

Nuggets and Gems from the Bible

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THE NEED
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Living Stream Ministry
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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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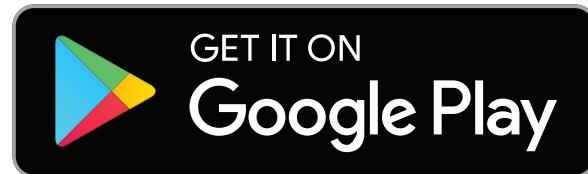
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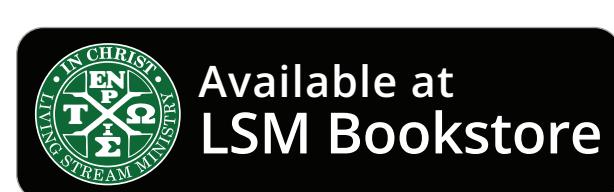
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