

The Upside-Down “Life”

The Upside-Down Kingdom—part 4

December 19, 2021

DAY 1: The incarnation: The “Word” in the flesh

*John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
2 He was with God in the beginning.*

1. In Greek philosophy the Greek word *logos* (translated Word) was used by philosophers as the term to describe “the explanation” for the great philosophical questions. Is there a God? What is the purpose for life? What is the meaning of life? To John’s Gentile readers this would automatically capture their attention and imagination!

2. John answers these questions in what theologians call the prologue of John’s gospel, John 1:1-18.

3. John uses this same term about Jesus, saying the answer we’re looking for is found in Him!

4. One of the descriptive names for Jesus Christ is “the Word.” What do we learn about the Word?

a. John begins with His eternal nature. “In the beginning...” In the context of the chapter, “beginning” does not refer to our human beginning or the universe’s beginning. To understand today what John is saying think of it reading... “in the beginning beginning...”

b. “The Word was *with* God.”

The Greek word for “with” is *pros*, which in this context points us to He was “in company with” God.

c. “The Word was God.”

Jesus is God. John points to the divinity of Christ.

d. “He was in the beginning with God.”

The “Word” is a person! He is not a force, a power, an idea, or a concept. He is personal and relational.

5. When we celebrate Christmas we celebrate far more than a baby’s birth. We are celebrating the entrance of God into our world as a human being, fully divine and fully human.

John 1:3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.

6. Next, we learn that Jesus was not a creature, but the Creator!

7. What strikes you from today’s devotional?

DAY 2: Jesus, the life

*John 1:4 **In him was life**, and that life was the light of all mankind.*

1. The Greek word for “life” is *zoe*.

2. There are different meanings for “life”:

- Physical life—which came with creation.
- Eternal life (1)—quantitatively, beginning on earth and never-ending in heaven
- Eternal life (2) – qualitatively, as in life “to the fullest,” or “abundant” life.
- Eternal life (3) or sometimes just referred to as “life”—the life found in Christ, the gospel treasure, enabling man to know and love God, and love people, and experience “life to the fullest.”

3. This last meaning of “life” is the one John is highlighting in John 1. It is also the meaning in the next verse.

John 17:3 Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

4. Back in John 1:4, John records that this “life” was not just embodied in Him, but *is* Him. He *is* the life.

*John 14:6 “**I am** the way and the truth and **the life**.”*

5. Under each of the verses below, jot down what strikes you about this “life”.

John 5:26 For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself.

John 6:57 Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me.

John 20:31 But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

6. What strikes you from today’s devotional?

DAY 3: Jesus, the Life!

1. We continue with our study of Jesus, the life.
2. Under each of the following verses, jot down what you learn about this life.

John 8:12 When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

John 5:26 For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself.

John 6:53 Very truly I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.

John 11:25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies;

John 14:6 Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

3. This "life" has the following characteristics to it.
 - a. It is found in Christ.
 - b. We begin to experience this life when we see Christ as the deepest answer to the hunger of the human heart. Until that happens we will expect and live as if something else or someone else can provide the "life" we crave.
 - c. As we will see, sometimes we experience the life we hunger for by paradoxically giving it away to others.
 - d. When we depend on God's love for our deepest needs, and then, in turn seek to love others the way we've been loved, we experience this life.
4. What strikes you from today's devotional?

DAY 4: The life that provides light

John 1:4 In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind.

1. What do you think John means by “light”?

2. The “life” we find in Christ is not just another word for satisfaction or blessing. As John writes here, that life also provides needed illumination.

3. Light is also a metaphor for

- Morality,
- Moral understanding, and
- Shining the way toward moral living.

4. Light is also a metaphor for spiritual understanding and for perspective.

The light of revelation instructs us at to the following:

- Who God is,
- Who Jesus is,
- Who we are meant to be (like Jesus),
- Who we are apart from Christ,
- Our human value
- Our value to God
- What is wrong with us, our sin nature,
- What is most important in life,
- How we are meant to live,
- How we are meant to relate,
- What it means to love,
- What heaven is like
- What hell is like, etc.

5. Light is a metaphor for that which can guide us. It shows the right path, both in the short-term and the long-term.

Psalms 119:105 Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

6. What strikes you about the light of Jesus?

DAY 5: The paradox to finding real life

1. Finding real life does not happen in a vacuum. Though we can experience of the life of Christ individually, by ourselves, it is magnified when we give that life away to others in relationship, in everyday conversations.
2. The paradox is this. When you are in a conversation and are just itching to share something about yourself, tell your story, your joke, and pass up the opportunities to be a blessing to your friend by taking an interest *in them*, both of you miss out on experiencing the life of Christ.
3. It is only when we focus our interest and attention on someone else that we find ourselves pouring the life of Christ out of our heart and into the heart of someone else. Then both people experience the life of Christ.

The paradox is this: death precedes life.

Mark 8:34 Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ³⁵ For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it. ³⁶ What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? ³⁷ Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?

4. In the following verses, underline or highlight where you see this paradox.

2 Cor. 5:15 And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.

2 Cor. 5:21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

2 Cor. 6:7 in truthful speech and in the power of God; with weapons of righteousness in the right hand and in the left; 8 through glory and dishonor, bad report and good report; genuine, yet regarded as impostors; 9 known, yet regarded as unknown; dying, and yet we live on; beaten, and yet not killed; 10 sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing everything.

2 Cor. 8:9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.

John 12:24 Unless a grain of wheat dies it remains alone, but if it dies it bears much fruit.

Philippians 2:5 In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: ⁶ Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; ⁷ rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross! ⁹ Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

5. What strikes you from today's devotional?