

Nuggets and Gems from the Bible

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MULTIPLICATION —
THROUGH
DEATH AND
RESURRECTION

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In this booklet we come to the second part of John chapter twelve. In the first part of this chapter we see, in a shadow, that the church has come into existence through the Lord as resurrection life (John 11:25). We have the church by His resurrection life. But how can the Lord increase the church? This is shown in the second part of this chapter (vv. 12-36a). The first part shows how the church is there, but the second part shows how the Lord can increase the church through His death and resurrection.

THE GOLDEN TIME FOR JESUS

At this point, according to the worldly view, Jesus was in His golden time. The raising up of Lazarus from the dead was such a miracle that it shook all the people. It was a real miracle for a dead person, buried for four days and even stinking, to be raised up. Because the Lord had raised Lazarus from the dead, a great crowd of the Jews

highly esteemed Him and warmly welcomed Him ([vv. 12-19](#)). They welcomed Him by shouting, “Hosanna, blessed is He Who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!” Humanly speaking, this very hour was the most glorious time for the Lord while He was on earth. All the people praised Him, welcomed Him, honored Him, and respected Him. Even the Greeks came to seek Him ([vv. 20-22](#)). Could the Lord have produced and increased the church by accepting this kind of welcome and honor? No, this is not the way to produce or increase the church. This is not the way to bring the church into existence and increase it in life.

A GRAIN OF WHEAT

At that very moment, when the Lord was welcomed and honored by both Jews and Greeks, what did He say? If we had been there, or if such a welcome were extended to us, we would have said, “Praise the Lord. Now is the time for us to do something to glorify God.” The Lord Jesus, however, was not excited. He told the seekers that He was a grain of wheat. He said, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it abides alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit” ([v. 24](#)). This was the

Lord's attitude toward such a human welcome. This was His reaction toward the glory of human honor. What is the way for a grain of wheat to multiply? It is not by being welcomed or honored, but by falling into the ground to die. This is absolutely contrary to the human concept. Nevertheless, we must remember that this is the only way to bring the church into being and to increase it in life. Whenever a human welcome comes to you, you must say, "I must die." Whenever human honor comes to you, you must reply, "I must be buried." Do not say, "Hallelujah, praise the Lord!" This is not the best time for you to do something, even if your intention is to glorify God. The proper way to glorify God is for you to die and be buried.

The Lord Jesus did not seize the golden opportunity as the means to have His increase. If He had, He would have made a great mistake. The golden opportunity is never for the increase. If you read church history, you will see that whenever the church had an increase it was not the result of a golden opportunity but of persecution. The more persecution and opposition there are, the more increase the church will have. The persecution at the hands of the Roman Empire did not frustrate the growth of the church during the

first two centuries, but rather helped it to grow. What then did damage the church? The welcome of the Roman Empire. When the Roman Empire turned its persecution into welcome, the church life was ruined. Do not be excited by man's welcome. Man's welcome will always ruin and corrupt us. Praise the Lord that man's persecution and opposition are the golden opportunity for the increase of Christ. He is a grain of wheat, and there is no other way for that grain of wheat to increase except for it to fall into the ground and die. This is the way to have the multiplication of life.

Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it will simply remain one grain and will never produce anything. But, praise the Lord, after it dies and grows up, the one grain becomes the many grains or the much fruit. These many grains or much fruit are the church. This is the way for the church to come into being. This is also the way for the Lord to increase the church. This has to be the way for us to bring the church into existence and to increase it. We must face human welcome by death, by taking the cross. The way for the church to come into being and to increase is not by human glory; it is by the death of the cross.

Although many good missionaries were sent to China by the leading missions, such as the one formed by Brother Hudson Taylor, history proves that there was not much result for the proper church life. Among the many missionaries who went to China was a sister named Margaret E. Barber who was sent there by a British mission. She was accused falsely, called back to England, and later vindicated by the Lord. Then the Lord burdened her to return to China. She was not sent by any mission but went there by faith, settling in a little town named Pagoda, very close to Brother Watchman Nee's hometown. She stayed there purposely, not visiting other places. In a sense, the Lord sowed her there as a grain of wheat.

Along with other young people, Brother Nee went to her to receive help. She was deep in the Lord and was very strict. She often rebuked the young ones. Brother Nee told me that most of them could not stand her rebukes. Eventually he was nearly the only one who kept going to her. In 1929 she went to the Lord. Sister Barber was a seed that was sown, and Brother Nee was a grain that grew out of that seed. Brother Nee, as a seed that grew out of her, became a great vessel for the recovery of the proper church life.

This is the way to produce and increase the church in life. It is absolutely not a matter of a golden opportunity.

Brother Nee used to tell us that the work is not a matter of the endeavor of outward activity, but of the outflow of the inner life. The work that the Lord needs is the overflow of the inner life. Today we see the issue of Brother Nee's ministry: many churches produced in the Lord's recovery throughout the world.

Do not be troubled by the temporary success of others' outward activities. Let the Lord have some time and He will vindicate His way in life. Although Brother Nee has gone to be with the Lord, his ministry is still prevailing and his work continues to go on. Such a work is not a matter of activity, but of life. This is the work of life to produce and increase the church.

We may use the illustration of making artificial flowers. If you were to hire people to make artificial flowers, a great number could be produced within a short time. However, if you are going to grow flowers, it will take a longer time. You must first sow the seed. The seed will grow and multiply. Then more seed will fall into the ground and grow and multiply again and again. This kind of multiplication will last for a long time.

What kind of increase do you expect to have—artificial flowers produced by outward labor or genuine flowers produced by life?

PRODUCING MANY GRAINS AND DRAWING ALL MEN

The Lord Jesus fell into the ground and died that His divine element, His divine life, might be released from within the shell of His humanity to produce many believers in resurrection ([1 Pet. 1:3](#)), just as a grain of wheat has its life element released by falling into the ground and growing up out of the ground to bear much fruit, that is, to bring forth many grains. The Lord, as a grain of wheat falling into the ground, lost His soulish life through death that He might release His eternal life in resurrection to the “many grains.”

In one aspect, the Lord’s death was a falling into the ground as revealed in [John chapter 12 verse 24](#); in another aspect, it was a lifting up on the tree ([v. 32](#); [1 Pet. 2:24](#)). To “fall into the ground” as a grain of wheat was to produce the many grains; to be “lifted up” on the tree as the Son of Man was to draw all men to Himself. The many grains produced by His falling into the ground are the “all men” drawn by His being lifted up on the tree.

RELEASING THE DIVINE LIFE

It was also by His death that the Lord was glorified and glorified God the Father. In John 12:23 the Lord said, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified,” and in verse 28 He prayed, “Father, glorify Your name.” How was the Lord glorified? He was glorified through death and resurrection because it was through death and resurrection that His divine element was released and manifested. How was God the Father glorified? It was by the Son’s being glorified. When the Son’s divine element was released and manifested through His death and resurrection, the Father’s divine life was released and manifested. Thus, the Father was glorified in the Son’s glorification through His death and resurrection. The death and resurrection of the Lord glorified God the Father because His death and resurrection released God’s divine element from within Him. God’s divine element was confined in His flesh, just as the life element of a grain of wheat is confined within its shell. How is the life element of a grain glorified? The grain has to die so that the life element within it can be manifested and glorified. It is the same with God’s divine element.

To glorify the name of the Father was to cause

the Father's divine element to be manifested. The Father's divine element, which is the eternal life, was in the incarnated Son. The shell of the Son's incarnation, that is, His flesh, had to be broken through death that the Father's divine element, the eternal life, might be released and manifested in resurrection, just as the life element of a grain of wheat is released by its shell being broken and manifested by its blossom. This was the glorification of God the Father in the Son's glorification.

Suppose we have a flower seed. Although much beauty is in the life of that seed, how can that beauty be manifested? The seed has to die. If the seed falls into the earth, dies, and grows up, the full beauty within it will be manifested. That is the glory, the life in the seed glorified. Likewise, at one time God was confined within the flesh of the Lord. The Lord had to die that God within Him might be released, manifested, and glorified in resurrection.

Glorified simply means manifested. Many times I have used the electricity in a lamp as an illustration. When is the electricity glorified in the lamp? When the electricity is manifested, it is glorified. Likewise, the God who was confined in the flesh of Jesus was manifested when

He was resurrected. So, when God was manifested from within Jesus, God was glorified.

JUDGING THE WORLD AND CASTING OUT SATAN

In [verse 31](#) the Lord declared, “Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the ruler of this world be cast out.” By His death on the cross the Lord judged the world and cast out its ruler, Satan. The world is an evil system, arranged systematically by Satan. Satan has systematized all the things on earth, especially those related to mankind, and the things in the air into his kingdom of darkness to occupy and frustrate people from the purpose of God and to distract them from the enjoyment of God. This evil system, the kingdom of darkness, was judged when its ruler, Satan, was cast out by the Lord’s crucifixion in the flesh. On the cross, the Lord as the Son of Man ([v. 23](#)) was lifted up in the form of the serpent ([3:14](#)), that is, “in the likeness of the flesh of sin” ([Rom. 8:3](#)). Satan, the ruler of this world, as “the old serpent” ([Rev. 12:9; 20:2](#)), has injected himself into man’s flesh. Through His death on the cross “in the likeness of the flesh of sin,” the Lord has destroyed Satan who is in man’s flesh ([Heb. 2:14](#)). By judging Satan

(16:11) in this way, the world which was hanging on Satan was also judged. When the Lord Jesus as the Son of Man was lifted up in the form of a serpent, He not only removed our sins and dealt with our serpentine nature, but also destroyed Satan and the satanic world system that hung upon him. Now, by His death, we are redeemed, delivered, have the divine life, and are overcoming the world.

The Gospel of John is a book of pictures or signs, showing many things related to the Lord as life. If we do not know this Gospel, we may know the Lord as life, but we simply will not know the Lord as life in all its detailed aspects. For example, even the palm branches in this chapter symbolize life overcoming death, portraying a life that is victorious over death (12:13). Most palm trees grow in the desert, which signifies death. So life (palm trees) grows out of death (desert). This pictures the victory of life over death, which is the spiritual significance of the palm tree.

In his Gospel, John uses different figures to portray various aspects of the Lord's death. Verse 1:29 says, "Behold, the Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world!" In 3:14 the Lord Jesus said that He had to be lifted up on the cross as the brass serpent was lifted up on a

pole by Moses. Now, in [chapter twelve](#), the Lord says that He is a grain of wheat. Here we see three figures: the Lamb of God, the serpent, and the grain of wheat. The Lord's death has three aspects. In the first aspect, He was the Lamb of God taking away our sins by shedding His blood. In the second aspect, He was the brass serpent that destroyed the old serpent as well as the serpentine nature within us. In the third aspect, He was a grain of wheat that fell into the ground and died to produce many grains. The one death of the Lord Jesus had these three aspects: the redeeming aspect, the Satan-destroying aspect, and the life-releasing aspect. When He was nailed to the cross, He was the Lamb of God bearing our sins and shedding His blood for our redemption. This is the first aspect, and every genuine Christian is familiar with it. However, not many Christians are familiar with the second aspect of the Lord's death, which is that on the cross the Lord Jesus was crucified in the form of a serpent in order to destroy the old serpent and the serpentine nature within our being. This is the Satan-destroying aspect. The third aspect of the Lord's death is the life-releasing aspect. The divine life was in that little man Jesus just as life is confined in a grain of wheat. Since

the life is concealed in the grain, the shell must be broken that the inward life might be released. These many grains are good for making one loaf, which is the Body of Christ (1 Cor. 10:17), the church. Formerly, we were sinners with the serpentine nature, having nothing to do with the divine life. But by the Lord's all-inclusive death our sins have been removed, our serpentine nature has been dealt with, and the divine life has been imparted into our being. Now we have become living grains who, composed together, become one loaf, the church. Praise Him!

Based upon this principle, if we want the church to be brought into existence, we have to die. If we want to glorify God, to have God manifested through us and glorified among us, we have to die. If we want to deal with Satan and his world, we have to die. It is by the cross that the church comes into existence, it is by the cross that God is glorified, and it is by the cross that Satan and his world are dealt with. The Lord clearly said that when He died, He would produce much fruit, that when He died the Father would be glorified, and that when He was lifted up, He would judge the world and cast out Satan, the ruler of this world. This is so brief and simple, yet it is so profound and meaningful. These

three items include everything—the church produced, the Father glorified, and Satan expelled. There is nothing else left. If we want to bring the church into existence, to glorify God, and to deal with Satan, there is no other way than the death of the cross. We always talk about the way of the church: the way of the church is the way of the cross. We always talk about how to glorify God: the way to glorify God is the way of the cross. And the way to deal with Satan, the enemy of God, is also the way of the cross. There is only one way—the cross. We must experience the cross. No matter how much people welcome us or how they welcome us, we must realize that the more they welcome us, the more we must die.

How do we die? In [John 12:25](#) the Lord tells us to lose our soul. “He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world shall keep it unto eternal life.” The first two occurrences of the word life in this verse in the Greek language mean soul or soulish life. The same word is found in [10:11](#), [15](#), [17](#). This is also proved by the Gospels of Matthew and Mark ([Matt. 16:24-26](#); [Mark 8:34-35](#)). What does it mean to die and experience the cross? It simply means to deny and reject your soul, your natural life. You must lose your soul, your natural life, your

self. Then the church will come into being, then God will be glorified, and then Satan will be dealt with and cast out, for he will be expelled by the church.

The Lord as a grain of wheat falling into the ground lost His soulish life through death that He might release His eternal life to the “many grains” in resurrection. We as the many grains must lose our soulish life through death that we may enjoy the eternal life in resurrection. This is to follow Him that we might serve Him, as mentioned in [John 12:26](#). Furthermore, the many grains need to be crushed and ground into flour, into powder, that they may be blended together and become the bread.

RELIGION’S UNBELIEF AND BLINDNESS

Verses 36b through 43 speak of the unbelief of religion and God’s judgment upon that unbelief. Regardless of how much the Lord as life worked in wonders, miracles, and signs, the religious people would not go along with Him. They simply did not receive Him, but, on the contrary, they rejected Him. Isaiah had prophesied this already. He said, “Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?” ([Isa. 53:1](#)). The arm of the Lord is the

Lord Jesus Himself. The Lord is the arm of God to do things and to deliver, but no one in the religious world could recognize this arm. No one would respond to, receive, or accept this arm. They simply rejected it. Although this arm is salvation, even the Savior and the Deliverer Himself, the religious people rejected Him.

As a result, blindness and hardness of heart have come upon them ([John 12:40](#); [Isa. 6:10](#)). This is God's judgment exercised over their unbelieving rejection of the Lord. Blindness and the hardening of the heart are a punishment to the unbelieving ones.

[Verse 41](#) says that Isaiah saw His glory and spoke concerning Him. The words "His glory" confirm that the Lord Jesus is the very God, Jehovah of hosts, whose glory Isaiah saw ([Isa. 6:1, 3](#)). This glory was seen and appreciated by Isaiah, but it was not loved by the Lord's weaker believers ([John 12:42-43](#)). They loved the glory of man more than the glory of God, which was the living Jesus before them.

LIFE'S DECLARATION TO THE UNBELIEVING RELIGION

In [verses 44 through 50](#) we see life's declaration to the unbelieving religion. Here the Lord

makes a final declaration to the religious people. After this declaration, for the remainder of the Gospel of John, the Lord has nothing to do with the religious people.

Firstly, He declared that He is the manifestation of the living God ([vv. 44-45](#)). He is the Son of God, which means that He is the manifestation of God. Whoever sees Him sees God, and whoever receives Him receives God because He is the manifestation of God to man.

Secondly, He declared that He came to this world as the shining light that man might not remain in darkness ([vv. 46, 36](#)). If people will receive this light, they will have God. He is the manifestation of God as light, and if you receive Him as light, you will have God. If a man believes in Him, he will not remain in darkness. However, if you refuse to receive Him as light, you simply reject God and will be overtaken with darkness. He comes as light. If you receive Him you will have God and will become one of the sons of light.

Thirdly, He declared that He came to man with living words and that whoever receives His words will have eternal life now and forever and that whoever rejects His words will be judged by them in the last day ([vv. 47-50](#)).

What is the meaning of this declaration? It is simply that the Lord told the Jewish people that He is the manifestation of God coming to them as light. If they receive Him, they will have God and become the children of God. But if they reject Him, they will be overtaken by darkness. Moreover, the commandment that God gave to Him to speak is to them eternal life if they receive it. Otherwise, that very word will become a sentence of judgment upon them in the last day. This is the final declaration the Lord made to the religious people. Beginning with [chapter thirteen](#), the Lord is continually with His disciples, no longer having anything to do with the Jewish people.

There are, therefore, four points to this chapter. The first point shows what is the real church life. The second reveals how the Lord produces and increases the church. The third discloses that the religious people will not go along with the Lord no matter how much He does for them as life in the signs. Finally, the last point indicates how the Lord was forced to make a declaration to the religious crowd that He is the manifestation of God coming to them as light; that if they receive Him they will become the sons of light and that if they do not receive

Him they will be overtaken by darkness; that He comes to them with the commandment of God to speak living words to them; that if they receive His words, those words will become eternal life to them, but if they reject them, those very words will judge them in the last day.

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