

Nuggets and Gems from the Bible

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OF
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Living Stream Ministry
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When I was young, many things in the Bible bothered me, one of which is in [John chapter three](#). Although this chapter is so elevated, speaking about the rebirth ([vv. 3-21](#)), it seemed to me that suddenly, beginning at [verse 22](#), it became rather low. [Verse 22](#) says, “After these things, Jesus and His disciples came into the land of Judea; and there He stayed with them and baptized.” When I read this verse as a young man, I thought that there was no need for it. It seemed to me that such a record was unnecessary. I felt the same about [verse 23](#), which says that John was baptizing in Aenon near Salim because there was much water there. I was also bothered by [verse 24](#), which says that John had not yet been thrown into prison. I asked, “What is all this about? After the mention of heavenly and spiritual things, why are things such as imprisonment mentioned?” The reason for this appears in [verse 26](#). “And they came to John and said to him, Rabbi, He Who was with you across the Jordan, of Whom you testified, behold, He is baptizing and all are coming to Him.” Why did John include all of these verses?

Simply for the purpose of exposing the tail of the fox. What is this tail? It is the matter of who will have the crowd and the following. Today many people's attitude is, "This is one who follows me. All of these are my following. Why should some of them go to you?" What we find today was also present in the time of John the Baptist.

John's reply begins in [verse 27](#). "John answered and said, A man can receive nothing unless it has been given him from heaven. You yourselves testify of me that I said, I am not the Christ, but I have been sent before Him" ([vv. 27-28](#)). If I had been there, I would have said to John, "Brother, if this is the case, you should go home and not baptize any more. Since the One of whom you testified is now baptizing, you should stop your baptizing. If you continue to baptize, you will surely be cast into prison." John was good, but he was not clear. The problem was that after Jesus came upon the scene, John was still there. John should have withdrawn and allowed the Lord Jesus to occupy the whole scene. There should have been only one main figure, not two. When I was young, I did not understand why John was cast into prison. Later I came to realize that he was put into prison because he did not withdraw from the scene.

Nevertheless John said, "He who has the bride

is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices with joy because of the bridegroom's voice. This joy of mine therefore is made full. He must increase, but I must decrease" (vv. 29-30). Most Christians, especially most of the Christian teachers, misinterpret [verse 30](#). What does it mean for Christ to increase and for you to decrease? It means that you must withdraw from the scene and from having the following and allow Christ to be the only figure on the scene and to have all the following. All the following should go to Christ; none of it should go to John the Baptist or to anyone else. Since John did not make this matter clear to his disciples, they were jealous on his behalf. When John's disciples saw that all the people went to Jesus, they were unhappy. They seemed to say, "Why do these people not follow our teacher, but they go to Jesus?" Do you see the point? If John had withdrawn from the scene, there would have been no problem. If he had told all of his disciples to go to the Lord Jesus, no longer accepting a following for himself, there would have been no difficulty.

CHRIST COMING AS THE BRIDEGROOM

However, in answering his disciples John made the matter clear to them that he was not

the Christ, or the bridegroom who came for the bride; he was only the friend of the bridegroom. He told them clearly that Christ was the bridegroom who came for the bride. People should not follow him; they should follow Christ so that He might have His bride.

ALL THE REGENERATED ONES BECOMING THE BRIDE OF CHRIST

John wrote his Gospel under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. By his words we can see that all the regenerated followers of Christ are His increase. The increase in [verse 30](#) is the bride in [verse 29](#), and the bride there is a living composition of all the regenerated people. This means that in this chapter on regeneration, regeneration is not only to bring the divine life into the believers and annul the satanic nature in their flesh, but also to make them the corporate bride for Christ's increase. The last two points, to annul the serpentine nature in the believers and to make them the bride of Christ, are both fully developed in John's writing of Revelation. The book of Revelation mainly reveals how Satan as the old serpent will be fully eliminated ([Rev. 20:2, 10](#)), and how the bride of Christ as the New Jerusalem will be fully produced ([Rev. 21:2, 10-27](#)).

Although most Christians are familiar with regeneration in [John 3](#), very few see that each regenerated person should be a part of the increase of Christ, which is His bride. Regeneration is for the increase of Christ. It is for the producing of the bride. Regeneration is for you to be a part of the bride of Christ. [John 3](#) is a chapter of regeneration for the increase of Christ. Many Christians only see regeneration itself. They do not see the purpose of regeneration. Is regeneration just for you to have eternal life? No! It is for something more. Regeneration is for us to be built into the bride, which is the increase of Christ.

Originally we all were little serpents with a serpentine nature. By regeneration, the serpentine nature has been terminated ([John 3:14-15](#)). Furthermore, in regeneration we all have been germinated with the divine life. Since our serpentine nature has been terminated and since we have been germinated with the divine life, we are all a part of the bride. Are you a serpentine person or are you a part of the bride of Christ? We are parts of the bride! We are parts of the increase of Christ.

The Gospel of John is a book about the increase of Christ. Christ as the bridegroom needs a bride. He came for this purpose. He came for His increase. How will He obtain His increase? By

entering into us and making us a part of Himself. We all are parts of Christ. As parts of Christ composed together, we are the bride of Christ, His increase. Both salvation and regeneration are for this purpose, for the bride as the increase of Christ.

THE BRIDE OF CHRIST BEING HIS INCREASE

The bride of Christ is the increase of Christ. All of the reborn people are the increase of Christ, and this increase is the bride which becomes the counterpart of Christ. The bride is the church, the composition of all the regenerated people. All those who are regenerated are composed together as the corporate bride to match Christ. Without regeneration, Christ cannot have a bride as His increase.

The bride as the increase of Christ is like Eve who was the increase of Adam. When Adam was first created, he was single—a so-called bachelor. In Adam's single state there was no increase. After God took a rib out of Adam and built a woman with it, this woman was married to Adam ([Gen. 2:21-24](#)). Once she was joined to Adam, she became the increase of Adam. Adam then had an increase and was no longer single.

Christ also was single, and so He made a bride

to be the increase of Himself. But who are the increase, the bride, of Christ? Only those who are regenerated with Him as life. Through regeneration we possess the divine life of God which is Christ Himself, thus becoming members of the corporate bride of Christ. Later, the same writer, in the book of Revelation, says that the bride of Christ, the bride of the Lamb, is the New Jerusalem (21:2, 9-10). What is the New Jerusalem? Again, it is the composition of all those who have been born again through the regeneration of the Spirit. If you have been regenerated, you are part of the increase of Christ, a member of the corporate bride of Christ, which is the church today and which will consummate in the New Jerusalem in the future.

How can we become the increase of Christ? We repeat once again that the increase of Christ is produced through regeneration. For example, when we were born of our parents, we were the increase of Adam. Do you realize that Adam is increasing every day? Have you ever thought of how large Adam is today? About six thousand years ago, when Adam was alone in the garden of Eden, he was single, a bachelor. However, down through the generations, Adam has acquired many descendants. All his descendants are his increase.

Today, counting only the living ones, Adam has increased to about three billion people. Adam has increased to be such a big Adam. Praise the Lord that Christ is increasing also. But He is not increased by our first birth. Our first birth is for the increase of Adam; our second birth is for the increase of Christ. When you have a child, that is another person for the increase of Adam. However, you must thank the Lord for another possibility: this once-born one may also be born again for the increase of Christ. Potentially, all of your children can be born again into the increase of Christ as well as into the increase of Adam.

Are you the increase of Adam, or are you the increase of Christ? Formerly, we had to say that we were just the increase of Adam. Now, thank the Lord, we are the increase of Christ through regeneration. However, we must also make sure that we live, walk, and do things, not by the life of Adam, but by the life of Christ. As long as we live by our human life, we are merely the increase of Adam. It is only as we live and walk by God's divine life that we are the increase of Christ. Then we shall be the bride as the counterpart of Christ.

As the wife is one flesh with her husband, so we are one spirit with Christ ([1 Cor. 6:17](#)). As the wife is the increase of the husband, so we, as His

bride, are the increase of Christ. Due to the fact that we have Christ as life through the second birth, we are the increase of Christ. Therefore, the ultimate result of regeneration is that Christ has a bride as His increase. Christ is increased through regeneration because by regeneration He is reproduced in us. We, the regenerated people, are His reproduction.

Eve could be the increase of Adam because she was constituted with the rib of Adam and became one flesh with Adam, a part of Adam. In the same principle, we can be the increase of Christ because we are spiritually constituted with the life of Christ and have become one spirit with Him, a part of Him. As Eve came out of Adam and returned to be one with Adam, thus becoming Adam's increase, so we also have come out of Christ and will return to be one with Him, thus becoming His increase. This increase is just His reproduction in us through regeneration. All the people who participate in this reproduction are given to Christ by God.

THE WORKER FOR CHRIST DECREASING

We must let Christ increase. We all must decrease. The entire following must go to Him.

If all of today's Christian preachers and leaders would say, "Lord, let my following be Yours that You may increase and that I may decrease," there would be no problem. Some people seem to say, "He must increase, and I must decrease, but I must hold my following." As long as one holds his following, he will never decrease and He cannot increase. The increase or the decrease all depends upon the following. To whom does the following belong? May the Lord have mercy upon us. We all need His mercy not to keep a following under our hand. If we do, sooner or later, we shall be cast into prison. Let the following go to Him. He must increase, and we all must decrease.

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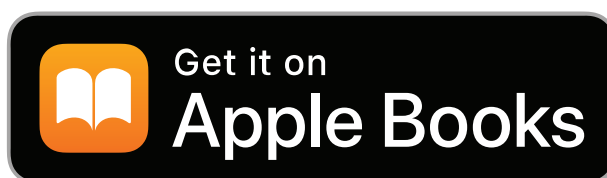
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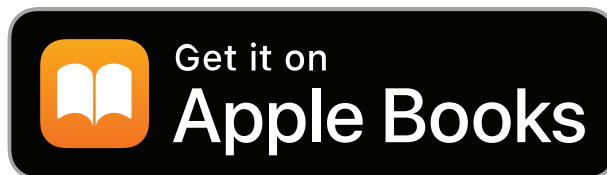
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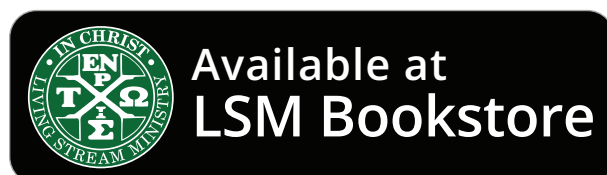
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