

"In him was life;..." John 1:4a.

Verse 4 is at once a transition verse that leads us from the creative work of the Logos to His redemptive work. Life is the gift of the Logos to His creation. The attribute of Life is exclusive to the Logos. Only the Logos possesses Life:

" Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen." 1 Tim. 6:16.

The first three verses certainly tell of this exclusivity of Life: please remember that John is writing in a polemic fashion in refutation of the growing heresy originating from Alexandrian Jewish thought - particularly the "philosopher" Philo of Alexandria. Inherent in his presentation of logos was that he was the firstborn of God in that logos was the first born / created by God. There was a lot of uncertainty in connection with Philo's representation of logos - to the point that there was question whether logos was really a person or merely the thought of God. The Complete Biblical Library says that Philo's logos was a *personification* not a *person*. Therein lies the "rub" as is said. It is a frontal attack on the Person of Jesus Christ - the Son of God.

This is why the first three verses is such a powerful argument for the true essence of the Person of Christ - the Logos. This is why John presents Jesus Christ as the Logos - to counter a very dangerous error of representing Jesus Christ as everything from a righteous man - even the prophet of prophets¹ to merely an apparition - a sort of ghostly appearance for the accommodation of man. Later on Cerinthus and then Gnosticism attacked the person of Jesus Christ by splintering His Person into two persons: the divine and the human. Some variations go so far as to say that the two natures were in union only during his earthly ministry (from after his baptism) and that just before the cross there was a division of the two natures again for, according to their thought, divinity cannot have contact with sin and therefore the necessity of the division of Jesus' natures. Utter devilish error that completely bypasses the redemptive work of Jesus Christ.

So we have the Unique God-Man, Jesus Christ - a real Person who is about to be represented as the Life giver - the light giver of creation, specifically of man. But I anticipate the lesson.

There are three focal points of John's gospel.

1. The unique Person of Christ is offered to man.
2. His Life/Light is offered to man.
3. His Love is offered to man.

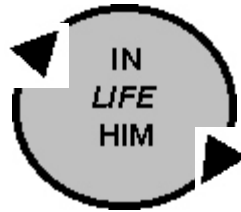
"In him was life;..." The first half of verse 4 refers to the Life of the Logos. The second half of verse 4 offers that Life / Light to man.

Here's my working translation of verse four:

¹ As does Muslim thought in the Koran.

Summed up in Him eternally was the essence of life and the life was eternally the light, the luminary of the men.

"In him..." (Gk = *prep év.*) I would like to illustrate this preposition in this way:



This is the force of *év - en*. The meaning of "In him" is that of summing up all life and placing it in the Logos. The Logos, having this life in Himself communicated this life to creation. See Thayer, Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, on ζωή par. 2, a - the Logos was the only source of this life. Lenski frequently uses the term "in connection with." In this case the relationship between "The Life" and the Logos is inclusive - only the Logos has Life.

"...was..." Durative, imperfect of ἐμί. This case reaches back into eternity and establishes the existence of this Life. Further examination shows from Jesus' own testimony -

For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; John 5:26.

That this is an eternal state - reaching back into before creation and into eternity future. Please note that the thought "...so hath he given ..." does not imply that at one time the Son did not have "Life" - but as a historical aorist rather refers to the incarnation. Note in verse 27 that authority was given to the Him because He was the *the Son of man*. Rule out the idea that at one time the Son of God did not have *Life*. There was a time in the Father's Plan for the Incarnation and in that sense was given *Life* and also *Authority*.

"...life..." anarthrous denoting the quality or essence of life. There are three Greek words that are translated "life" in the New Testament.

ζωέ (*zoe*) meaning the essence of life.

Zoe refers to the essence of life - the opposite of death.²

βίος (*bios*) meaning period of time or manner of life.

ψυχή (*psuche*) actually translated also as soul, mind, heart, person, self and life. Literally, the breath of life or physical life.³

All living beings - animal and man owe their existence to the Logos. There was no

² Rom. 8:38.

³ See John 10:11.

primordial "soup" from which simple cells were spontaneously generated and from there more complex life forms. No. The Genesis account and New Testament accounts state categorically that Jesus Christ is the Creator and giver of life to all creatures. But this statement goes much further than this. ζωέ refers to the very essence of God, Himself and so we are introduced to the life/light statement in the second half of this verse:

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

There are several places where this association is stated in God's word. Here are a couple:

Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, 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.

For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light.
Psalm 36:9.

All creatures owe their existence to the Logos - He spoke them into existence. But this life/light relationship brings us to a much higher level. When God created man He breathed into man the breath of *lives* - a plural expression.⁴ We always translate this in the singular however. But the point is this: man was not created to merely be an animate being but to share in God's spiritual life! This is the point of the life/light statements of God's word. Note our passage in John. There is supposed to, by divine design to be a walk. This suggests a way of life but it goes further than this. Remember the passage of the resurrected Christ and the disciples who were traveling to Emmaus?⁵ The walk here is not just the physical motion but the strong suggestion is that of manner of life and of fellowship. We will cover the subject of darkness in our next lesson but the point here is that true life is not merely animal life but that of both our humanity and the life that the Lord gives to mankind - spiritual life.

The **light** of life tells us of Jesus' illumination - His divine truth - His holiness - His blessedness to mankind. Lenski makes the connection of this light to the pillar that the Hebrews followed in the desert. That pillar denoted guidance, illumination, presence, protection and more. So it is with the light of life for mankind.

Our passage from Psalm describes the Lord as the fountain of life. We need to understand the context from which this is given. The geographical area from which this was written was basically an arid area. Springs and wells were a very important part of survival. When the psalmist refers to the Lord as the fountain of life there is a strong suggestion of basic survival. But there is more. As in the desert the presence of the pillar meant that the Hebrews would survive and more than this - that they would

⁴ And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul. Gen. 2:7. Masc Pl of chay (khah-ee).

⁵ Luke 24:13-32.

receive the Lord's light (the law) and His understanding (the work of Moses as prophet) and His presence in their own lives (the ministry of the Holy Spirit in individual lives). So the Lord offers to all mankind, who would believe in Him, survival, indeed a personal walk with Him and as we will soon study - eternal life.

Without this light/life all other human life must come under the category of death.⁶ It not just that man is condemned to an eternal hell but that without this life/light he is spiritually *dead*.⁷

From the land of the dead to the land of the living.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. John 5:24.

Please note the last portion of this passage: literally the sinner who hears His word and believes on Him who sent Jesus (mutually inclusive association) transitions from *death* unto (denoting entrance) *life*. What was the difference? Before the sinner was walking, talking, expressing himself but he was dead! He heard the Gospel - was convicted of his sin and believed on the Lord as Savior and he now is characterized as *living*. It's the spiritual life that Jesus imparted that made the difference. The force of this word / image is that of passage from one place to another.

Paul makes this experience that of deliverance from the power or authority of darkness - Satan's kingdom and the sinner becoming a citizen of Christ's kingdom.⁸ The plain fact is that man was born once to be born again - the spiritual birth where he truly becomes alive, in Christ. So, again, unsaved human life is characterized as death, but the believing man possesses ageless life - he is passed from death unto life.

The image of Christ as the vine.

I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. John 15:5.

“...without me ye can do nothing...” can = gk 2 per, pl, pres, ind of δύναμις (*dunamis*) - inherent power residing in the vine, with the emphatic negative along with the present tense means there is never any inherent power for imparting life apart from Christ. Cut the branch from the vine and it dies - the connection, however is permanent. We have His life eternally.

⁶ He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him. John 3:36.

⁷ Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) Eph 2:5.

⁸ Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: Colossians 1:13.

Back to John 1:4. “...and the life was the light of men.” “And” here is a progression of thought. The force of καί (and) is that of transition to the theme of the Life/Light being offered to man. We must leave off here and pick things up next time.