

# GEMS OF TRUTH

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## FROM THE EDITOR

I believe that the Apostle John wrote not only the gospel that bears his name but also the epistles of John and Revelation. I further believe that all 27 books of the New Testament were written and recognized by the Christian community as the authoritative canon of the New Testament prior to 70 AD. This gospel is very different than the first three synoptic gospels and in it Jesus gives a more complete revelation of Himself and of His relationship to the Father than any other book of the Bible.

His divinity, the work of the Holy Spirit after

His ascension and His commission by the Father are herein presented with a depth that contains treasures of truth that are yet to be mined. Fresh insights await the diligent student. In its historical context the book was written towards the end of the Old Covenant era when that old system would be forever destroyed in the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. John makes clear that everything the Law was to the Old Covenant community Jesus was to New Covenant believers. Jesus *fulfilled* the Old Covenant and all that it included as it had become totally obsolete. In this issue of GEMS OF TRUTH I present a GEM from each of the first 11 chapters of John and hope to finish them in the next issue. May you be inspired to give more prayerful study to this precious gospel than you ever have done before.

If you wish to be on my very frequent email list or send some comments contact me as below:

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## JESUS KNOWS WHERE WE ARE

**John 1:47-49 Common English Bible (CEB)**

**47 Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said about him, “Here is a genuine Israelite in whom there is no deceit.”**

**48 Nathanael asked him, “How do you know me?”**

**Jesus answered, “Before Philip called you, I saw you under the fig tree.”**

**49 Nathanael replied, “Rabbi, you are God’s Son. You are the king of Israel.”**

Jesus knew all about Nathanael and what was on his heart and how he was hungering for something more. So it is with each of us. He knows all about us, our heart cry, our aspirations, our strengths, and our weaknesses. We are ever on His heart no matter what is our situation in life and He will call us to follow Him or perhaps enter a work of service just when the time is right. Jesus came to this earth just at the right time on God’s time clock (see Galatians 4:4). God’s callings for our life are in His hands and beyond our ability to understand. The most important thing is to live in humility and constant surrender so that we will not harden our hearts and thus be unable to hear His voice (see Hebrews 3:8, 15; 4:7). Also it is well to frequently think about God’s calling for us, to be faithful in fulfilling it, and ask for His strength and guidance as we go forward.

## JESUS KNEW HUMAN NATURE

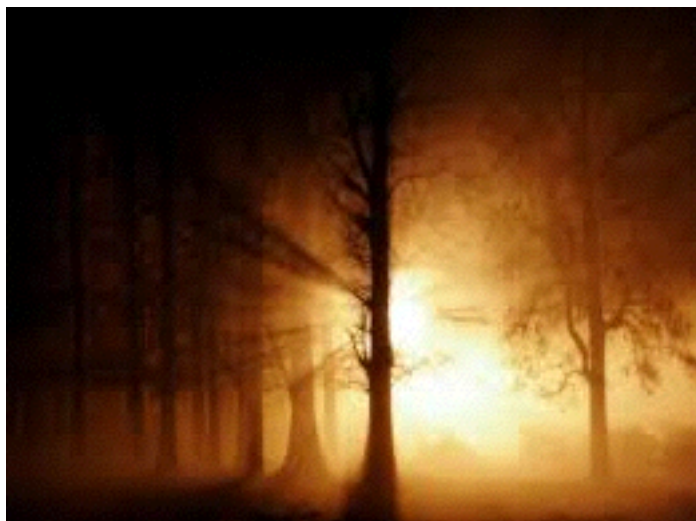
**John 2:23-25 Common English Bible (CEB)**

**23 While Jesus was in Jerusalem for the Passover Festival, many believed in his name because they saw the miraculous**



**signs that he did. 24 But Jesus didn't trust himself to them because he knew all people. 25 He didn't need anyone to tell him about human nature, for he knew what human nature was.**

The emphasis on the “goodness” of humanity as spiritual beings which now prevails in most spiritual belief systems, including Christianity, is very salutary and much better than the old time “hellfire and brimstone” preaching. However, we must not lose sight of the fact that our human nature became defiled and deformed after the Fall in the Garden of Eden. Sin entered the world through Adam but was overcome in Jesus Christ, the last Adam (see Romans 5:12-21; 1 Corinthians 15:22). By the power of the gospel we can be overcomers but nevertheless we are still not sinless in ourselves and we need to be aware that sin is always lurking in the shadows waiting to spring forth into action and will destroy us unless we watch and pray continually. Jesus “knew all people” and “he knew what human nature was.” So it isn't judgmental for us to exercise spiritual discernment and do whatever is necessary to watch our associations and protect our spiritual space. We need to recognize that Satan is still the prince of this world, although essentially defeated, he is still hanging around (see John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; Ephesians 2:2). He is like a roaring lion seeking to destroy and cripple the saints (see 1 Peter 5:8). I think that denying the existence of sin in human existence and saying that “everything is wonderful” is a deception that can prevent us from dealing with our issues that need attention. Sin is more than just a “mistake” but is a principle that wars against the Kingdom of God. Apart from the grace of God all of us have potential to commit grave evils and you only need to scan any news source to see this play out.



## **ARE YOU CHOOSING DARKNESS OR LIGHT?**

**John 3:19-21 New Living Translation  
(NLT)**

**19 And the judgment is based on this fact:  
God's light came into the world, but**



**people loved the darkness more than the light, for their actions were evil. 20 All who do evil hate the light and refuse to go near it for fear their sins will be exposed. 21 But those who do what is right come to the light so others can see that they are doing what God wants.**

The metaphors of light and darkness are used many times throughout the Bible. In Jesus Christ the fulness of God's light came to humankind as had never been seen before and yet He was rejected by most, especially by the religious leaders of His own chosen people (see John 1:11). The way people related to Him revealed what was in their hearts (see Luke 2:35). And so it is even to this day. We pass judgment upon ourselves when we fail to respond to the light of God as it comes to us. The enemy has indeed invented myriads of ways of keeping people occupied and in darkness.

God has various ways of bringing light to us such as the still small voice from within, His word, the beauty of nature, providential events, and His love revealed through others. Every person receives some ray of light. Our ever seeking God brings light even to those who've never heard of Him so no one is left out, although outwardly it may appear to be so (see John 1:9). There is a need for constant prayer to be sensitive to whatever light comes and for it to penetrate deeply so as to dispel darkness which can take many forms. To have the willingness to take whatever steps necessary to leave the darkness and come into the light of God is the place where the greatest battle of life takes place. There is within us a greater resistance to entering the light than we realize most of the time. All neglect of or resistance to the light be it known or unknown brings suffering in some form. We need to constantly pray, "Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts!" (Psalm 139:23 ESV)

## **WORSHIP IN SPIRIT AND TRUTH**

**John 4:24 New Living Translation (NLT)**

**24 "For God is Spirit, so those who worship him must worship in spirit and in truth."**

Jesus pointed the woman at the well to something much higher than places of worship and in essence



He was pointing to Himself as the Savior and the one Who could bring her ultimate fulfillment—a life eternal that would never disappoint her. She had been looking for fulfillment in all the wrong places. In this gospel Jesus points to Himself as being the way, the truth, and the life and these three aspects of His person and work are like a golden thread running through this entire book as well as in all the other writings of John (see John 5:39; 14:6; 20:30, 31; Revelation 1:1). To “worship in spirit and in truth” points to the importance of having a living encounter with the Savior so that everything in our life will be guided by His spirit. As we follow His commands to serve and love one another we are indeed worshipping “in spirit and in truth.” True worship is too big to be confined to a chosen people or to sacred places but rather extends to every part of our life, in all circumstances, and to every place we ever could be (see Psalm 139:7-12). Since Jesus came to this earth as the Son of God He brought to us a quality of life that we have barely begun to experience in many respects. However, we benefit greatly from any point of contact with our Lord no matter how feeble it may sometimes appear. The practical implications of fellowship with Jesus as the way, the truth, and the life are beyond human understanding but will be revealed to us as we open our heart to receive what God has for His children. There is a fulness yet to come and we need to be ever watchful lest we fail to receive all that God has for us.



## **YOU SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES**

**John 5:39-40 New Living  
Translation (NLT)**

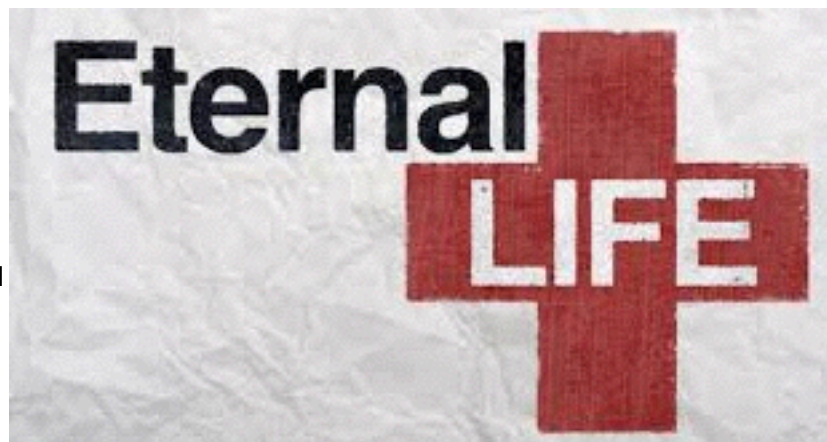
**39 “You search the Scriptures  
because you think they give you  
eternal life. But the Scriptures  
point to me! 40 Yet you refuse to  
come to me to receive this life.”**

Jesus was addressing some of the greatest students of the Scriptures that have ever lived—the leaders of Israel, His chosen people of that time. The tragedy was in thinking that these Scriptures had some sort of magic power in themselves to bestow eternal life and when the One came of whom the Scriptures testified these highly religious leaders not only rejected Him but had Him crucified. We all need to seriously consider the results of failing to see the “Christ centered” purpose of the Bible. Jesus presented Himself and the apostles preached Him from the only Scriptures available at that time—the Old Testament writings. The power of the Holy Spirit in our lives which is emphasized especially in the New Testament is a direct result of accepting what Jesus has done for us in His redemptive work and is so presented again and again both by Jesus and the apostles. If we emphasize good works in such a way that they lose their relationship to Jesus and His saving work they become legalism which ends up killing people and often turning them away from God altogether. The logic of the gospel of Jesus Christ is “because of what He has done for us we are set free from the bondage of self-centeredness and so we strive to be like Him and to follow in His footsteps.” Our good works are not done to earn God’s favor but because we already *have* His favor freely bestowed upon us by His grace (see Ephesians 2:8-10). None of our good works make us more perfect or acceptable to God because we are covered by Christ’s robe of perfect righteousness that is full and complete (see Jeremiah 23:6; 2 Corinthians 5:21). It is a great tragedy indeed that throughout Christian history so much of the time the “Christ centeredness” of the Scriptures has been forgotten and people have gotten bogged down in proving doctrines, legalism, bizzare interpretations of prophecy, and often have ended up attacking one another instead of loving and supporting one another. Let us major on the Savior and what He has done, is doing now, and will continue to do for us (see Hebrews 12:1-2; 13:8).

## ETERNAL LIFE A PRESENT

### POSSESSION

**John 6:53-54 Amplified Bible (AMP)**  
**53 And Jesus said to them, I assure you, most solemnly I tell you, you cannot have any life in you unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and**



**drink His blood [unless you appropriate His life and the saving merit of His blood].**

**54 He who feeds on My flesh and drinks My blood has (possesses now) eternal life, and I will raise him up [from the dead] on the last day.**

The central message in the Gospel of John is the gift of eternal or everlasting life NOW. The Greek word for eternal or everlasting is *aiónios* which means the very life of God. Let us think for a few minutes about the wonderful, awesome love of our God who has given us the gift of His Son to bring this eternal (aionian) life to those of us who were groping in darkness and perishing (dying within) from the weight of degradation which came into the world through sin (see Ephesians 2:1-10). We may think that we have life if we are not significantly suffering from lack or sickness and have good physical health but that is only mortal existence and not the life of God.

Unless we partake of the very life given to us through Jesus we really do not have that eternal (aionian) life. Jesus clearly explains what He means when He speaks of eating His flesh and drinking His blood in these words: "The Spirit alone gives eternal life. Human effort accomplishes nothing. And the very words I have spoken to you are spirit and life" (John 6:63 NLT). Even if we lacked the written record of Jesus' words as we have them in the Bible the Spirit would still impart to us this "aionian" life of God as we open our hearts. I am personally thankful beyond what any words could ever express for the words of Jesus in the gospels but also realize that unless the Spirit reveals to me their deep meaning and empowers me to practice them I am working with "human effort" which will fail at some point. "The Spirit ALONE gives eternal (aionian) life." The emphasis upon living a more healthy lifestyle that has become popular over the last few decades is very salutary but at the same time can be deceptive. I've met a lot of people in gyms that are compulsive-obsessive about body building and aerobic exercise but give little or no thought to God—the only source of true life. Take some time to very prayerfully read about "the bread of life" which came down from Heaven as so clearly taught in John 6. Bread is something that most people consider necessary in their diet and so the metaphor of Jesus being the heavenly bread is more important than we have imagined thus far. We must feed on that bread continually or we'll die spiritually and the danger here is that we may not even realize that we are dying inwardly, especially if things outwardly may be going well for us in our everyday life. Oh, how much I appeal to everyone to give the true bread of life their highest priority.



## RIVERS OF LIVING WATER

**John 7:37-39 New Living Translation (NLT)**

**37 On the last day, the climax of the festival, Jesus stood and shouted to the crowds, “Anyone who is thirsty may come to me! 38 Anyone who believes in me may come and drink! For the Scriptures declare, ‘Rivers of living water will flow from his heart.’”**

**39 (When he said “living water,” he was speaking of the Spirit, who would be given to everyone believing in him. But the Spirit had not yet been given, because Jesus had not yet entered into his glory.)**

In the advent of the Son of God to this earth followed by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost the floodgates of Heaven were opened and have continued to flow ever since. All the forces of hell have been powerless to stop these living streams from the throne of God and of the Lamb (see Revelation 21-22). Those who neglect or reject this heavenly refreshment suffer accordingly. Those who believe and receive have rivers of living water flowing from their hearts which touch everyone whether near or far. The metaphor of living water and the promises of the outpouring of life and spiritual blessings as used repeatedly in the Old Testament reached their ultimate fulfillment in Jesus Christ. All of us are included in that saving work for everything that came through Him includes all believers (see Ephesians 1:3). As the blessings that Jesus has won for us touch our heart and transform us into His image we shall overflow with love, joy, and peace. This is what brings real transformation to a needy world. Let us appreciate more and more everyday the wonderful privilege that we have as His children to be bearers of “living water” to all who hunger and thirst for something higher and better than the material world can ever supply.

## HE WILL BY NO MEANS EXPERIENCE DEATH

**John 8:51 Amplified Bible (AMP)**

**51 I assure you, most solemnly I tell you, if anyone observes My teaching [lives in accordance with My message, keeps My word], he will by no means ever see and experience death.**

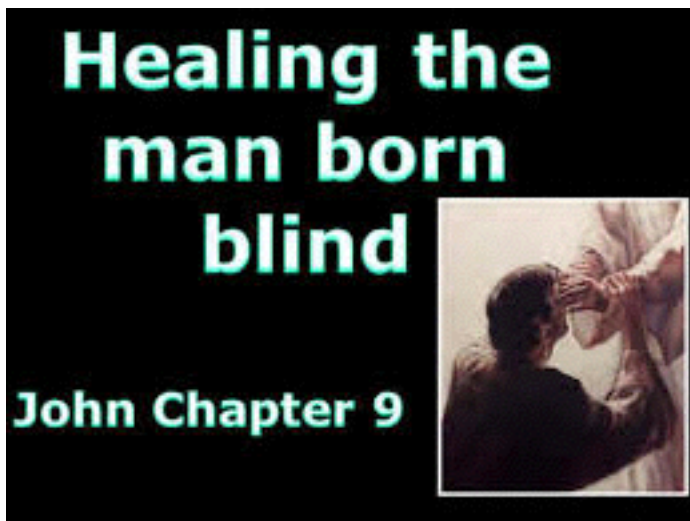


Depending upon the context, the word “death” as used in the Scriptures may refer to physical death or it may refer to spiritual death. There are many instances when death is referring to inwardly being dead, devoid of the Holy Spirit and living in bondage to sin, the ego and the physical, material realm. This is being “dead in trespasses and sins” (Ephesians 2:1). Just to stretch your thinking a bit when you read Bible verses where “death or dying” are used consider the possibility that it may be referring to spiritual death instead of physical death or perhaps may be embracing aspects of both.

Doing this will open up some new and very precious insights to many familiar passages which have been understood in a very limited way. Our long held pre-conceived ideas sometimes prevent us from seeing deeper meanings in God’s Word.

Also when you see the word resurrection or some equivalent of it be open to the possibility that instead of the resurrection of the physical body it may indeed be teaching spiritual resurrection. I think John 8:51 is referring to spiritual death and to the fact that those who follow the teachings of Jesus and genuinely keep them in their heart will have true life “from above” [the heavenly realms] and will be free from the bondage and control of evil in all of its many forms. They will not experience spiritual death. This doesn’t mean there will be no temptations but that we are free from enslavement to sin. We need to be “born from above” or be resurrected from spiritual death to really experience the life of God. This is an ongoing, continuous experience. The apostle John speaks of “abiding” in Christ several times. This means living in communion with and dependence upon Him always which is far above and beyond merely giving a mental assent to certain information, no matter how good that

information may be. Jesus, the Son of God, has united us with the fullness of divine power which affects every part of our being, including our physical body. In Him we find a source of health and true wellness which cannot be found anywhere else. It seems to me that we've settled for far less than what God has for us and that we so often choose death in place of that which would give us real life and vitality.



## NOW I SEE

**John 9:24-25 Common English Bible (CEB)**

**24 Therefore, they called a second time for the man who had been born blind and said to him, “Give glory to God. We know this man is a sinner.” 25 The man answered, “I don’t know whether he’s a sinner. Here’s what I do know: I was blind and now I see.”**

The religious leaders were always wanting to argue and cavil about everything that Jesus taught and did. They were trying to badger the man who was born blind who had been healed by Jesus. I find it interesting that he didn't allow himself to become involved in “explaining” nor did he try to contradict them. He merely testified of what he did know, which was that he had been blind and now he could see. All of us are somewhat like that blind man for we are born into this world wounded, blind and in need of healing (see Psalm 51:5). At various points in our life the Holy Spirit speaks to us and our blindness is healed at some level and we can't understand nor explain the “how” of this nor should we (see John 3:8). We can simply say with the blind man “Here’s what I do know: I was blind and now I see.” If we try to become too analytical about the way God works in our life to heal our blindness we may interfere with the process. When people see some changes in us it is well to bear testimony to the goodness of God and glorify Him but we need to be cautious about getting drawn into discussions about the “whys and wherefores” of how God works, especially with folks

who may have little spiritual discernment (see 1 Corinthians 2:14). I've been very careful about what I say to those who likely will not understand. Most of the time I can't really speak plainly about what I experience so I just seek to find something to say that will be uplifting and feel that setting a good example is the most effective way that I can ever teach anyway (see Matthew 5:16). If our life isn't in harmony with our faith our words will be meaningless. For that reason, as simplistic as it no doubt sounds, I keep focusing on knowing God experientially, having something more than merely a head full of good information. The world is flooded with information from all directions but as believers in the living Christ we have LIFE to offer. Let's focus on cultivating the divine life within so that we have something to give that will really make a difference.

## THE VOICE OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD

### John 10 Common English Bible (CEB)

**4 Whenever he has gathered all of his sheep, he goes before them and they follow him, because they know his voice. 27 My sheep listen to my voice. I know them and they follow me.**

There are many metaphors of Jesus in the Bible and in the Gospel of John there is a series of "I ams" which present wonderful aspects of the Savior's mission and love for His children. In John 10 Jesus presents Himself as the good shepherd. In the verses quoted above Jesus leads His sheep and they *FOLLOW* Him. What stands out is the close relationship of the shepherd to the sheep. They *KNOW* His voice and *LISTEN* to His voice. The three words *follow*, *know*, and *listen* stand out in the text. What does it really mean to *know* and *listen* to the voice of Jesus? We need spiritual discernment to know the difference between His voice and a multitude of other voices that hammer us from every direction. So recognition of truth from error is an important part of this process and in order to be able to do this we must fortify our minds continually with God's Word under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. I'm speaking of something here above and beyond merely filling our head with certain information. We not only need to *know* but we also need to





*listen* to His voice, i.e., pay close attention to and act on His voice when it speaks to us. If we are continually filling our minds with trivia what hope do we have of really listening to the voice of the good shepherd and what He might want to teach us? Also notice that the shepherd goes before the sheep and they follow Him but only “because they know His voice.” If we don’t take time to listen to His voice we will find ourselves going in many directions that bring disappointment, emptiness, and suffering at some point. We need times of Silence in which we are willing to rest from all of our concerns and surrender everything at His feet, even those things which we may feel are so very important. He will give back to us what is for our best good and possibly some things, including some of our opinions, may need to be set aside for a time or perhaps permanently. Following, knowing, and listening to Jesus as our good shepherd involves more than most people may think.



## DO YOU BELIEVE THIS?

**John 11:23-27 Common English Bible (CEB)**

**23 Jesus told her, “Your brother will rise again.”**

**24 Martha replied, “I know that he will rise in the resurrection on the last day.”**

**25 Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me will live, even though they die.  
26 Everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?”**

**27 She replied, “Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Christ, God’s Son, the one who is coming into the world.”**

Nothing can ever take away the eternal life that believers have in Christ (see Romans 8:31-39). There are different meanings for the word “believe”. We are told that the

"devils also believe and tremble" (James 2:19 KJV). Their belief doesn't save them or change them but is a self-serving kind of belief which is in sharp contrast to the kind that experientially lays hold of the power of God. Saving belief is more frequently referred to as faith which is "of the heart" and involves complete trust and surrender of our entire being to God (see Romans 10:9-10). "Whoever believes in me will live, even though they die." Our physical bodies will at some point be laid aside and this change is called death but for the believer there really is no such thing as death but only an *appearance* of death. When we depart from this present life we go to be with our Lord and He has prepared something infinitely better for us than we could ever begin to imagine (see Acts 7:54-60; 1 Corinthians 2:9; Colossians 3:1-3; Philippians 1:23). Even right here and now He has prepared blessings for us everyday that will unfold more and more as we open our hearts to receive. Eternal (aionian) life begins NOW and is like a leaven which will transform us as well as affect all others with whom we come in contact. We need to give much more thoughtful contemplation to the power this eternal (aionian) life. I long to experience more of it in my own life.

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