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QUARTERLY REVIEW LESSON

- MARCH 22 -

Golden Text: – "In him was life; and the life was the light of men." – John 1:4.

WE leave the review of the Quarter's lessons to each according to his time and preferences, merely suggesting that the entire subject of our Lord's life and ministry is well summed up in our Golden Text. It divides itself into two parts, the one the result of the other. (1) In him was life, (2) the life that was in him was the light of men.

A strange statement, "In him was life." Is there [R4154 : page 89] not life in every man? We answer, No! From the divine standpoint a death sentence passed upon Adam and was inherited by all of his descendants, and from this, the divine standpoint, the legal standard, the whole world is dead, under the sentence of death, because of transgressions and sins, the tendency to which was inherited when, as the Scriptures declare, we were all born in sin, shapen in iniquity. (Psa. 51:5.) The statement, therefore, that in Christ there was life implies much. It implies that he did not receive his life, as did other men, from an earthly father. It corroborates the testimony of the Scriptures that our Lord was begotten from above, that his life was transferred from a higher plane, that he left the glory which he had with the Father before the world was and humbled himself and took the bondman's form and was found in fashion a man. – Phil. 2:8.

It was because Jesus had life in this special sense which no other man had that he could be the Redeemer of man; as was written of him prophetically, Let go the prisoner out of the pit,

for I have found a ransom. (Job 33:24.) No member of Adam's race was able to give a ransom for his brother, because all were under condemnation, and one condemned life could not be substituted for another condemned life. Hence the necessity of sending God's Son in human likeness and nature that he, by the favor of God, as the perfect one, having life, "might give his life a ransom for many." Thus, as the Redeemer of the world, our Lord's life was given for father Adam's life, a substitute, and since all of Adam's posterity shared in his death sentence, therefore naturally, justly, properly all who shared thus in his condemnation shared through Jesus in Adam's redemption. Hence a redemption for all has been provided, and God's assurance is that in due time all shall learn thereof and receive a blessing therefrom, an opportunity to return to harmony with God. This opportunity cannot come except through knowledge, and hence it has come first to those who have the hearing ear and are blessed of the Lord thereby. Blessed are your ears for they hear and your eyes for they see. – Matt. 13:16.

IN HIM WAS SPIRIT-LIFE

But there was another sense in which this text applies to our Lord Jesus and to him alone. When he had laid down at Calvary his life and finished the work which the Father had given him to do, that life was gone and could never be taken back, except by rescinding the entire contract of redemption. We are glad [**R4155 : page 89**] that this was not done. We remember, however, at the particular time when our Lord made his consecration to death, namely, at the beginning of his ministry, when he was immersed in the symbolism of death, that he received of the Father a begetting of the holy Spirit – he was begotten to a newness of life, to a spirit life. We perceive that the spirit life or new nature progressed and developed during our Lord's earthly ministry, and that at his resurrection from the dead it was this New Creature, this spirit being, that was raised up to perfection, so

that our Lord is not a glorified man but, as the Apostle says, "Now the Lord is that spirit." – 2 Cor. 3:17.

Our text has a special application to this New Creature – "In him was life," the new life, life as a New Creature, partaker of the divine nature. It is this life which the followers of Jesus in the present time are invited also to share. The promise is made to them that if they are baptized into his death, they shall also be in his resurrection. In the divine program all the Church's spiritual rights and interests were thus made to center in Christ; as the Apostle declares, "When he who is our life shall appear, we also shall appear with him in glory." (Col. 3:4.) It is this divine nature which our Lord has that he has been privileged to give to his followers. Thus it is written, "As the Father hath life in himself, so he has given unto the Son to have life in himself," and that he should give this life of a divine nature unto as many as he would, according to the Father's good pleasure. (John 5:26; 17:2.) He has promised it to those who love him, who follow in his footsteps and become overcomers of the world. Thus the Church throughout this Gospel Age is to be a partaker of the divine nature and is being gradually transformed in harmony with this new life, prepared for the glorious resurrection change at the end of this age, that by this resurrection of the just they may be made partakers of the divine nature and elevated to joint-heirship with their Lord in his Kingdom.

THE LIFE WAS THE LIGHT OF MEN

This second part of the text is applicable to both of the lives of Jesus, to the perfect human life which was his as a man, and also to the perfect life as a New Creature which became his as a result of the begetting of the holy Spirit. The Apostle apparently refers to our Lord's human life when he says, "He was made flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld his glory, the glory [honor]

as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." (John 1:14.) This seems to picture our Lord Jesus as the man and refers to the glory and dignity of his manhood; as the same is again referred to in the eighth Psalm in the words, "What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the Son of man, that thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels, thou didst crown him with glory and honor and didst place him over the works of thy hands." It is evident from this that there is a glory and an honor which belong to perfect manhood, and that our Lord possessed these is evident not only from this statement of the Apostle John, but also from the testimony of John the Baptist, who knew him before he was anointed and who at first declined to baptize him, declaring that he was in no sense of the word a sinner, and saying, I would rather need to be baptized of thee; and do you come to me for baptism? He recognized our Lord as holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners, aside from his begetting of the holy Spirit. In this manner the life that was in him, the perfection [R4155 : page 90] of manhood in him, was the light of men in his day. We cannot doubt that it had much to do with his popularity with the common people. He was full of grace – not only graceful in form, in manner and in speech, but in every other sense of the word he was a favored man. This was the result of his perfection, of his having an unlimited life from an unimpaired source – by reason of his not having had a human father or life-giver. He was full of truth in the sense that his life was not biased or warped; he was not born in sin or shapen in iniquity.*

*See SCRIPTURE STUDIES, Vol. V., Chap. IV., "The Undefiled One."

We come now to the power of the holy Spirit which was in our Lord Jesus – the new life, the divine life. This, shining through our Lord in perfect accord with his perfect flesh, made him a most wonderful one. This indeed was the light of men. It

not only shone forth as a burning lamp to reflect the divine character in all of our Lord's doings and words, but it enabled him to speak out to his followers, who had ears to hear the wonderful words of life. It enabled him to grasp the divine plan and to appreciate the pathway leading to the glory, honor and immortality, and to point it out to his followers, saying, "He who would be my disciple must take up his cross and follow me." Thus our Lord illustrated in himself to all who would be his followers the glorious words of the prophecy, "Thou wilt show him the path of life." (Psa. 16:11.) By the holy Spirit our Lord was shown that the path of sacrifice meant the path to glory, and similarly he pointed out to his followers that the light which was in him became the light of his followers.

It is in full harmony with this double application that we read elsewhere that our Lord "brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel." (2 Tim. 1:10.) As the man he showed, illustrated, the perfection of human life and made it possible for the whole human family, sold under sin but redeemed by the precious blood, to come eventually to that grand standard of human perfection which he personally represented. This he also told us in his declaration that the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost. (Luke 19:10.) Thus we see in our Lord the manifestation of the perfection of restitution life, and we see in his sacrifice how he secured that restitution life for all who will have it at his hand, for the entire human family, and that thus he became the author of life, the Life-Giver to all who would obey him. The great mass of the world have not yet had opportunity to hear him, because their blind eyes and deaf ears have not yet been opened. But in due time they shall have the opportunity of gaining by restitution, through the Redeemer's merit, the life which he brought to light, which he manifested and which he declared he had provided for them.

But what did he provide for the Church? Ah, we answer, the great Deliverer has provided some better thing than restitution life and blessing for the Church – wonderful, grand, as are those provisions for the world in general. For the Church he has provided immortality, the highest form or condition of life, the divine nature, life on the divine plane. This thought is too wonderful for us, it is incomprehensible; we must merely take it without hoping to grasp it or comprehend it fully as yet. It is a testimony to the unspeakable gift of God through Christ Jesus our Lord to all those who obey him, to all of his Little Flock. It is this, the very highest conceivable plane of life, to which our Lord is inviting his followers now, and everything in the divine plan is being made to wait until the Very Elect shall have been gathered from the four winds of heaven, until the Bride of Christ shall have made herself ready, until the polishing processes shall have made the jewels meet for the Master's use, and then by the resurrection change these may pass to glory, honor and immortality. "Sown in corruption, raised in incorruption; sown in weakness, raised in power; sown an animal body, raised a spiritual body!" "We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is, and share his glory."

