Lord. So he received sight. If he had not gone to wash off the clay after being anointed with it, it would have blinded him even more. Thus, our obedience to the anointing brings us sight.

The word Siloam means sent. This is very meaningful. The anointing of the Spirit of life means that you are always in the position of being sent. The anointing puts us on the ground of being sent. Therefore, we must obey. The Lord Himself always stood on the ground of being

sent by the Father and He was always obedient. Now the Lord puts us in the same position as His sent ones. After we receive the Lord in His Word and have His anointing, He puts us in the position of being sent. We must now be obedient to His sending. After you receive the Lord in His Word, what is the first step that you should take in order to be obedient? Once you have believed in the Lord and received Him in the Word, the Lord will ask you to go to a “pool.” The first step is that the Lord will send you to a “pool.” He will send you to wash and be baptized. From then on, you must daily and throughout the day apply this washing. Day by day, you must realize that you are being washed during the whole day. Even today, I have been washed several times. An order from the Lord always follows the anointing of the Spirit of life within you: “Go and wash.”

This chapter portrays the blind man, the Lord making the clay, the eyes of the blind man being anointed with the clay, and the Lord telling him to go and wash in the pool of Siloam. Once the blind man washed his eyes, the clay was gone. What is the clay? It signifies the natural life or the human self. When you went to be baptized, the old man, the old clay, was washed

away. After the washing, it was buried in and under the water. Your old man was buried in the water after you were baptized. However, do you also realize that you must apply the washing of the baptism day by day? In every day of your Christian life you have to apply the washing of baptism by putting the self and the nature of the old man under the water of death.

You must remember that the anointing within always demands that you apply the washing of baptism to yourself. If you do not apply this, you can never be obedient in following the anointing. The anointing within always demands that you go to Siloam and put yourself to death. You must bury yourself as the clay under the water of death. Perhaps you received an anointing this morning. If you neglect to apply the washing of baptism to yourself, you cannot obey that anointing. The command to put yourself under the water of death immediately follows the anointing. The anointing demands that you eliminate the old clay. When you do this, you will receive sight and light. According to our experience, after we follow the demand of the anointing to put ourselves into the water of death, we are very much in the light with the sight. Everything is clear to us because now we have both the sight

and the light. The sunshine is actually within us. Our eyes are opened and we can see very clearly because we have received sight and are now in the light.

What would have happened if the blind man had refused to obey the Lord's command to go and wash? Although his eyes had been anointed with the clay, his refusal to obey would have made him even more blind. What the Lord had done thus far would have been a veil or a covering instead of an unveiling. Likewise, if we do not obey the anointing of the Spirit of life, the anointing will become a veil that covers our eyes instead of opening them. However, if we obey the anointing of the Spirit of life and put ourselves into death, our eyes will be opened. In short, we will have sight and will be in the light. Otherwise, our disobedience will cause the anointing of the Spirit of life to become a veil covering our eyes. Then we will become more blind and will be brought into deeper darkness.

When I first received this interpretation, I laughed. I said, "My, the mixing of the clay with the spittle was strange enough. Now I have been given such a strange interpretation." At first I could not believe it. However, as I prayed and

checked with my experiences, I came to believe it. If you do the same, you will see that this is the correct interpretation. Many times you have received sight by the Divine Spirit being mingled with your humanity. For a short while, your eyes were covered and, temporarily, you were more blinded than ever. Eventually, after obeying the life-giving Word, your old nature was washed away. Then you had a clear sky. Please check with your experience. This was the procedure every time you received light.

Simply reading or studying the Bible is inadequate. Without the mingling of the divine life with your humanity, you can never see the light of the Word. You may read it, but you cannot see it. Perhaps you have read a certain sentence in the Bible many times. But you just could not see the light in it. One day, you begin to see. Immediately your eyes are covered and temporarily you are even more blinded. However, if you obey the living Word and say, "Amen, Lord Jesus," you immediately have the sensation that something has fallen off your eyes and you have light. Your old humanity has fallen away and you can see into the heavens. This is the way to receive light.

There are three steps which we must follow



in order to receive sight for our eyes. First of all, the clay must both receive and be mingled with the spittle. In other words, you, the old man, the clay, must receive the Lord's Word as the spittle and be mingled with the Lord in His Word. Then the second step will follow—that is, after you have received the Lord in His Word, you will have the anointing. Finally, the third step follows the anointing: the demand to put the old self to death. The old clay must be put into the water of death. By these three steps your eyes will be opened. You will then have the sight and will always be in the light. Brothers and sisters, even today if you are going to have the sight and be in the light, you must first receive the Lord in His Word. Even though you have been regenerated, you must receive the Lord in His Word and be mingled with Him more and more. You are still clay and you need the spittle out of the Lord's mouth, which signifies the very essence of the Lord Himself. Each time you receive the Lord in His Word, the anointing will follow. Then the anointing will command you, as a man of clay, to be put into the water of death and stand in the position of a sent one. A sent one never does his own will; he does the will of another. As a sent one,

you must work and act as a sent one. A sent one does nothing according to his own will, but everything according to the one who sends him.

## **PERSECUTED BY RELIGION**

It is a good thing to receive sight. However, be prepared to suffer persecution at the hands of blind religion. The blind man who received his sight was cast out (9:34), meaning that he was excommunicated, ostracized, from the Jewish synagogue. This means that he was put out of the sheepfold, as spoken by the Lord in 10:3-4. Although he was excommunicated from Judaism, he was received by the Lord Jesus.

## **BELIEVING IN THE SON OF GOD**

The blind man came to believe in Jesus as the Son of God (9:35-38). The blind man received his sight by a kind of obscure believing. He believed, but he was not clear. He was simply innocent. He believed without really knowing who Jesus was. He believed in an innocent way. Although he did not know adequately who Jesus was, he did believe that Jesus was someone special and he argued about this with the Pharisees. Eventually, the Pharisees cast him out. Then, the Lord Jesus found him and said, “Do you believe

in the Son of God?” (9:35). The blind man replied, “And who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?” (9:36). He believed, yet he did not know the Lord Jesus. Then the Lord said to him, “You have both seen Him, and He is the One Who is speaking with you” (9:37). Then the blind man declared, “Lord, I believe. And he worshipped Him” (9:38). He believed that the man Jesus is the Son of God. Thus, the blind man not only received his sight, but he himself was received by the Lord Jesus.

This means that the Lord, as the shepherd, entered the sheepfold, saw a little, blind sheep, opened his eyes, and then led that sheep out of the sheepfold. In one sense, the sheep was cast out; in another sense, the Lord led him out. The Pharisees cast him out, but the Lord Jesus carried him out. The Lord did not carry him out of hell but out of the sheepfold. The sheepfold was Judaism, the law-keeping religion. The blind man, like the blind and lame people on the porches in [chapter five](#), was kept on the law-keeping porch. Then the Lord Jesus came, not only as life, but also as the shepherd, to lead him out of the fold.

The Lord is sovereign. Many of us were in the fold of religion. Perhaps you were there as

one who was lame. We all were on that porch. Thank the Lord Jesus for His sovereignty. He came as life to heal our blind eyes and as the shepherd to lead us out of the fold.

## JUDGED BY LIFE

In [9:39-41](#), Jesus said, “For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may become blind.” Some of the Pharisees who were with Him heard these things and said to Him, “Are we also blind?” Jesus said to them, “If you were blind you would have no sin; but now that you say, We see, your sin remains.” The Lord told the Pharisees that He came to judge. But He told Nicodemus that He came not to judge but to save ([3:17](#)). He found a seeking soul in Nicodemus; therefore, He will not come to condemn the world, but to save the world. However, He saw pride in the Pharisees; hence, He will come to judge them. Whether the Lord will come to judge or to save you depends upon your attitude. If your attitude is like that of Nicodemus, He will come to save you. If your attitude is like that of the Pharisees, He will come to judge you. Whether the Lord will become a Judge or a Savior to you depends upon your attitude.

The Lord will seriously vindicate Himself when anyone is proud to assert himself with many claims. This simply indicates that he does not need the Lord. Consequently, the Lord will leave such a person in his blindness. We must be very careful not to proudly say that we can see. If we claim that we see, the Lord will leave us blind. The Lord said that He will give sight to those who cannot see, but that He will make blind those who claim to see. This is a serious vindication of the Lord. Thus, we must be humble and not proud. Pride simply means blindness and darkness.

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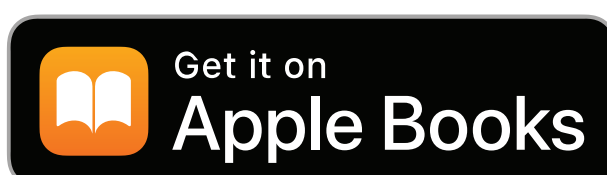
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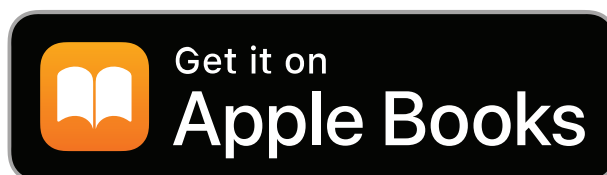
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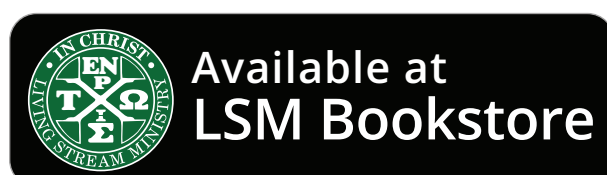


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## LIFE'S SHEPHERDING— THE NEED OF THOSE OUTSIDE RELIGION

[John 10](#) is a very interesting chapter, but it is also a misunderstood chapter. This chapter is actually a continuation of [chapter nine](#). [Verse 21](#) helps us to realize this, for the question is asked, “Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?” Both chapters center around the record of the case of the man born blind. The thought in this chapter is deep. On the surface, it seems easy to understand, but actually it is not easy to understand this parable or allegory. The Lord brought out this allegory about the sheepfold immediately after He cured the blind man who was cast out of the synagogue by the Jews. This incident, therefore, became the setting for the parable of the sheepfold.

We must now consider the significance of the sheepfold in this parable. It is not easy to define the sheepfold. Perhaps you know something about the Bible and especially about the Gospels. Perhaps you were told from your youth about

the stories from the Gospels in Sunday School. Perhaps you have even graduated from seminary. Let me ask you this question: what do you realize about the sheepfold? What have you been taught about this matter? The key to unlocking the secret of this parable depends very much upon the meaning of the sheepfold.

## **THE LAW, OR JUDAISM, THE RELIGION OF THE LAW**

The sheepfold, in its better usage, signifies the law of the Old Testament, but in its common and ordinary usage, it signifies Judaism, the religion of the law. Originally, before the first advent of Christ, God gave His law to the people of Israel. What was God's purpose in giving them the law? Did He expect them to keep it? No, that was not His purpose. [Galatians 3:23-26](#) reveals God's purpose in giving the law. "But before faith came we were guarded under law, being shut up unto the faith which was about to be revealed. So the law has become our child-conductor unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But faith having come, we are no longer under a child-conductor; for you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus." Before faith in Christ came, we were kept under the law. In other words, we were kept like

sheep in a fold. The Greek word translated “guarded” means confined. Before faith came—that is, before Christ came—the chosen people of God were confined under the law. They were “shut up” under the law. “Shut up” is a special word in Greek, meaning to be kept in custody or under special care in a ward. For instance, if the parents of a family pass away, the children might be put in the custody of their aunt or uncle. In other words, they are put under the care of someone else. This shows how the chosen people of God were placed under the custody of the law before faith in Christ came. The law kept God’s people under custody “unto the faith,” which is better translated as “for preparation to the faith.” [Galatians 3:24](#) says that “the law has become our child-conductor unto Christ.” The law was our slave to bring us to our schoolmaster, who is Christ. In ancient times, the children of the rich, Jewish families were escorted to their schoolmaster by a trained slave. Likewise, the law served as a slave to bring us to Christ. Before we were brought to Christ, the schoolmaster, we were under the care of a slave, the law. God the Father used the law as a slave to take care of us and to bring us to Christ. Before Christ came, we were put under the hand of the law which

was to be our custodian. The law was responsible for the care and protection of God's chosen people and eventually it brought them to Christ. Once we have been brought to Christ, we are justified by faith. Since faith has come—that is, since Christ has come—we are no longer under the custody of the slave.

Now we understand what is the sheepfold. Before Christ came, God put His chosen people under the custody of the law. The law was the fold. For example, if you visit the ranch country, you will discover that the sheep do not stay in the fold most of the time. Most of the year the sheep stay in the pasture. The pasture is the permanent place for them to stay, but the sheepfold is merely a temporary place. Only when the pasture is not ready will the sheep be kept in the fold. The fold is used temporarily to keep and protect the sheep until the pasture is ready. This illustrates that Christ is the pasture, the permanent place for the Lord's children to stay. But before Christ came, God prepared the law as the sheepfold to keep and confine His chosen people temporarily.

However, when the Lord came, the Jewish religion had utilized the law to form Judaism. Judaism had become the sheepfold. Before the

blind man was healed by the Lord, he was one of the sheep confined in Judaism. When he was cast out of the synagogue, he was actually driven out of Judaism. Therefore, he was put out of the fold. Formerly, he had been one of the sheep in the fold; now, he was cast out of the fold of Judaism.

## **GOD'S CHOSEN PEOPLE**

The sheep are God's chosen people. In eternity past, God with His foresight had chosen His people. In time, before Christ came, God put His chosen people into the custody of the law. After Christ came, He wanted all of His people to come out of the law's custody. The blind man who was cast out of the Jewish synagogue and who came to the Lord Jesus is one of God's chosen people. He was under the custody of the law, but he was taken out of it unto the Lord Himself.

## **CHRIST FOR "GOING IN" AND "GOING OUT"**

What does it mean to say that Christ is the door? Most Christians think that the door is for people to enter into heaven. Perhaps some of you reading this still hold on to this concept. But the door here is not for you to go to heaven, for this door enables people to go in and out. If this door

were the door into heaven, how could people go out of it? This door is not the door into heaven.

The Lord is the door to the sheepfold. Originally, the fold was the law, and the Lord was the door into the law. The Lord was not only the door into the law; He is also the door for people to come out of the law. [Verse 9](#) says, “I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he shall be saved, and shall go in and go out and shall find pasture.” Christ is the door, not only for God’s elect to enter into the custody of the law, as did Moses, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, etc., in the Old Testament time before Christ came; but also for God’s chosen people, such as Peter, James, John, and Paul, to come out of the fold of the law after Christ came. So the Lord indicates in [verse 9](#) that He is the door not only for God’s chosen people to go in, but also for God’s chosen people to go out. Those who went into the law were people like Moses, the psalmists, and the prophets. Christ was the door for these people to go into the fold of the law. In other words, they went into the fold through Christ and for Christ. If we adopt this point of view when reading the writings of Moses, the psalmists, and the prophets, we will realize that they entered into the law of God through Christ. Christ was their entrance into the law.

At the time the Lord Jesus came, so many people were still in the fold. However, after the coming of Jesus, God no longer intended to keep His chosen people in the fold of the law. God wanted them to come out of the law into Christ. Thus, by that time, Christ no longer was the door for God's chosen people to enter into the fold; He was the door for those who were already in the fold to come out. The blind man was one who was coming out of the fold. Formerly, all of the servants sent by God went into the law through Christ. But although Christ had come, the fold was still full of sheep who were confined within it. What should they do? They had to come out of the fold through Christ. During the Old Testament age, God sent many of His servants into the fold of the law through Christ. Now during the New Testament age, God intends to bring His people out of the law through Christ as the door. Now I believe you understand that the sheepfold was the Old Testament law, which was utilized by the Jews to form the religion of Judaism. Then Judaism became the fold to confine all of the Lord's chosen people. But Christ has come and the pasture is ready. Therefore, there is no need for the sheep to be confined any longer in the custody of the Judaistic law. They

must be released from the fold of the law that they might enjoy all of the riches of the pasture.

Moreover, the Lord is also the shepherd. He is not only the door of the fold, but also the shepherd. He comes to call His people out of the fold, and His sheep can recognize His voice. He is the first one out of the fold, which is the law. Now He walks before His sheep, who all will eventually follow Him. Peter, James, and John came out of Judaism. Even Paul came out of Judaism. All of the Jews who believed in the Lord Jesus followed Him out of the Judaistic fold.

The blind man was one who came out of Judaism. He was cast out of the synagogue of Judaism. He was cast out of that fold because of the living Jesus. Therefore, the Lord took the opportunity to speak forth this parable. The Lord let the Jews know that their religion was just a fold. He made it known that the pasture is now ready and that it was unnecessary for the sheep to remain in their fold. Now is the time for the sheep to come out of the fold and to enjoy the riches of the pasture. The one the Jewish people cast out of their synagogue became one who enjoyed the Lord as the pasture.

The Lord is first the door, then the shepherd, and finally the pasture. The shepherd takes all of



the sheep out of the fold through Himself as the door and brings them to Himself as the pasture. He is the shepherd who brought the sheep out of the fold; He is the door through whom the sheep are brought out; and He is the pasture to whom the sheep are brought. He simply brought the sheep out of Judaism through Himself, unto Himself, and for Himself. He is everything—the exit, the shepherd, and the pasture.

## **CHRIST AS THE FEEDING PLACE FOR THE SHEEP**

Outside the fold is the green pasture. Pasture here signifies Christ as the feeding place for the sheep. When the pasture is not available in the winter time or in the night, the sheep must be kept in the fold. When the pasture is ready, there is no further need for the sheep to remain in the fold. To be kept in the fold is transitory and temporary. To be in the pasture to enjoy its riches is final and permanent. Before Christ came, the law was a ward, and to be under the law was transitory. Now, since Christ has come, all God's chosen people must come out of the law and come to Him to enjoy Him as their pasture ([Gal. 3:23-25](#); [4:3-5](#)). This should be final and permanent. Now is the spring time, the right time for

the sheep to come out to the pasture and feed on the green grass. The disciples Peter, James, and John were also ones in the fold, but they came out of it to feed upon Christ as the pasture. When they were in the old religion, they were starved to death in the fold. There was no door, meaning there was no freedom, and there was no pasture, meaning there was no feeding. One day, they met Christ, the living One, the shepherd, and He said, "Come and follow Me." They followed Him out of the fold and into the pasture.

If you follow the Lord as your shepherd, it will stir up a storm that will force you out of the fold. You do not need to strive or to exercise any effort to follow the Lord Jesus out of the fold, for, as long as you follow Him, the old religion will force you to get out. They will cast you out. The more you follow this living Jesus, the more religion will force you out. Religion cannot put up with Jesus, and Jesus will never remain in religion. These two are absolutely different, and there is no possibility of reconciling them. Jesus is life, and religion is something other than life. The living Jesus simply cannot tolerate religion. Praise the Lord that we are all out of religion and are feeding on the green pasture! The pasture certainly is not in the fold; it is outside of the fold. If you

are going to enjoy the pasture, you must come out of the fold. Once you come out of the fold, you will find yourself in the pasture. Hallelujah!

The Lord came that the sheep might have life and might have it abundantly ([John 10:10](#)). This means that the Lord came to impart Himself as life to His sheep because He is their pasture. As long as the sheep stay in the pasture, they will have the supply of life abundantly. By feeding on the pasture, the sheep will enjoy the pasture as their abundant life supply, for the Lord is their abundant life. They will enjoy the Lord and experience Him as their life more abundantly.

How could the Lord fulfill this matter of being the pasture of life to the sheep? It is by realizing that the grass, in order to be eaten, must pass through the process of death. All of the living grass eaten by the sheep must pass through the process of death. Hence, as we shall see, the Lord said that He had to lay down His life for His sheep. He first had to die that He might minister Himself as life to the sheep.

**CHRIST LAYING DOWN  
HIS SOULISH LIFE THAT THE SHEEP  
MAY HAVE THE DIVINE LIFE**

In [verse 10](#) the Lord said, “I came that they

may have life and may have it abundantly,” and in [verse 11](#) He said, “I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.” In these two verses two different Greek words are used for life. In [verse 10](#) the Greek word is *zoe*, which is the word used in the New Testament for the eternal, divine life. In [verse 11](#) the Greek word is *psuche*, the same word for soul, which means the soulish life, that is, the human life. These two verses indicate that the Lord Jesus has two kinds of lives. As a man the Lord has the *psuche* life, the human life, and as God He has the *zoe* life, the divine life. He laid down His soul, His *psuche* life, His human life, to accomplish redemption for His sheep ([10:15, 17-18](#)) that they might share His *zoe* life, His divine life ([10:10](#)), the eternal life ([10:28](#)), by which they may be formed into one flock under Himself as the one shepherd. As the good shepherd, He feeds His sheep with the divine life in this way and for this purpose.

The Lord’s divine life could never be slain. What was slain in His crucifixion was His human life. In order to be our Savior, He, as a man, laid down His human life to accomplish redemption for us that we might receive His *zoe* life. He laid down His human life in order that

we, after being redeemed, might receive His zoe life, the eternal life.

## ONE FLOCK BY LIFE UNDER ONE SHEPHERD

The shepherd, the divine life, and the human life are all for the flock. In [verse 16](#) the Lord said, “And I have other sheep which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they shall hear My voice, and there shall be one flock, one shepherd.” Who are the sheep that are not of this Jewish fold? They are the Gentiles. And what is this one flock? The one flock signifies the one church, the one Body of Christ ([Eph. 2:14-16; 4:4](#)), brought forth by life, which the Lord imparted into His members through His death ([John 10:10-18](#)). Before, the fold was Judaism; now, the flock is the church. The sheepfold was, and still is, Judaism, but the flock is the church. The flock is the church which includes two peoples—the believing Jews and Gentiles. The Lord brings both together into one flock and under one shepherd. Now, the one flock and the one shepherd are the one Body and the one Head.

Why are the shepherd, the divine life, and the human life all for the flock? Because the people in the flock are fallen persons in need of

redemption. As a man, the shepherd had the human life. He sacrificed His human life in order to accomplish redemption for His flock. In this way His flock was redeemed. Then His flock received His divine life, and by this divine life the sheep live together as the flock. Thus, the flock is formed into one unit, into one entity. This is not accomplished by the human life, but by the divine life.

In the human life we are condemned and divided; in the divine life we are accepted and united. In the divine life we are all one entity, meaning that we are one flock under one shepherd in one life. If we live by our human life and not by the divine life, we will only cause trouble. Furthermore, we would become strangers and stray away from the flock. Whenever you live by your human life, you are no longer a sheep but a stranger. A sheep is a regenerated person with the divine life. We all must live by the divine life and thus become genuine, real, and pure sheep. Then we shall all be in the flock. As long as we live by our human life, we will resemble a wild animal, perhaps a devouring lion or a wild horse. If we do not live by the divine life, there can be no flock. The flock is produced, kept, maintained, and formed by the divine life. How

good it is for brethren to dwell together in unity (Psa. 133:1). However, dwelling in unity simply means to dwell in the divine life. Praise the Lord that in the divine life we are truly one and love one another. This is not possible in our human, psuche life, but only in the divine, zoe life. We receive this zoe life through the redemption accomplished by our shepherd who laid down His psuche life. He sacrificed His psuche life to accomplish redemption for us all that we might receive Him as our zoe life. Now we are in the zoe life under one shepherd to be one flock. This is not an organization; it is a flocking together in life. It is wonderful. Hallelujah! The flock is not a matter of religion, but of life.

## **THE ETERNAL LIFE, THE SON'S HAND, AND THE FATHER'S HAND**

In 10:28-29 the Lord says, “And I give to them eternal life, and they shall by no means perish forever, and no one shall snatch them out of My hand. My Father Who has given them to Me is greater than all, and no one can snatch them out of My Father’s hand.” The eternal life is for the believers’ living. Both the Son’s hand as the hand of power and the Father’s hand as the hand of love are for the believers’ protection. Eternal life

shall never run out, and the hands of the Son and the Father shall never fail. So the believers are eternally secured and shall never perish.

When I first began to work in this country, many dear saints asked me if I believed in eternal security. I always answered, “Why not?” After awhile everyone knew that I do believe in the wonderful, eternal security. As long as we have eternal life, we have eternal security. What can be more secure than eternal life? I have the real insurance policy in my spirit. Not only do I have eternal life, but I have two hands—the Son’s hand of power and the Father’s hand of love. These two hands embrace me, and Satan is unable to snatch me out. I am eternally secured by the divine life and by these two divine hands. Praise the Lord! These hands are always on the alert, and no one can kidnap us. Therefore, we shall never perish. We have a divine living and an almighty protection. Thus, we, the sheep, are secured forever. Do not argue doctrinally about eternal security. We enjoy the fact. Do you have eternal security? I do not ask whether you believe in eternal security but whether you have it. Regardless of whether or not we believe in the doctrine of eternal security, we are eternally secured.



## THE PERSECUTION OF RELIGION

In [verse 30](#) the Lord said, “I and the Father are one.” Here the Lord asserts His deity, that He is God ([10:33](#); [5:18](#); [1:1](#); [20:28](#); [1 John 5:20](#); [Phil. 2:6](#)). The Jews took up stones in order to stone Him, saying, “We are not stoning you for a good work, but for blasphemy; and because you, being a man, are making yourself God” ([10:33](#)). The Jews persecuted Christ because of His “blasphemy.” It is the same today. Religion claims that we preach heresy. Religion was trying to protect its “belief.” Actually, they had no belief. They had unbelief and they were protecting vanity. Therefore, they persecuted the Lord Jesus.

## LIFE’S DESERTION OF RELIGION AND LIFE’S NEW STANDING

In [10:40-42](#) we see life’s desertion of religion and life’s new standing. Christ deserted Judaism and went to the place where John the Baptist preached the New Testament gospel. This is very meaningful. The Lord deserted Judaism and took a new standing for the New Testament. Today we are here on this new standing. We are following the shepherd, we are on the pasture, and we have a new standing.

The testimony of the Old Testament was the sheepfold, but the testimony of the New Testament is Christ as the pasture. Are you a sheep? Do you prefer to remain in the fold when the pasture is ready? Do you still like to be confined and kept under the custody of the fold? Or will you come out of the fold and go into the pasture to enjoy the riches of Christ? Today, the Lord Jesus is no longer in Judaism. The Good Shepherd is no longer in the fold. He is staying where the testimony of the New Testament is established. He has given up the fold and is staying in the place where He is the pasture. Therefore, you also must give up the fold and come to Him. This means that you must give up “Judaism” and come to take Christ as your everything. He is everything to you. Just look at the sheep. The pasture is everything to them. The sheep enjoy the pasture as the resting place, the food, the water, the life supply, and as everything else. You too must come out of the fold and go into the pasture—that is, you must come out of “Judaism” and go to Christ alone. You have to come out of the “law” and go to the place where Christ is enjoyed. Where is Christ now? Christ is outside of all the Judaistic types of groups and in the place where John the Baptist testified of Him.

Christ is the all-inclusive pasture. The fold is the law and Judaism. Christ, the very exit out of the fold, is the shepherd who leads you out of the fold and brings you to Himself who can be everything to you. He is now your pasture.

Allow me to repeat once again. Where is Christ now? He is not in Judaism, but in the very place where the New Testament is testified. Christ is in the place where John the Baptist testified of Him. This is very meaningful because the Lord is now out of the fold and is standing in a new position where He is everything to the chosen people of God. Therefore, you must come out of the old fold and go into the new pasture where Christ Himself is everything to you.

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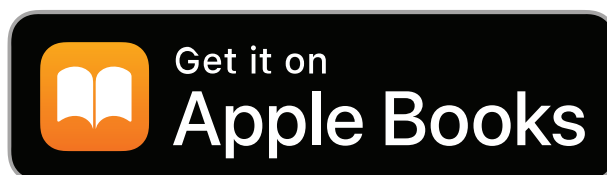
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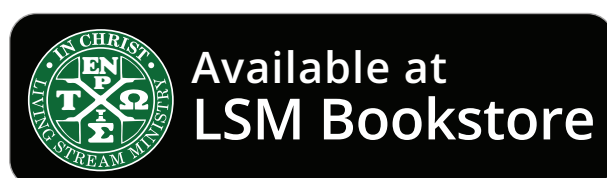


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## **LIFE'S RESURRECTING— THE NEED OF THE DEAD**

The case of raising Lazarus from the dead in [John 11](#) is certainly a wonderful case. Here we see the case of a man who had died, who had been buried for four days, and who had begun to stink. Nevertheless, he was resurrected. Why do the other three Gospels give us no record of this wonderful case? This case of resurrection does not fit in with the purposes of the other three Gospels; it only suits the purpose of the Gospel of John. Matthew, Mark, and Luke are Gospels with purposes other than life. John is the gospel on life. Therefore, the Holy Spirit kept this case for John. This proves that the Gospel of John is a book of life.

### **THE DEAD AND HIS NEED**

In [John 11:1-4](#) we see the dead and his need. Lazarus was not only sick but also dead ([11:14](#)). Thus, he did not need healing but resurrecting. In the Lord's salvation He does not merely heal the sick; He also gives life to the dead. So He remained two days until the sick one had died

(11:6). The Lord does not reform people or regulate them; He regenerates people and raises them out of death. Hence, the first of the nine cases is on regeneration ([John 3](#)) and the last is on resurrection, revealing that all of the different aspects of Christ as life to us, as unveiled in the other seven cases, are in the principle of regeneration and resurrection. This last case is the actual changing of death into life.

Before going into the matter of Christ raising Lazarus from the dead, we must realize that the Gospel of John reveals two things. On the positive side, it reveals that Christ came to be our life. The Son of God is the Word of God, which is the expression of God. As the expression of God, He came in the flesh to be our life. This central thought is found in every chapter throughout the entire Gospel. On the negative side, this book also shows that religion, even the Jewish religion of Judaism, is very much against Christ as life. By reading this book carefully, you will even see how the sound and genuine religion opposes Christ as life. Within the first ten chapters of this Gospel, the only opposition our Lord met came from the Jewish religion. Religion opposed Him, rejected Him, repudiated Him and persecuted Him. Eventually, at the end



of [chapter ten](#), He was forced to desert religion. He forsook the temple, the holy city, and all the good things of the Jewish religion and came to a new standing.

In every chapter from [chapter one through chapter ten](#) we can see one point concerning religion versus Christ. In [chapter one](#) we see that religion was expecting a great leader to come. Religion looked for the so-called Messiah, Elijah, or the promised prophet. However, Christ did not come as a great leader, but as the little Lamb of God to accomplish redemption and with a little dove to produce the transformed stones for God's building. Thus, even in the first chapter of this Gospel we find an indication that religion takes the wrong way, a way other than the way of life. There is a great discrepancy between religion and life.

In [chapter two](#) we see that religion will try to destroy life, for religion will try to destroy Jesus. But Jesus as the divine life will raise Himself out of that destruction. Life not only can withstand destruction, but can raise Himself up out of the destruction of death.

In [chapter three](#) we see that Nicodemus, a high-class man, held a religious concept of the Lord Jesus, addressing Him as rabbi and

referring to Him as a teacher sent from God. All such concepts are religious.

In [chapter four](#) we see that even a poor, mean, immoral, low-class Samaritan woman held a religious concept. At a certain point in her conversation with the Lord she began to speak about the worship of God. Although the religion among the Samaritans was not orthodox, it was a religion.

In [chapter five](#) we see religion's opposition to life fully aroused. This was due to the fact that the Lord Jesus enlivened the impotent man on the Sabbath day. To the Jews, it seemed that He broke their regulations about the Sabbath. Consequently, they began to oppose Him. In fact, they began to be very much against the Lord. By this case we can see how the rules and regulations of religion are in opposition to the Lord as life to the needy. The Lord who is our life is one thing, but religion with all of its rules and regulations is another. Christ as life and religion with its regulations can never go together.

We also see something of religion in [chapter six](#). When the people saw that Jesus had fed the multitude with five loaves and two fishes they said, "This is truly the prophet who is to come into the world" ([6:14](#)). They were about

to force the Lord to be their King (6:15). That was a religious concept. The Lord Jesus withdrew from them, for He wanted to remain as the small bread good for people's food.

We see another religious concept in [chapter seven](#). The people at the religious feast were discussing Jesus, but Jesus stood and cried, asking them to turn from their dry religion and come to the source of living water.

We see more of religion in [chapter eight](#). The religious scribes and Pharisees tried to trap the Lord by asking Him, in their religious way, how to deal with an adulterous woman. But the Lord answered in the way of life, exposing their folly in holding on to their religion and silencing them with shame.

The opposition of religion to life is strengthened in [chapter nine](#). In [chapter five](#) the Lord enlivened an impotent man on the Sabbath. In [chapter nine](#), He gave sight to a blind man. He purposely did this on the Sabbath day. Why did not the Lord Jesus go to the blind man before or after the Sabbath day? He did it purposely to break the dead rituals of dead religion. That stirred religion's opposition against life. The Lord purposely broke the Sabbath regulation before the eyes of the religious Jews. The eyes

of the blind man received sight, but the eyes of the Pharisees received blindness due to their opposition. The Jews thought that Jesus was very much against their religion because He broke the regulations of their religion. Hence, they became very angry with the Lord and began to oppose Him. They even excommunicated the man who had been healed by the Lord (9:34). When they cast the blind man out of their synagogue, they excommunicated him from their Judaistic religion. Then the Lord took the opportunity to tell them that Judaism was nothing other than a sheepfold which keeps the sheep for awhile. Now that the pasture is ready, the sheep will be released from the fold and brought into the pasture. The Lord Jesus let them know that since they had excommunicated the blind man from their religion, a sheep was released from the fold and brought into Christ as the living pasture. At the end of [chapter ten](#), the Lord walked out of the fold of the Jewish religion.

In the first ten chapters of this Gospel we see the fighting, the struggle, between religion and life. Eventually, the Lord deserted that religion and went outside of it. Where is He now? He is outside of religion. He has nothing to do with it.

Now, in His new standing, there is no religious element. All the elements of religion have been excluded.

## FRUSTRATION OF HUMAN OPINIONS

Now we come to the last case. This case is not in the Judaistic fold; it is outside of it. After the Lord went out of Jerusalem, He went to a home in Bethany of one brother and two sisters who loved Him very much. Before He came, something happened in this home. The brother, Lazarus, became seriously ill, and the sisters sent a message to the Lord, which means that they prayed to Him (11:3). There is nothing wrong with prayer. If you are in trouble, you must send a message to the Lord. At any time you can send a word to Him. You may send Him the information about any situation. But what He would do is up to Him.

**Chapter eleven** serves a very specific purpose: it shows us that besides the opposition of religion, human opinions are the strongest frustration to life. Throughout the foregoing chapters, the problem that life faced was with religion. However, there is no religion in **chapter eleven**. But there is another kind of frustration—the frustration from human opinion. What is revealed

in this chapter that frustrates the resurrection power of the Lord? It is the human opinions. This chapter vividly portrays how the human opinions frustrate the Lord's resurrection life. Once human opinions are subdued, resurrection life is manifested. This is not a matter in religion, but in the church. The home in Bethany is a miniature of the church life. In Jerusalem, you are in religion; in Bethany, you are in the local church. In Jerusalem you have religion; in the local church you have the problem of human opinions. In [chapters one through ten](#), Christ as life is fully revealed and, at the same time, religion is exposed. Now, in [chapter eleven](#), Christ as the resurrection life is unfolded, but, at the same time, human opinions are brought to the surface. The Lord is the resurrection life, but He is hindered by the opinions. This chapter is filled with human opinions.

Martha and Mary considered that the Lord should have come immediately. This was their opinion. But the Lord never acts on the basis of anyone's opinion; He always acts according to His own will. The Lord purposely stayed away for two more days.

The Lord is the resurrection and the life and death is no problem to Him. It is easy for Him to

swallow up death. Death may be a problem to us, but it is not a problem to Christ. He as resurrection can overcome death and swallow it up. However, when we come to applying Him as resurrection, we face the problem of human opinions. The problem in the local church life which keeps us from seeing the resurrection of Christ is our opinion.

If you read this chapter carefully, you will see that even the death of Lazarus was provided by God. In His sovereignty, God prepared the environment which allowed a Jesus follower to die. God's sovereignty provided such a death situation in order to unfold Christ's resurrection power. Without death there is no way to express resurrection. Resurrection needs death. How could resurrection be manifested without it? We need to praise the Lord for the death of Lazarus. If Martha and Mary had seen that resurrection can never be manifested without death, they would have praised the Lord when they saw their brother dying. They would have known that this death would manifest the Lord's resurrection. In such a case, there would have been no human opinion.

Surely the Lord knew that Lazarus was sick and He knew exactly how to handle the situation,

even if they had not sent any news to Him. However, they sent the news to Him, but He was not moved by it. Sometimes it is very difficult to move the Lord. In a prayer meeting you may say, “Lord, we move Your hand,” but the more you try to move His hand, the more His hand refuses to be moved. The Lord will never be moved according to your opinion.

## THE DISCIPLES’ OPINION

In [verses 8-16](#) we see the disciples’ opinion. When the news came about Lazarus’ sickness, the Lord’s heart was not moved. The disciples must have been puzzled and perplexed. You can imagine how disappointed the disciples were. After two days, the Lord suddenly expressed the desire to see Lazarus. He said, “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going that I may awaken him out of sleep” ([11:11](#)). The disciples immediately said to Him, “Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover” ([11:12](#)). Here we see the disciples’ human opinion. When the Lord did not want to go, they were puzzled, and when the Lord was about to go, they thought that it was not necessary to go. Once the Lord expressed His desire to go and see Lazarus, all of the disciples expressed their opinions. They told



the Lord that it was dangerous to go because the Jews sought to stone Him (11:8). This is human opinion, which always contradicts the Lord's will. However, once the Lord made up His mind that He was going to see Lazarus, no one could change it. Eventually, the disciples agreed to go, but with a martyr's attitude fearing the Jews' persecution, for one of them said, "Let us also go, that we may die with Him" (11:16). Many times in every local church the situation is exactly like this.

### MARTHA'S OPINION

When the Lord came, Martha was the first one to meet Him (11:20). But before the Lord could say anything, Martha opened her mouth and gave forth another opinion: "Lord, If You were here, my brother would not have died" (11:21). She was complaining that the Lord had come too late. The Lord said to her, "Your brother shall rise again" (11:23). This means that the Lord would raise him immediately. However, Martha said, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection in the last day" (11:24). Martha expounded this word of the Lord so as to postpone the present resurrection to the last day. What an expounding of the divine word! What

devastating knowledge of fundamental teaching that frustrates people from enjoying the Lord's present resurrection life! Then the Lord Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me, even if he should die, shall live; and every one who lives and believes in Me shall by no means die forever" (11:25-26). The Lord seemed to be telling her, "It is not a matter of time. There is no problem of time with Me. Nothing is too late, and nothing is too early. As long as I am here, everything will be all right, for I will raise up your brother." Then the Lord asked Martha, "Do you believe this?" Martha replied, "Yes, Lord; I have believed that You are the Christ, the Son of God, Who is coming into the world" (11:27). What she answered absolutely was not what the Lord asked. She was not clear about what the Lord was saying. Her old, preoccupying knowledge prevented her from understanding the Lord's new word.

Martha is like many Christians today who have a great deal of knowledge and doctrine. She had all the knowledge, but it was not the living knowledge that the Lord taught. All of her different opinions were due to the fact that she had all the knowledge. Today, many Christians

have opinions because they have so many teachings. When someone talks with them about the inner life, they immediately begin to share their opinions. Too much knowledge and too many doctrines breed endless opinions.

After Martha said that she believed the Lord to be the Christ, the Son of God, she went away and called her sister Mary. Martha said, “The Teacher is here and is calling you” (11:28). However, I cannot find a word saying that the Lord had called for Mary. That was Martha’s suggestion. It was her self-assuming opinion. Again we see in Martha a person who was so full of her own opinions. She was so active in her opinion that she could never be silent. Perhaps you also love the Lord very much, but, like Martha, you cannot be silent.

### **MARY’S OPINION**

Mary came to the Lord at Martha’s word. She reiterated what Martha first told the Lord: “Lord, if You were here, my brother would not have died” (11:32). This also is an opinion, a complaint against the Lord.

The Lord never argued; neither did He accept their opinion. They simply did not understand that as long as the Lord was present everything

would be all right. They could not realize this, for they were very sorrowful and even weeping. For this reason, the Lord groaned in His spirit and was troubled (11:33). He did not groan over the death of Lazarus, but over the fact that not one of the sorrowful ones knew that He was the present resurrection, and He was troubled by this. Then the Lord asked them where they had put Lazarus. They said to Him, “Lord, come and see” (11:34). This answer was very good. That opinion was the best. When the church has a problem, do not talk so much. Simply say, “Lord, come and see.” At this juncture, the Lord wept in sympathy with their sorrow over Lazarus’ death (11:35).

## THE JEWS’ OPINION

In [verses 36-38](#) we see the Jews’ opinion. They thought that the Lord wept because He loved Lazarus. Some questioned why the Lord could not have kept Lazarus from dying. Those opinions plus the Jews’ ignorance of the Lord’s ability to raise Lazarus from the dead caused the Lord to groan again.

## MARTHA’S OPINION AGAIN

When the Lord came to the tomb, He told

them to take away the stone. Once again, Martha frustrated the Lord with her opinion. She said, “Lord, by now he smells, for it is the fourth day that he has been there” (11:39). In this chapter there is nothing religious, but there are many opinions standing in the Lord’s way. Although the Lord is life to the people in the church, He meets a great number of human opinions from the people in the church. It is just like His meeting the opinions of the disciples, Martha and Mary, and their Jewish friends.

## **GIVING LIFE TO THE DEAD**

The Lord as resurrection gives life to the dead. He is the resurrection and the life. In resurrection, this life is imparted into the dead to raise them up from death. This is life’s resurrecting.

## **RESURRECTION REQUIRING MAN’S SUBMISSION AND COOPERATION**

We must see one point here. The point is that the Lord was able to raise up Lazarus from death. However, He could not do anything because He was continually frustrated by human opinions. He was frustrated by those opinions

until the time came when they were subdued. Eventually, Martha was subdued with a certain amount of submission. The Lord has the resurrection life, the resurrection power, but it needs our cooperation. It needs our submission. What is our submission? It is simply the giving up of our opinion. You must forsake your opinion and allow the Lord to speak. When He tells us, “Move this stone,” we should simply move it. We must submit, cooperate, and coordinate with Him. We need to submit to His word, cooperate with Him, and coordinate with the resurrection power. Why did the Lord, who was able to raise the dead, not remove the stone by Himself? Because His resurrection power requires our cooperation. Once they had removed the stone, the Lord cried out with a loud voice, “Lazarus, Come forth!” (11:41-43), and Lazarus was raised from the dead. He heard the voice of the living Lord, was quickened, and was raised from the dead. After Lazarus came out of the tomb, there was still the need for human cooperation. Lazarus’ hands and feet were bound with the burial clothes and his face was bound about with a handkerchief. Therefore Jesus said to them, “Loose him and let him go” (11:44). They had to remove the bandages from the resurrected

Lazarus. They did it and the work of resurrection was completed.

We too must work by cooperating with the Lord to release others from the bondage of their bandages. When the Lord raises up people from their death in the church, we need to cooperate with Him in order to release them from their earthly bondage. By this kind of cooperation the church becomes the testimony of the Lord as life. The Lord could have moved the stone from the cave and He could have removed the bandages from Lazarus, but He did not do it. He would rather ask us to cooperate with Him. However, before we can cooperate with Him, we must first give up our opinions and act according to His will. In the church life, we must drop our opinions, submit to the Lord's word and work, and cooperate with His resurrection power.

This is a serious lesson that everyone in the local churches must learn. Especially the Marthas and the Marys—the leading ones, the responsible ones—must learn to drop their opinions, submit themselves and their opinions to the Lord, and cooperate with Him and with His resurrection power. If in any local church the leaders drop their opinions, submitting them to the Lord's word, and cooperate with the Lord's

resurrection power, that church will see resurrection life. The Lord today is still waiting for an opportunity to express His resurrection power, but it is difficult for Him to obtain the submission, cooperation, and coordination. As leaders in the local churches, we may be busy praying and asking the Lord to do things according to our opinion. We have to drop our opinions, submit every opinion for His consideration, and cooperate with Him. When He asks you to remove the stone, remove it. When He tells you to do a certain thing, do it. Then you will see resurrection life. You will see resurrection power. This is a part of the revelation of [John 11](#). Most people have only seen the story of Lazarus being raised up from the dead. They have not seen the revelation in this chapter, which is that outside of religion, in the local churches, the frustration to Christ as life comes from our human opinions.

## THE ACTUAL CHANGING OF DEATH INTO LIFE

To resurrect the dead actually is to change death into life. The significance of this case is the same as that of the sign of changing water into wine ([John 2](#)). As Mary's opinion in that



sign frustrated the Lord's changing of water into wine, so Martha's opinion in this case frustrated the Lord's resurrection power. When Martha's opinion was subdued, the Lord's resurrection power prevailed.

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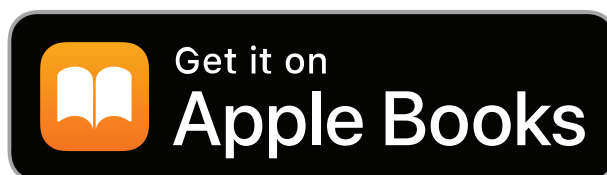
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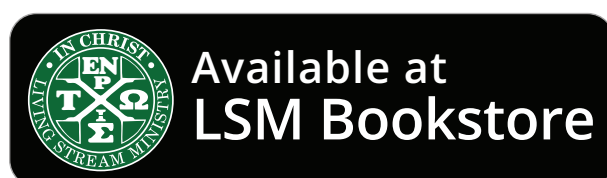


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## LIFE'S ISSUE— THE CHURCH

In the Gospel of John [chapter one](#) we see an introduction to life and building. In [2:1-11](#) we find the principle of life—to change death into life, and in [2:12-22](#) is the purpose of life—to build the house of God. Beginning with [chapter three](#), we see nine cases which illustrate how Christ as life can meet mankind's every need for the fulfillment of God's purpose. This brings us to the end of [chapter eleven](#). After this, in [chapter twelve](#), this Gospel reveals the issue of Christ being life to man: the producing of the church. The church, a house of feasting, is the place where the Lord can rest and obtain His satisfaction. The issue of Christ being life to man is the church.

### LIFE'S ISSUE

[Chapter twelve](#) stands alone. It is not the continuation of the nine foregoing cases; it is the conclusion of all of them. The conclusion of the nine cases is that Christ as life issues in the church ([vv. 1-11](#)).

## A HOUSE OF FEAST

In [chapter eleven](#) the Lord raised Lazarus from the dead. That resurrection issued into the church life. We all were dead persons. After He resurrected us, we became the church. Thus, in [chapter eleven](#), we see Lazarus resurrected and in [chapter twelve](#) we see that the resurrected person becomes the very place where the Lord can find rest and satisfaction. This is the church. Now we need to consider the church as the house of feast.

## OUTSIDE OF RELIGION

This house of feast is outside of religion. It was not in Jerusalem, the holy city, or in the holy temple. It was in a little house in Bethany, outside of Jerusalem and outside of religion.

The Lord being life to people to meet all of their needs brought about His rejection by the Jewish religion. Judaism could not tolerate seeing the Lord being life to so many kinds of people. So the religious ones rejected the Lord as life. This rejection began in [chapter five](#) ([vv. 16, 18](#)) and reached its climax in [chapter ten](#) ([vv. 31, 39](#)). In [chapter eleven](#), the Jewish religionists even held a council on how to put the Lord to death because He had raised Lazarus from the dead ([11:53, 57](#)).

The Jewish leaders also plotted to put Lazarus to death for the same reason (12:10). This shows how much religion is against the Lord as life. It not only persecuted the Lord, but also tried to destroy those who participated in the Lord as life. Religion always renounces and rejects the Lord as life.

As we study the Gospel of John, we must see the difference between religion and Christ as life. The Lord Jesus came to earth in His incarnation not to be a religious leader but to come into man and to be man's life. From the first case of regeneration in [chapter three](#) to the last case of resurrection in [chapter eleven](#), all that the Lord did was to present Himself as life to people outside of the Jewish religion. If we look at religion, including Christianity, from a viewpoint other than that of life, we shall be easily cheated and misled, for religion teaches people how to know God and worship Him. It even teaches the Bible. It seems that there is nothing bad about it. However, if the Lord has mercy on us and if His Spirit opens our eyes, we shall see that what God is doing in the universe is not merely to make people worship Him or serve Him. In this age, God's desire and intention is to come into man in the Son, by His Spirit, and through His Word to be

man's life that man might live by Him. This is absolutely different from religion and altogether contrary to the religious concept. When the Lord came as life to man, He was rejected by the Jewish religion. Throughout all the succeeding centuries, He has been continually rejected by religion.

## A PLACE FOR FEAST, REST, AND SATISFACTION

The rejection of the Lord by Judaism was a negative issue. But there was also a positive issue brought forth by the Lord's being life to people—a home for Him in His rejection, a place where He could rest, feast, dwell, and be satisfied. In [chapter twelve](#) we see that the Lord has come out and has hid Himself from the religion that rejected Him and has come into a home of His Jewish believers in Bethany. By making Himself the resurrection life to His believers, He found a home. This home may be considered as a shadow of His church. On the one hand, He was rejected by Judaism and gave it up; on the other hand, He obtained a home where He could stay and rest. He had a place where He could feast and be satisfied. Formerly, the Lord had “nowhere that He may lay His head” ([Matt. 8:20](#)). But now, after raising Lazarus from the dead, He obtained a place



for resting and feasting. After the Jewish religion had rejected Him, He was no longer willing to stay in Jerusalem. He always went away to stay in Bethany ([Matt. 21:17-18](#)). There He could not only stay and rest but also feast and be satisfied. This spiritually signifies that He was absolutely separated from the Jewish religion of the Old Testament and was and still is dwelling in the church as His home wherein He can rest, feast, and be satisfied.

Although there was nothing outwardly attractive about that little house, inwardly it was filled with feasting, resting, and satisfaction. Not only the Lord Jesus was feasting and resting, but so was everyone else who was there. It must be this way in the church life. When you look at the church life outwardly, nothing is attractive. The building, the chairs, nothing may seem to be very good. Outwardly, everything may be poor; inwardly, however, everything is precious, sweet, and dear. We have the sweet sensation that we are with the Lord and that the Lord is with us.

**A MINIATURE  
OF THE CHURCH LIFE PRODUCED  
BY THE RESURRECTION LIFE**

Let us now consider several points concerning

the miniature of the church life found in [John 12](#). Firstly, it was produced by resurrection life. Lazarus was present as a sign that the church is produced by resurrection life. The church does not come into being by man's organization, man's wisdom, man's work, or man's teaching.

Bethany was the place where the Lord accomplished His last sign—the raising of Lazarus from the dead. Therefore, Bethany is the place where the Lord raised up the dead. The believers there issued from the Lord's resurrection life. This is exactly where the church is—in the place of resurrection where the Lord as resurrection life raises people from the dead. Originally, we were dead, for we were dead in sins ([Col. 2:13](#)). But the Lord has raised us up from the dead; He has quickened and regenerated us. The issue of this is that we who have shared in His resurrection life have become the church. In the natural life there is no church. The church can only come into being through the Lord's resurrection life. Such a church in resurrection life is the place where the Lord can find rest and satisfaction with us and where we can feast with the Lord.

## **COMPOSED OF CLEANSED SINNERS**

The church is composed of cleansed sinners

as represented by Simon the leper ([Mark 14:3](#)). When I was young, I thought that the house there in Bethany where they were feasting with the Lord was the home of Lazarus. Eventually I learned that it was not the home of Lazarus, but the house of a leper who must have been healed by the Lord ([Mark 14:3](#)). The house of Simon, a cleansed leper, became the meeting place of the church. This is very meaningful. On the one hand, we all were dead; on the other hand, we all were lepers. Originally, the members of the church were both dead and leprous (sinful) people. In a sense we, like Lazarus, were dead and have been resurrected. In another sense, we, like Simon, were contaminated lepers and have been cleansed. Hallelujah, the Lord has raised us from the dead and cleansed us from our leprosy, our sins! Now where we are becomes the meeting place of the church.

[John 12](#) is silent about Simon's doing anything. The feast was prepared in Simon's house, but everything was done by two sisters and one brother. In Bethany, in the house of a leper, everything was done by Martha, Mary, and Lazarus. Although the church is the place where the Lord quickens and regenerates the dead and cleanses the leper, the service in the church is not done

by the lepers. This is the meaning behind the fact that Simon was absent from serving in [John 12](#).

## **OUTWARDLY POOR AND AFFLICTED**

Bethany means house of the poor or house of affliction. Outwardly, the church may be poor and afflicted. The church on earth may not be rich in material things; it should be rich with the enjoyment of the Lord in His presence. The outward people will always look down on the church, saying that it is poor and full of affliction. They do not have a spirit to realize how rich we are in the enjoyment of all that the Lord is to us.

## **INWARDLY FEASTING IN AND WITH THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD**

Inwardly, the church life is a life of feasting in and with the presence of the Lord ([12:2](#)). The Lord came to that house, and His presence was there. In the church life, the first thing we need is the Lord's presence. We must be a people in such a position and with such a condition that the Lord can come and be with us. His presence means very much to the church life. The church life is a life that absolutely depends upon the Lord's presence. Without the Lord's presence, the church life is empty.

Inwardly, the church life is a feast. In the church life, there should always be a feast that the Lord can enjoy by Himself and with His people. It is in the church that the Lord has rest, enjoyment, and satisfaction. Here there is always a feast prepared for the Lord and His people. Not only the Lord Himself enjoys it, but all the people who are with Him enjoy it as well. The church is a place where the Lord can enjoy Himself with His people and where His people can enjoy being with Him.

## **HAVING MORE SISTERS THAN BROTHERS**

As it was there in Bethany, it is better for a church to have more sisters than brothers (12:2-3). Whenever the number of sisters in a church is smaller than the number of brothers, that church may not be so living. A living church needs to have more sisters, the more the better. If you look into a situation where the number of sisters is greater than the number of brothers, you will find that that church is living.

## **WITH DIFFERENT FUNCTIONS SERVING**

In the church life there are different functions. There are three kinds of functions in the service

of the church represented by the three persons in the house. Firstly is the serving function represented by Martha (12:2). Throughout history, Christians have looked down on her. Do not condemn Martha. It is unfair to condemn her. Martha's serving is very good, for, in the church service, the business affairs of the church must be taken care of. How could we have the food taken care of without Martha? We need her to prepare the food. I appreciate Martha's service. We all must change our concept about her and not look down on her. We should encourage the sisters to be Marthas. Perhaps you sisters are still quite spiritual and religious, but I am rather practical. I do not want to be that spiritual. Suppose all the sisters are Marys sitting there quietly being spiritual. Who is going to prepare the meal? We must have some Marthas who are diligent, capable, active, living, and practical. Although we are spiritual, we must still serve practically.

## TESTIFYING

The second kind of function in the service of the church is represented by Lazarus. It appears as if Lazarus did nothing. He just sat there at the table with the Lord, enjoying the feast with Him. But we must remember that Lazarus was

the living testimony of the resurrection life. He did not testify by doing but by living in the resurrection life. His testimony was not in labor or in works; it was in the enjoyment of the resurrection life. He was a witness to the power of the Lord's resurrection life. Wherever he was, the testimony of resurrection life was there.

Martha's service was good, but it did not attract people. It was the testimony of Lazarus that attracted them. This does not mean that Martha's service was not good and was not needed, for certain things had to be taken care of. Even Lazarus had to be served by Martha. Therefore, we must realize that even when we have a good testimony of life, we still need the service of Martha.

The testimony of life is not by doing but by living. It is not a kind of work; it is a kind of life. It is not by laboring; it is by enjoying the Lord. It gives people the feeling of resurrection power, the manifestation of resurrection life, and the enjoyment of the Lord as life. This is a strong testimony that the Lord can make a dead person so living and enable him to feast with Him. In the church there must be such a living testimony, such a function of life. Martha's service is necessary, but Lazarus' ministry is even more necessary.

## LOVING

Mary represents the third kind of function (12:2-3). She represents the dear ones who love the Lord very much and who pour out what they hold most precious upon the Lord. They love the Lord so much that they give the best to the Lord. This is what Mary did. She poured the costly ointment upon the feet of the Lord and wiped His feet with her hair. In her heart, nothing was so dear, so precious, and so costly as the Lord. She, along with many others like her, loved the Lord with the best she had. Her estimate of the Lord was that He was more valuable and lovable than anything else.

Mary's pouring the precious ointment upon the Lord Jesus is a sign of the proper church life. Although you may realize that Mary anointed the Lord Jesus with the best ointment, perhaps you have not seen that this is a sign of the church life. The main characteristic of the church life is anointing the Lord with our best love. The main expression, aspect, and characteristic of the church life is that we pour out our ointment upon Him. The church here is likened to a house that is filled with the preciousness, the sweetness, and the pleasantness of the aroma of the ointment



poured out upon the Lord Jesus. This ought to be the main expression of a local church. When you come into a local church, the first thing that you should smell is the loving ointment poured out upon the Lord Jesus. It is not simply that Mary loved the Lord, but that she poured out her best upon the Lord, and this becomes a sign of the proper church life. In the proper church life we all must love the Lord to such an extent.

These three items must be found in the church life. Whenever people come to us, they must realize that among us is the service for the Lord, the testimony of the Lord, and the love poured out upon the Lord. These three items are a must. We must have the service, serving all the time. Even more, we must have the testimony, testifying that the Lord is the resurrection life to us. There is no need for us to labor in this aspect of the testimony. We simply need resurrection life. After we have been resurrected with Him, it is unnecessary for us to labor. We simply sit with Him, go along with Him, and enjoy the feast with Him. This is the real, living testimony that the church must have, and this is the very expression of the Lord. Moreover, we must also have the absolute love shown to the Lord. When people come into our midst, they should say, "Oh,

these people love the Lord at any cost. They will pay any price in loving the Lord. In their hearts nothing is so costly, so valuable, so lovable, and so precious as the Lord Himself.” We must give people this kind of impression.

We all must be a triangular member of the church. We must have three corners. We all must be Martha, Lazarus, and Mary. When someone asks you your name, you should reply, “My name is Martha-Lazarus-Mary.” This is the proper name for us all to have.

If we are truly practicing the church life, we must have the service, the testimony, and the love toward the Lord. We all must be Martha, Lazarus, and Mary. Such a church is the result and issue of the Lord being life to us. [Chapter twelve](#) is the issue of [chapter eleven](#). This kind of service, testimony, and love comes out of the Lord being resurrection life to us. With these functions, there is the genuine church life. In the real church life, the service to the Lord is rendered, the testimony of the Lord is seen, and the love toward the Lord is poured out. Here we can enjoy the Lord with other saints, and the Lord Himself can dwell, rest, and feast in satisfaction. This is the real expression of the Body of the Lord, which is a vessel to contain the Lord and to express Him.

## SPOTTED BY THE FALSE ONE

However, in the picture of the church life portrayed here, there is something negative—the black spot of Judas (12:4). Even among the twelve apostles chosen by the Lord Jesus, there was Judas, who was a black spot. Throughout all the centuries, there has always been a black spot in the churches. The glorious church life is always spotted by some false one. Nevertheless, it is quite comforting that even in the little church established directly by the Lord Jesus Himself, there was such a black spot.

Judas cared for money; he loved money much more than he loved the Lord. Therefore, he did not appreciate what Mary did to the Lord. He thought that it was a waste. Judas pretended that he cared for the poor. Actually that was not true. He only cared for money. In the church life there is almost always such a black spot. Mammon, the embodiment of the evil one, is the real rival of the Lord. The failure to overcome mammon is so often seen in the church life. Judas' love of mammon gave Satan the ground to enter into him and take him over (13:2). Instead of loving the Lord, he betrayed Him! It is a shame that this is often repeated in the church life.

## **PERSECUTED BY RELIGION**

The church life is persecuted by religion. The Jewish priests took counsel that they might kill Lazarus (12:10) who testified to the resurrection power of the Lord. He was an evident and strong testimony of the Lord's resurrection power. This stirred up the religious people's hatred and persecution. It is the same today. The stronger we are in bearing testimony of the Lord as life to us, the more the religious people will be provoked to anger with us.

## **BEING A TEST AND EXPOSING PEOPLE**

The church life is a test. It exposes people (12:6, 10). It exposes where a person's heart is and what his attitude is toward the Lord. Without the church, the people's heart and attitude toward the Lord could never be exposed. As long as there is a church, everything comes to the surface. If there were no church in your locality, the hearts and the attitudes of men toward the Lord would be hidden and concealed. However, in the church life, every man's heart is exposed.

## **BRINGING IN MANY BELIEVERS**

In [verse 11](#) we see that many believed because

of the testimony of Lazarus. The living testimony of the church always causes people to believe in the Lord and brings people into the church life. The increase of the church must depend upon the church's living testimony, not only upon the preaching of the gospel. The best preaching of the gospel that makes the church to increase is our living testimony of experiencing the Lord as our life.

When we consider all of these aspects of the church life, it is not too much to say that the house at Bethany was an early figure of the church. We do see the church life there.

## **THE LORD BEING A TEST TO PEOPLE**

Not only is the church a test and an exposure of people, but the Lord Himself is a test to all the people around Him. The chief priests and the Pharisees conspired to kill Him (11:47, 53, 57). We see a different attitude in Simon the leper, for he prepared the house for Him (Matt. 26:6). Martha served Him, Lazarus testified of Him, Mary loved Him, and Judas was about to betray Him. Many others believed in Him. All of these varying attitudes were shown toward the same Jesus. Where are you? (Are you trying to kill Him, or are you serving Him, testifying of Him,

loving Him, or being seduced to betray Him?) You can never be neutral. You must do something. The very Lord in His church is a test to everyone around Him.

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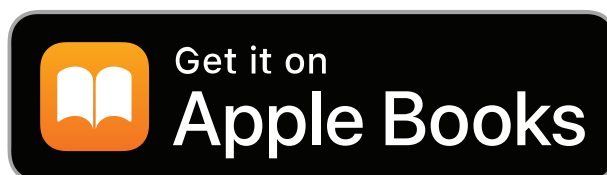
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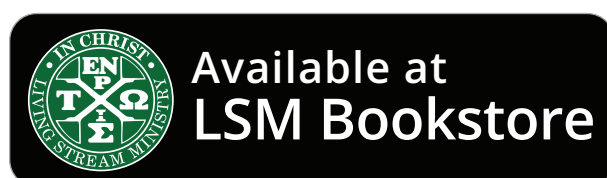


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