

*Nuggets and Gems from the Bible*

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OF LAW  
VERSUS  
THE GREAT  
I AM

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*Living Stream Ministry*

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# THE RELIGION OF LAW VERSUS THE GREAT I AM

The case of the adulterous woman in John chapter eight reveals that the religion of the law (8:5, 17), as represented by the temple (8:2, 20), cannot set people free from sin and its death, but that the Lord Jesus as the I Am, becoming the Son of Man lifted upon the cross for the serpent-poisoned people, can do what religion and law cannot do. The religion of law-keeping is versus the great I Am. This chapter reveals that among human beings on earth there are two things—a religion and a living Person. This religion is excellent, high, and superior. It is not a heathen religion or a religion of superstition. It is the typical religion, which helps people to worship God, to know God in the outward way of letters, and to assist people to keep the law of God in order to please God and to perfect themselves. This religion is the best, and all the typical Jews are proud of it. If you consider the orthodox religion of the Jews, you will realize that it is the highest religion. It is not false; it is absolutely real and genuine. Everything related

to this religion is the best. This religion has many holy things. Among these many holy things is the Holy Word of God. No one can deny this.

The Jewish religion is the only real religion. Islam is a counterfeit of Judaism, and the Koran, the Moslem Bible, is the counterfeit of the Old Testament and part of the New Testament. Mohammed did not compose anything new. He simply copied the Old Testament and parts of the New Testament. Thus, Islam is a counterfeit religion. Besides Judaism and Islam, there are no other religions. Buddhism is not a typical religion; it is nonsense. Religion helps people to worship God by teaching them in the proper way. However, in Buddhism there is no God. In Buddhism everyone can become a Buddha. According to Buddhism, if you practice until you attain a certain degree of perfection, you can become a Buddha. This is absolute nonsense; it contains no proper teaching whatsoever. Hence, it should not be considered a proper religion. What about the teachings of Confucius? They are not a religion; they are ethical teachings. The teachings of Confucius tell people how to behave, but they do not tell them how to worship God. Never consider the teaching of Confucius as a religion. Therefore, there is on earth only one typical,

genuine, and true religion, the religion formed by the Jews according to the Holy Word. Christianity, including Catholicism, is an outgrowth of Judaism. Thus, there is only one typical religion on earth.

There is only one Bible. We have already pointed out that the Koran is a satanic counterfeit of the Holy Word. No one can invent something like the Bible. Who could write another Bible? Could Plato or Confucius? No one can write another Bible because there is only one God, and only God can write such a wonderful book. Since God would never write another Bible, there will never be another one. No one can write it. Whoever is able to write such a book as the Bible is qualified to be God. Who can imitate such a book? Who can imitate the depths of its wisdom? If you can do it, you must be God. Do you believe that the Gospel of John was merely written by a fisherman of Galilee? Do you believe that John himself could write such a book? “In the beginning was the Word... and the Word was God,” “I am the light of the world,” “I am the bread of life,” “I can give you living water”—only Jesus can say such things. Only Jesus can write such a book as the Gospel of John.

However, God's elect, His chosen people, had the wrong concept. They did not pay full attention to the focus: that God Himself in the Son and as the Spirit wants to come into man to be his life and his everything. God's people missed this mark, collecting all the regulations, laws, and other good points, and putting them together to make a religion with which to kill themselves. How pitiful! Thus, by the time of John 8, there were two things on earth: a religion and a living Person. We all must see this contrast.

The Jewish religion was genuine and wonderful. It was good in every respect except one—it was versus the great I Am. Religion may be good, but it cannot give you life. It cannot help you because you are dead. A dead person does not need something good; he needs something of life. Only life can help a dead man. Suppose you say to a dead person, "Poor man, here are gold and diamonds. You shouldn't be dead. Look at the gold—how valuable! Look at the diamonds—how precious!" It would be foolish to speak to a dead man in such a way. He could hear nothing. In John chapter five we see the porches near the pool on which were the blind, the lame, and the withered. If you were to preach to such people they would say, "Don't waste your

time. I don't need something good. I need life." We all need to see who and what this living Person is.

## THE GREAT I AM

Who is the Lord Jesus? He is the very Jehovah, the I Am ([8:24, 28, 58](#)). According to [Genesis 1](#), God's name in relation to His creation is Elohim, God. After creation, however, in [Genesis 2](#), when God was attempting to form a relationship with man, God's other name was mentioned—Jehovah, I Am that I Am. Jehovah is God's name in His relationship with mankind. At the time of [John 8](#), Jehovah stood there in the form of a little man by the name of Jesus, which means Jehovah the Savior. Again I say that you must learn the lesson not to care for the outward appearance. If you merely care for the outward appearance, you will certainly miss the mark. The Jewish religionists of the day missed the mark because they despised that little Jesus. Jesus had no form, comeliness, beauty, or attraction. Nevertheless, He was the great I Am. The Lord as the great I Am is the everlasting One who exists from eternity unto eternity. He is without beginning or end of time. As the great I Am, He is the self-existing One, ever existing for eternity. He

is not only Jesus, a man from Nazareth; He is the great I Am.

To say that the Lord is the I Am means that He is whatever we need. It is like having a blank check on which you may fill the amount that you need. If you need light, you simply fill in light, and the Lord will be your light. If you need comfort, the Lord will be your comfort. This kind of check will never bounce, for there is never a shortage of deposits in the heavenly account. Be bold to write in a big amount. What you write in is up to you. The Lord is everything you need. Now it's up to you to fill in what you actually need. He is the great I Am.

## **BEFORE ABRAHAM AND GREATER THAN ABRAHAM**

As the great I Am, the eternal, ever-existing God, the Lord is before Abraham and greater than Abraham (8:53). The Jews did not understand this and argued with the Lord. “The Jews then said to Him, You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham? Jesus said to them, Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham came into being, I am” (8:57-58). The grammar here is awkward, for the Lord said, “Before Abraham came into being, I am.” According to grammar,

He should have said, “I was.” But He is the present One, the I Am. Whether it is past, present, or future, He is always the present One.

## THE SON AS REALITY

In 8:32 we are told that “the reality shall set you free.” In 8:36 we are told that “the Son shall set you free.” This proves that the Son, the Lord Himself, is the reality. The reality is not the so-called truth of doctrine; it is the reality of the truth which is the Lord Himself (14:6; 1:14, 17). Since the Lord is the embodiment of God (Col. 2:9), He is the reality of what God is. Hence, reality is the very divine element of God realized by us. When the Lord as the great I Am comes into us as life, He shines within us as light, which brings the divine element as reality into us. This reality, which is the divine element imparted into us and realized by us, sets us free from the bondage of sin by the divine life as the light of man. The Son of God as the very fullness of the Godhead is the reality. While He shines in us as life, He works His reality, His divine element, into our being. This is not merely shining; it is a shining that brings the reality of what God is into our being.

## THE SON OF MAN

Another aspect of the Lord is that He is the Son of Man. On the one hand, He is the great I Am; on the other hand, He is the Son of Man (8:28). This great I Am, God Himself in relation to man, became the Son of Man. This is very meaningful. For Jehovah to become the Son of Man means that He had to humble Himself, to lower Himself. This was more than necessary due to all the negative problems that are in man. Sin is in man. The serpent, the Devil, is also in man. Man is the focus of every problem. If God was going to solve all the basic problems of man, He had to become a man Himself. Satan knows the importance of this. Satan was not afraid of the Lord Jesus being the Son of God. He was afraid of the Lord Jesus being a man. Therefore, Jehovah God became a man.

As a man, He was willing to be lifted up (3:14) as was the brass serpent in the wilderness (Num. 21:4-9). When we say that the Lord Jesus was crucified on the cross, we mean primarily that He died there for our redemption and removed our sin. But what does the Bible mean when it says that Christ was lifted up? It mainly refers to His dealing with the serpent, the Devil. When most

people read the words “lifted up,” they lack the understanding of them. The Son of Man was lifted up as was the brass serpent not only to deal with sin, but also to deal with the serpent. John 12:31-32 indicates that when the Son of Man was lifted up, the ruler of this world, the Devil, was judged and cast out. Christ was not only crucified—He was lifted up. In His being lifted up, the serpent was exposed, judged, and cast out. The serpent, the Devil, was judged and cast out by Jesus’ being lifted up. Who was there on the pole? The serpent. In the flesh of Jesus, God put the serpent on the pole and made a universal display that all the universe might see that His enemy, the serpent, was on the pole. Thus, Jesus was lifted up for the judging and casting out of the Devil. He was lifted up for the serpent-poisoned sinners in the form of a serpent in order to cast out the old serpent (John 3:14; 12:31-34; Rev. 12:9; 20:2). He was lifted up in order to deal with the serpentine nature and with the serpent himself.

How could the Lord be the One who was sinless? Because He is Jehovah, the great I Am. How could the Lord condemn sin? Also because He is the great I Am. But how can He as Jehovah forgive sin? You must remember that Jehovah could never forgive sin. If Jehovah forgave sin, He

simply would have made Himself unrighteous. There is only one way for Him to forgive sin, and that is by being the Son of Man and being crucified on the cross. In other words, He could only forgive sin by redemption. Without redemption God Himself would have been unable to forgive sin. Without redemption there would have been no ground for the forgiveness of sin. Because He was lifted up on the cross as the Son of Man, bore our sins, and redeemed us from all of our sins, He had the position to forgive sins.

## THE WORD AND THE SPIRIT AS LIFE

The whole Gospel of John also reveals that the Lord is the Word and the Spirit. There is such a thought throughout the whole Gospel. Once you see the wonderful person of the Lord in this Gospel, you will ask, “Where is He and how can I contact Him?” Praise the Lord that He is in the Word and in the Spirit, for He is the Word and He is the Spirit. You now have both the Word and the Spirit. If you contact the Spirit and receive the Word, you then have the Lord Himself. You have everything by abiding and continuing in the Word of the Lord ([8:31](#)). If you keep yourself in contact with the Word of the Lord, it means that you are abiding in the Lord Himself.

By contacting the Word, you are contacting the source of the eternal and everlasting life.

Consequently, because you are always in contact with the Lord Himself, you will never taste death (8:51). This has been proved by history. When some of the saints were about to die, they did not taste death even though they were dying. For example, when D. L. Moody was dying, he died bravely. He died without tasting death, because he was abiding in the Lord and contacting the source of life. Likewise, if we will abide and continue in the Word of the Lord, we will also contact the source of life all of the time. Then we will never taste death. We will pass through death without tasting it.

The Gospel of John is a book of life. Many times in this Gospel people asked the Lord questions with the intention of receiving a yes or no answer. However, the Lord never answered yes or no. For example, in chapter four the Samaritan woman said, “Our fathers worshipped in this mountain, and you say that in Jerusalem is the place where men must worship” (4:20). In other words, she was asking Him which place was the right place in which to worship. The Lord Jesus did not say which place was right. He said that God is Spirit and that we must worship Him in

spirit (4:24). It is not a matter of here or there; it is a matter in the spirit in which we can contact God, the tree of life. The Lord Jesus did not answer her with a yes or no, but turned her to the human spirit to contact God, the tree of life. The principle is the same in [chapter eight](#) when the Pharisees brought a sinful woman and asked the Lord whether or not she should be stoned. Again, the Lord did not give a yes or no answer. He said, “He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her” (8:7). The Lord’s answer turned them to the Lord, the tree of life. In [chapter nine](#) the disciples asked the Lord a question about the man who was blind from birth, inquiring whose sin, his or his parents, had caused him to be born blind. The Lord answered them by saying, “Neither has this man sinned nor his parents, but that the works of God might be manifested in him” (9:3). Once again, the Lord answered by pointing them to God, the tree of life. The Gospel of John is a book of life and it never gives answers that are according to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, but always turns people to the tree of life. There are no answers of right or wrong, good or bad, yes or no. There is only one thing—life. You do not need to be right, just like you do not need to be wrong.

You need only to care for life. This life is just the Lord Jesus Himself; and, as John 8 reveals, only this life can set us free from sin and its death.

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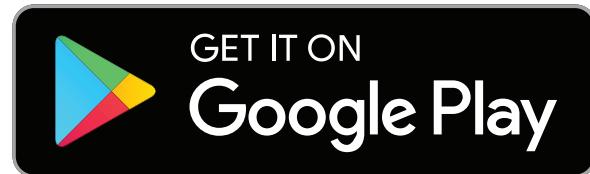
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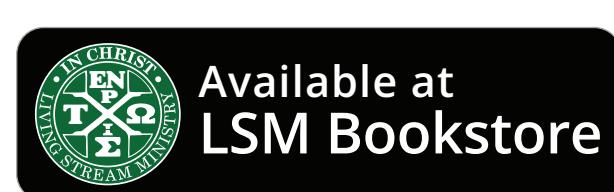


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