

Nuggets and Gems from the Bible

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OF SPIRITUAL MATTERS
IN THE WRITINGS
OF JOHN

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Living Stream Ministry

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The Apostle John not only wrote the Gospel of John but also his Epistles and the book of Revelation. His writings are of three important categories. The Gospel of John is for the imparting of life, his Epistles are for the fellowship of life which is for God's building, and the Revelation is for the consummation of God's building. Thus, there are three stages of spiritual matters in his writings. The first stage is that of life imparting, the second stage is that of spiritual growth and building, and the last stage is that of maturity and the completion of God's building. Revelation is not an easy book, but we can still receive something about the ultimate conclusion, or ultimate completion, of God's dealings throughout the generations.

HIS COMING AND HIS GOING

We must see that John's Gospel is divided into two parts: [chapters one through thirteen](#) and

chapters fourteen through twenty-one. In the first part the Lord as the Son of God came to bring God to man, and in the second part He went to bring man to God. In other words, the first part reveals that the Lord is the manifestation of God who came to man, brought God to man, and mingled God with man. The little man named Jesus is the mingling of the very God with man; He is the unity of God with man. In Him and through Him, God is one with man. In the little man named Jesus we see God (God is with Him), and we see man (man is with God). In [Matthew 1:23](#) Jesus is referred to as Emmanuel, which means God with us, or God with man. By His incarnation, God has mingled Himself with man. This refers to the Lord's coming.

The second part of this Gospel refers to the Lord's going. Firstly, He came from God to man. Then He went from man to God and brought man into God. His death and resurrection prepared the way for man to be brought into God. Fallen man was separated from God and was a great distance from Him. But by His death the Lord eliminated the distance and all the hindrances which separated man from God. Now, through Christ's death and by His blood, man can be brought into the presence of God—and

not only into the presence of God, but also into God Himself. By His death and resurrection, the Lord not only went back to God from man; He also went to God with man and brought man into God. Therefore, by His coming, God is mingled with man, and by His going, man is brought into God. By the Lord's coming and going, God and man, man and God, are mingled together as one.

GOD IN MAN

There is another way of looking at this Gospel: it may be divided into three parts. The first part, composed of the first seventeen chapters, reveals that God is manifested in man. The first seventeen chapters present a picture showing that the very God Himself, the almighty, infinite, unlimited, and eternal God, has been manifested in a man. These chapters are a history of a man, a real man of flesh and blood, a man named Jesus who lived on earth and manifested God. When the Lord Jesus lived on earth as a man, He did not live by the life of man; He lived by another life, the life of God. In these seventeen chapters we do not see a human life lived out through this man; rather, we see a divine life lived out through Him. Thus, the unlimited and infinite God was

manifested through this little man. It is for this reason that the Lord told people many times that He did not speak of Himself but of the Father ([John 12:49](#)). Whatever He spoke was of the Father, for it was the Father speaking in Him. Furthermore, whatever He did was not of Himself ([5:30](#)). He did everything in and by the Father, for the Father was working in Him. Because He lived, not by man's life, but by God's life, God was manifested in and through Him.

LIFE IN DEATH

If we would divide this Gospel into three parts, the second part would consist of [chapters eighteen and nineteen](#). In these two chapters we see a picture of how the Lord was arrested, brought to trial, sentenced to death, and crucified on the cross. But we must realize that this picture is a revelation of life manifested through death. In the first part of this Gospel, God is manifested in man; in the second part, life is manifested in death. Everything that happened to the Lord Jesus in [chapters eighteen and nineteen](#) was an aspect of death. Judas's betrayal of the Lord, his bringing the soldiers to arrest the Lord, the judgment before the high priest and Pilate, the cruel treatment of the Lord, the false sentence

against Him, and His being nailed to the cross—all were aspects of death. Nevertheless, all that happened to the Lord in these chapters did not put Him to death. If we say that the Lord was put to death, we are wrong. The Lord went into death voluntarily. Just as He was God coming into man, so now He is life going into death. As He was God manifested in man, so here He is life manifested in death.

Throughout the whole universe, nothing other than God is more powerful than death ([S. S. 8:6](#)). It is so powerful that no one can resist it. Only the God of resurrection can overcome it. Whenever death comes to a person, it is merciless, strong, and cruel. It does not care about your wife, children, or family. Therefore, everyone is afraid of death and no one would go into it voluntarily. Who would willingly offer himself to be visited by death? But in these two chapters we see that the Lord Jesus went into death willingly. He chose to go to the garden and to deliver Himself into the hands of the people. Knowing that His captors would come to the garden to seize Him, He went there deliberately for the purpose of being arrested. In doing this He showed that He is life. The only way in which life can be manifested is by entering into death. In and by death, the real

life is manifested. In [12:24](#) the Lord referred to Himself as a grain of wheat. How do we know that there is life in a grain of wheat? We know it by putting the grain of wheat into death. By burying the grain of wheat in the earth, that is, in death, we see that life comes out. Thus, the life in the grain of wheat is manifested through death. If you bury a grain of sand in the earth, nothing will come out because there is no life in it. Hence, death is the means by which life is manifested.

As we have pointed out, everything the Lord Jesus experienced in these two chapters was an aspect of death. But the Lord, being life, was not afraid to die. He was never frightened nor troubled by death. Rather, He victoriously met every threat and attack of death. Even when the disciples were attempting to rescue Him, He told them not to resist, saying, “Put the sword into the sheath; the cup which the Father has given Me, shall I not drink it?” ([18:11](#)). When the Lord Jesus asked those who came to arrest Him whom they were seeking and they answered, “Jesus the Nazarene,” He said, “I am” ([18:5-6](#)). When He said, “I am,” His captors, terrified by this word, “drew back and fell to the ground” ([18:6](#)). This proves that if the Lord had been unwilling to deliver Himself up to them, they could never

have arrested Him. Moreover, as the soldiers were arresting the Lord, He easily and calmly took care of the disciples, saying, “If therefore you are seeking Me, let these go away” (18:8). All this reveals that the Lord was the life manifested in death and that death could do nothing to Him.

RESURRECTION IN THE SPIRIT

Chapters one through seventeen show that the Lord is God in man, chapters eighteen and nineteen reveal that the Lord is life in death, and now chapters twenty and twenty-one unfold the Lord in resurrection as the Spirit. The Lord is God, the Lord is life, and the Lord is resurrection. He is God manifested in man, He is life manifested in death, and He is resurrection manifested as the Spirit. Through man, God is manifested; through death, life is manifested; through the Holy Spirit, resurrection is manifested. In the three parts of the Gospel of John, we have the Lord as man in the first part, the Lord as life in the second part, and the Lord as resurrection in the last part. Thus, He is God, life, and resurrection. In the first seventeen chapters the Lord was in man as God; in the next two chapters the Lord was in death as life; and in the last two chapters

the Lord is the Spirit as resurrection. This is the Lord in three stages.

The Spirit is the reality of the Lord's resurrection. After the Lord's resurrection, what is He? He is the Spirit, and as the Spirit He is the resurrection. In [11:25](#), the Lord clearly said to Mary, "I am the resurrection and the life." He is not only life—He is also resurrection. Do you prefer the Lord as God, the Lord as life, or the Lord as resurrection? I prefer the Lord as resurrection because it is in resurrection that God can be one with us and experienced by us. It is only in the Lord's resurrection that we can have a subjective relationship with the Lord. It is by the resurrection that we can be in God. If God were only God, He could not be life and could not have anything to do with man. It is much better for God to be life than merely to be God. But even if God is only life, it is still rather difficult for us to have a real relationship of fellowship with Him. However, in resurrection, God can be one with us and we can experience Him in a very subjective way. Have you ever realized how far away God was from you? And do you realize how near He is to you today? When He was only God, He was very far from us. But now that He is in

resurrection, He is very near to us, for He has come into us.

After His resurrection, the Lord came into His disciples and breathed on them saying, “Receive the Holy Spirit” (20:22). What is the Holy Spirit? The Spirit is just God reaching man. God the Father is the source, God the Son is the expression, and God the Spirit is God’s entering into man. The Spirit as God entering into us is for our enjoyment. If God were only the Father and not the Son and the Spirit, we could never experience Him. But God is in the Son as life, and God is the Spirit as resurrection. By resurrection God releases Himself and imparts Himself into us. Therefore, the Lord told the disciples to receive the Holy Spirit. To receive the Holy Spirit is to receive God Himself. It is only in resurrection and by resurrection that God can be within us and be one with us.

Do you realize that God is not only life, but that He is also resurrection? Is this a fact and a reality to you, or is it merely a teaching and a doctrine? By the death and resurrection of Christ, God as resurrection is living within us. This must not be a mere doctrine to us. The One who is stronger and more powerful than all things is living in us. This One is the very God who became

life, and this life is now the resurrection within us. The indwelling Holy Spirit is the reality of this resurrection. Therefore, He and we, we and He, have become one. Resurrection means the wonderful mingling of God and man in the Spirit. In resurrection, God and man are mingled together. Man becomes the abode of God, and God becomes the abode of man. Hence, man and God, God and man, can mutually abide in one another.

THE MUTUAL ABIDING IN JOHN'S EPISTLE

The fact of abiding is mentioned in the New Testament Epistles. After the Gospel of John, there are the Epistles of John. In his first Epistle, John covers this matter of the mutual abiding. We abide in God and God abides in us ([1 John 4:15](#)). How do we know that God abides in us and that we abide in Him? We know that God abides in us by the Spirit ([1 John 3:24](#)), and we know that we abide in Him by the anointing ([1 John 2:27](#)). The most important matter today is for God to abide in us and for us to abide in Him. God abides in us by the Holy Spirit, and we abide in Him by the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

THE BUILDING IN REVELATION

What is the issue of this mutual abiding? According to the last book of John, the book of Revelation, the issue is the churches, the temple, and the city. The book of Revelation mentions the churches (1:11, 20), the temple (3:12; 7:15), and the city (21:2, 10), which are different aspects of God's building. The building issues from the mutual abiding. When we abide in God and God abides in us, we are built up in the divine life. In His resurrection, the Lord on the one hand is in heaven and, on the other hand. He is in us. These two aspects are seen in the writings of John. For instance, in [John 21:22](#) the Lord, referring to the Apostle John, said to Peter, "If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you?" If I had been there, I would have said, "Lord, are You not here? Since You are already here why do You say that You will come?" In order to answer this question, we must see the two aspects of the Lord. On the one hand, the Lord is in heaven; on the other hand, He is with us and within us. The book of Revelation discloses both aspects, revealing that the Lord is among the seven churches (1:13) and that He is also on the throne in heaven (4:2). If we would realize the presence of the Lord,

we must see that He is not only in heaven but also in the midst of the seven churches.

In [Revelation 3:12](#) we are told that if we realize the Lord's presence, we shall be overcomers and pillars in the temple of God. A pillar is something that the temple relies upon. The temple simply denotes the presence of God. Hence, the presence of God depends on our experience as a pillar. In other words, we must be a pillar for the presence of God. Where the pillar is, there the temple of God is. This means that where you are, there the presence of the Lord is. If you are a pillar of the temple, then you are one on whom the presence of God depends.

Three names are written on the pillar mentioned in [Revelation 3:12](#): the name of God, the name of the New Jerusalem, and the new name of the Lord. This means that this pillar is the victorious one who becomes the very expression and manifestation of God. Because he is the manifestation of God, the name of God is written on him; because he has become a vital part of the New Jerusalem, the name of the New Jerusalem is written on him; and because he becomes the new manifestation of the Lord, the Lord's new name is written on him. The name of God is written on the pillar because the pillar has become

the manifestation of God. Why is the name of the New Jerusalem also written on it? Because it has become a part of the New Jerusalem. Likewise, the new name of the Lord is written on this pillar because it has become the new manifestation of the Lord Himself.

In the last writing of John, the book of Revelation, there are the churches, the temple, and the city. The temple depends upon the pillar, which means that the presence of God depends upon the victorious ones. Where they are, there the presence of God is and there the New Jerusalem, or the building of God, is. The New Jerusalem is the ultimate expression of the mingling of God with man.

THE PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE

Now we must see how to practice this experience. This way is seen in the last two chapters of the Gospel of John. If we would experience God in resurrection, if we would experience God as the Spirit, if we would experience God in the way that God and we are mingled together, if we would experience being a pillar for the Lord's presence, if we would experience the writing of God's new name, the name of the New Jerusalem, and the name of the Lord upon us, then we,

like Mary the Magdalene, must seek the Lord. Mary sought Him early in the morning. Along with seeking Him, we must believe that the Lord has been resurrected and that He is now with us, realizing His presence by believing, not by seeing. Do not be like Brother Thomas, who said, “Unless I see in His hands the mark of the nails, and put my finger into the mark of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will by no means believe” (20:25). We must believe in the Lord without seeing, feeling, or touching Him. Furthermore, we must attend the church meetings. Do not neglect the meetings. In the morning, we should seek the Lord personally in the morning watch, but, in the evening, we must attend the church meetings.

As we seek the Lord, we should not be troubled by the practical matters of our living. In addition to seeking the Lord, believing in Him, and attending the church meetings, we must also trust the Lord for our living. Remember the Lord’s promise: “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matt. 6:33). If we seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness, God will certainly take care of our living. Do not go out on your own to fish. If you try to earn a

living on your own, you will experience failure and eventually receive nothing. Remember that [John 21](#) reveals that the Lord can prepare fish even on the land where there are no fish. The Lord will give us the fish which have already been cooked.

Finally, we must learn the lesson of Peter's life and have the experience of being broken. Do not think that you are strong. You may be strong in your natural life, but this strength must be broken. The Lord wants your heart, not your strength. Our self must be dealt with until we love the Lord with our whole heart. We must love the Lord by giving up our strength. Peter had two great failures: denying the Lord three times in His presence and giving up the Lord's commission and going fishing. Peter denied the Lord, and then took the lead to go into the world to make a living. But the Lord met him and asked, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?" ([21:15](#)). In [chapter twenty-one](#) we see that Peter had learned the lesson and had become a broken man. Then the Lord seemed to tell him, "Peter, you must follow Me, work for Me, feed and shepherd My sheep, and build up the church."

May we all remember the five things which we need to experience: seeking the Lord, believing

in the Lord, coming to the meetings, trusting in the Lord for our living, and being broken in our natural man. However strong, clever, and wise our natural man may be, it must be broken. We must forsake our natural strength, cleverness, and wisdom. The Lord wants our heart but He does not want our strength. When we think we are strong, we shall fail. Why must we learn the lesson of forsaking our natural strength, our natural cleverness, and our natural wisdom? Because the Lord Himself must be our life, our strength, our wisdom, and our everything. The Lord needs our heart to love Him so that we may cooperate with Him and give Him the opportunity to be our life. Although the Lord does not need our strength, wisdom, and cleverness, He does need our cooperation. If we love Him, we shall cooperate with Him and give Him the opportunity to live in us. Then we shall be the same as He was when He lived on earth. As He lived by the life of God, so we shall live by the life of Christ. Then we shall experience resurrection. We shall experience that the Lord is not only God in man but also life in death and resurrection in the Spirit. If we seek Him, believe in Him, meet with the saints, forget about the matter of our living, and learn the lesson of denying the

natural man, then we shall experience Christ as the resurrection in the Spirit. If we do all this, the Lord will be our reality. This is what it means to be a pillar for God's manifestation, a part of the New Jerusalem, and the new expression of Christ.

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Life-study of John

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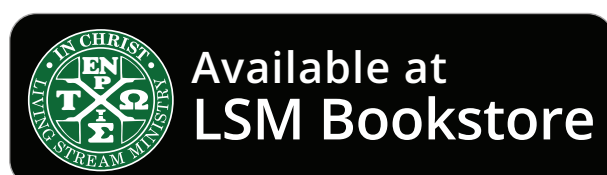
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