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The Life: Manifested in the Christ

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The Life: Manifested in the Christ

Jesus the Life. “I am . . . the life” (John 14:6).

“In him was life; and the life was the light of men” (John 1:4).

“I am the light and the life of the world” (3 Ne. 9:18).

“I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life” (John 8:12).

Just as Jesus proclaimed himself to be the Truth and the Way, so also he proclaimed himself to be the Life in God’s plan of things for man’s earth existence. But just what does that mean? We know that he is proclaimed in the revelations of God as being “the resurrection, and the life,” and that though men were dead, yet in him should they live. This is followed by the singular statement, “whosoever liveth and believeth [in me] shall never die” (John 11:25–26). Also in his Gethsemane prayer he said, “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (John 17:3). It would appear, then, that “eternal life” comes through “belief,” through a “knowledge of God,” and that would lead us to believe that these scripture references to Jesus being “the Life” had a broader scope and meaning than the securing of physical *immortality* through the resurrection from the dead.

From what has gone before throughout these pages, we have already learned that death has two phases: first, spiritual death, second, physical death. The Lord Jesus, the “Anointed One,” came “to seek and to save” that which was lost; and as what was lost was spiritual life, dependent upon union with God; and physical life, dependent upon union of spirit and earth element, this we have already concluded, is what Jesus came “to save” by restoring the spiritual and the physical life of man. A noble mission indeed, comprising a redemption of the world, the salvation of a race, a task worthy of Deity, whatever the sacrifice might be, and Deity’s shame had it not be performed, since Deity alone could achieve such a work.

And yet there is something more than this in the mission of the “Anointed One.” He is the Truth respecting the things of God. He reveals

God in his own person, for he is declared to be the very image of the Father's person, and the brightness of his glory (cf. Heb. 1:1-3). In him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead, bodily (cf. Col. 1:19; 2:9). He is God manifested in the flesh, and in respect of being the revelation of God, and the fullness of that revelation, he is the whole truth of it; and that becomes the very heart of all truth in the world, the knowledge of God, the highest knowledge, and the heart of all truth that may be learned and realized by the intellect and the heart of man. It will lead to the solving of all mysteries, to the attainment of all knowledge of that which is, or has been, or shall become; and our Lord Jesus is the complete manifestation of that truth. He is the Truth!

Also, as we have seen, he is the Way. No man can come unto the Father but through him—meaning that no man can come to the knowledge of God and into fellowship with God but through him; and no man cometh unto the Christ, “except the Father . . . draw him” (cf. John 6:44). The Father and the Son work together, they are in cooperation; and the Holy Ghost is in the union also, in the way of being the witness to the truth. And “no man, speaking by the Spirit, calleth Jesus accursed, and no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost” (1 Cor. 12:3).

And yet, magnificent as all this is, it is not the whole of the story. There is still to be accounted for “I am . . . the life,” and “The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment” (John 14:6, Luke 12:23). We are told in the scriptures that in the Lord Jesus was life; and the life was the light of men; and though the light shineth in darkness, the darkness ~~may not~~ comprehendeth it **not**, and though he that was the Light coming to his own yet he was rejected of them. Nevertheless, we are assured, to as many as received him—to as many as will receive him—to them gave he power, and to them he will give power to become the sons of God; even to them that believe on his name. To those that were born of him, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of men—“but of God” (cf. John 1:1-14). He gives his promise that whosoever will follow him, shall not walk in darkness, but shall have “the light of life” (John 8:12).

No wonder that when contemplating his mission the Master said to his followers: “I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst” (John 6:35).

The gospel must be a life. All this means that the gospel of Jesus Christ is not only a plan, a way, it must be a Life. The gospel must be a life to be understood—to be realized. God must provide, in order to complete his plan, not only a theory of living, an outline, verbal or written,

and frequently repeated, and by such repetitions reveal it from many angles—but it must be set forth by example, and the example must be perfect. Men may not be able in this our mortal life to live up to its perfections, but the perfections must be seen, the one perfect life must be lived so that men shall know what it is they are to strive for. As the paschal lamb, the symbol of the real sacrifice had to be without spot or blemish—foreshadowing that the one making the real atonement, *would* be without blemish—so this “Life,” which is to be the type-life under God’s plan—the gospel—must be perfect; without blemish, or spot, to stand out above the horizon of the world forever present in man’s vision as the perfect life aimed at in gospel-living. Or as Jesus, the anointed, stands in the foreground of all history, as the complete and perfect revelation of what Deity is, God completely revealed, so, too, must the perfect life stand out revealed clearly to the consciousness of men, so that there can be no question as to either Deity revealed or the perfect life portrayed to the consciousness of men, and there must be no possibility of doubt in either case. Two splendid words: God! Life! And these are revealed in Jesus Christ that men may know both the one and the other.

And now as to this life. Let us go back to the starting point to find out what it is to be. God in the council of Gods—divine personages—archangels, angels, and spirits of men, said:

We will make an earth whereon these may dwell; And we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them; [And] they who keep their first estate ⟨that preexistent spirit estate in which they would accept the proposed plan of Deity for their advancement⟩ shall be added upon ⟨i.e., shall be put in the way of progression⟩; and they who keep not their first estate shall not have glory in the same kingdom with those who keep their first estate; and they who keep their second estate ⟨the estate of their earth life, and in that estate of earth life will do “all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them”—they⟩ shall have glory added upon their heads for ever and ⟨for⟩ ever. (Abr. 3:24–26)

From this prelude to the opening chapter of man’s earth life we learn that ~~it~~ *said earth life* is to be the trial period, the testing field for man. God “will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them.” The test is to be obedience; the submission of man’s will to God’s will—to God’s law. The will must learn to control all other qualities of mind. It must be the master quality of mind, acting upon intelligence after intelligence has surveyed the whole field and submits report to consciousness as

to what is evil, what is good, and better, and best. Then the “will” must at the last pronounce the determination as to what shall be done, that is the all important matter—what shall be done? Upon the right answer to that hangs the salvation of every soul of man in the world. Happy is he who learning the truth and finding the way comes to that point where he conforms his “will” to law, to the will of God. Whatsoever God saith unto him that will he do; for that will be the highest manifestation of wisdom that men can anywhere or anyhow arrive at; for in doing that, men but submit to the highest possible wisdom, wisdom that arises from perfect knowledge. All things then will be done in “the wisdom of him who knoweth all things” (2 Ne. 2:24), and there will be no mistake. Man’s faith and action will find sure foundation at last if he will say with Joshua: “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord” (Josh. 24:15).

The keynote of the Life. Now again, “the Life,” the keynote of it. The Life that was lived, the one perfect Life. ~~the Life of Jesus.~~ Thought of it takes us back again to the Council preceding the creation of the earth. After all things had been explained and God had made his covenant with men to give to them eternal life—spiritual life, and physical immortality, it became known that a sacrifice would have to be made in order to restore that which would be lost by the breaking up of the harmony of things, and the question arose, “Whom shall I send?” That is, to make the sacrifice and bring to pass the necessary redemption of man. The approved answer by the Son of God was, “Father, thy will be done, and the glory be thine forever” (Moses 4:2). And the keynote thus struck in that council became the keynote of the life that the Son of God lived in the earth. This was the chief characteristic of him repeatedly expressed. In youth it was: “wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?” (Luke 2:49). Later: “I seek not \langle to do \rangle mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me” (John 5:30). Again: “I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me” (John 6:38). It followed him, this principle, to the very last phase of his mortal, earth life. If it were possible he would have been pleased to have had some other way taken to the accomplishment of God’s purpose: “O [my] Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me”—the cup of his bitter suffering and his approaching *humiliation and* crucifixion—“if it be possible, let this cup pass from me”; but then and instantly, as if he feared he had asked too much; instantly—“nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt” (Matt. 26:39); No answer coming, he bowed reconciled to the inevitable. Afterwards he said to the assembled Nephites to

whom he appeared on the Western Continent—and now triumphantly, since he had endured the cross and gained the crown—“I have drunk out of that bitter cup which the Father hath given me, and have glorified the Father in taking upon me the sins of the world, in the which I have suffered the will of the Father in all things from the beginning” (3 Ne. 11:11). Later still, to the Prophet of the New Dispensation, in referring to his passion, he said:

Which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit—and would that I might not drink the bitter cup, . . . Nevertheless, glory be to the Father, [and] I partook and finished my preparations unto the children of men. (D&C 19:18-19)

Here was one (the Lord Jesus) who proved beyond all human imagining that he would do whatsoever “the Lord his God would command him.” And that is the ensample, the perfect ensample, of what God would have men to do: Be obedient. “If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments” (Matt. 19:17).

Type of the Life: “Prodigal son” or the Christ? The prodigal son, made so much of in emotional religious appeal, as exhibiting God’s power in redemption, is not the type of what God would have men to be. True, since there are those—and many of them—who among the children of men will be prodigal sons, it is a glorious reality that they can repent and through repentance find their way back to their father’s home and receive royal welcome and start anew in the way of keeping the commandments after the terrible experiences of folly and sin; but that is not the type that God would have upheld before men as an example to follow. The Christ-type is the divine ideal, the mould and form, God would have followed by men—the perfect life. This the Christ emphasized when he said to his Judean disciples, “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect” (Matt. 5:48). And to the Nephite disciples the Christ made this clear by putting to them the question, “what manner of men ought ye to be?” answered, “Verily I say unto you, even as I am” (3 Ne. 27:27). “Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience ⟨through⟩ [by] the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them ⟨who⟩ [that] obey him” (Heb. 5:8-9);^a even as he, of course, obeyed the Father.

^aThe Joseph Smith Translation explains that Hebrews 5:7-8 is a parenthetical comment referring to Melchizedek, not Christ.

In all his life, as we have said, the Christ was dominated by this master conception of duty—obedience to God. He was here to do the will of the Father that sent him. And in all the events of his life and his dealings with men, this principle gave a noble graciousness to all that he did. Truly his chief apostle could well say of him: “God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him” (Acts 10:38). And not only was God “with him,” but “in him.” “To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself” (2 Cor. 5:19); and he was revealing God at work.

Accessibility to “the Life.” How richly the incidents of his life unfold the principle upon which the Christ worked, we may not know, but by contemplation of it! The value of the life will be in proportion to its accessibility to mankind; and how accessibly was and is the life of the Christ to the world! To the rich, to the poor, to the sorrowful and to the joyous. To the unfortunate, the cripples, the sick, the lepers, the halt, dumb and blind. To the rulers and the magistrates, the despised Samaritans, the publicans and the sinners; the beggar by the wayside, the widows—of which she of Nain was typical. To those grateful for his administrations, and to those ungrateful; to the penitent thief on the cross; even to those who crucified him, he could say, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34). To Nicodemus, who for fear of the Jews would only come to him under cover of the night—to him he could teach the mystery of being born again; to the dwarfed, waddling Zacchaeus, who must needs climb a tree to behold him above the heads of the crowd—in his house he would dine! To the woman taken in adultery and dragged to his feet by her accusers—to her he could be gracious, refuse to accuse her, but bade her *to go her way but to* “sin no more” (John 8:11). To schyster lawyers, seeking to entrap him into inconsistency of utterance, even with them he could be patient. What a heterogeneous mass had full access of him! And none who came turned he away!

All this reflects the graciousness and majesty of God the Father, who “maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust” (Matt. 5:45). That scorns to love only them that love him—for the publicans do so—but the divine love for our example is extended to even those who mock and revile God. ~~for he knows that they know not what they do.~~

The graciousness of “the Life” to disciples and friends. To his close adherents and friends, how benign and sweetly benevolent

the Christ could be and was! ~~to~~ **St. Peter**, the oldest man of the group of his immediate followers, ~~St. Peter~~ rough and tempestuous as he was, the Master corrected with firmness; but loved and trusted him beyond *expected* measure. What a world of feeling there is in that soul-cry of his over this apostle when he said: “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren” (Luke 22:31-32). This man Peter boasted that though all men should be offended at the Christ yet never would he be offended with him. But Jesus said to him: “Verily I say unto thee, That this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.” To which Peter answered, “Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee” (Matt. 26:33-35). But Peter fulfilled the master’s prediction, that night he denied him thrice and with cursing! And what was the punishment? Nay, rather the correction? The Master after the resurrection forced Peter to a three-~~time~~ **fold** declaration of his love. St. John tells the story: “Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more then these?” Referring to the other disciples present—lovest thou me more than these do?^b For Peter is already designated as the head of the church, to whom had been given in a special way the keys of the kingdom; and therefore more may be demanded of him than of the others. Also both the Christ and the other disciples must know the soundness of Peter’s mind and love for the master, the supreme thing both for the disciples and the one to be entrusted with the very keys of the kingdom. Hence—“Lovest thou me more than these?” And Simon answered: “Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee.” And the Christ said, “Feed my lambs.” Again, the second time, “Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?” And the answer, “Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee.” And the Christ said unto him, “Feed my sheep.” Then the third time, “Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?” Perhaps Peter was beginning to see the drift of the master’s purpose, that three-fold denial was being replaced by a three-fold declaration of love and loyalty. Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, “Lovest thou me?” And doubtless in tears Peter said, “Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee.” Jesus saith unto him, “Feed my sheep”

^bThis is an unusual interpretation of this scripture. The original Greek is ambiguous, as is also the English translation. Any of the following are a possible translation: “Simon, son of John, do you love me more than (you love) these (people)?” “Simon, son of John, do you love me more than (you love) these (things)?” “Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these (people love me)?”

(John 21:15-17). And the apostle who had denied the Christ thrice, and with cursing, was after three times affirming his love, reinstated with trust and confidence, and with commission to be the feeder of the lambs and of the sheep, to be the chief shepherd of the flock, the head of the church on earth in that dispensation, so long as he lived, holding the keys of the kingdom, having power to remit whosoever sins he would remit, and retain whose-soever sins he would retain (cf. John 20:23).

“The Life” more than morality. Dealing with the gospel-life, there are those who misapprehend it. ~~And~~ It becomes with some a tangent that leads away from the truth in that they would reduce the whole of the gospel to merely right moral living—a system of morality—what men call human or natural righteousness, and so they say “doctrine does not matter”; forms, ceremonies, symbols, ordinances, right conceptions of truth, right mental attitude towards existence, *towards God* does not matter. ***Practical righteousness is what counts.*** The gospel is not a “power of God unto salvation”; has nothing to do with being born again, born of the water and of the spirit; nothing to do with knowing the only God and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent, as being necessary to eternal life. That which is recognized as plain, human, morality will be sufficient for salvation, with the logical result that God and Christ with plans of salvation, atonements, and redemptions through love, may be ruled out of the reckoning except as the moral life of the Christ may be taken as an ideal. It is true also that from one point of view the gospel may be regarded *chiefly* as a life; but to be complete and perfect, it must be a life founded on truth and on a system of truth that requires right conception of true principle and doctrine and the satisfactory gospel life must be a *lived-out* consequence of that truth and system of doctrine. The gospel has a history, and “the Life” required in it is based upon the facts of that history. “The Life” also must be lived with a view of conforming it to the purpose of God in the creation, and the purpose he has in making possible the earth life of man. Religion is more than mere morality; it is a new birth, a spiritual power; it is a conformity to the purpose of God, a spiritual union with God, and a submission to his will, and a careful performance of all that he has ordained as necessary to the completion of “the Life!” Let no one therefore attempt to displace God’s gospel plan by a substitution of humanitarianism, by which is here meant a system of morals based upon what is recognized as contributing to human welfare, the basis merely of social relations and individual well-being. Truly the gospel

is expressed in a life, but it is a life, in harmony with God's purposes; ~~and~~ **with** fellowship, and complete union with ~~him~~ **God, established** through spiritual birth and consciousness of **a** one-ness with God's life.

Further references recommended by Roberts for this lesson:

All the citations of scriptures in this lesson, and their context; I can recall no other works that may be referred to with advantage, except that a more exhausting research of the four books of our scripture may be made than is represented by the citations used in the texts and footnotes of this chapter.