

The Light of Life

Read: Genesis 2, John 11:17-45

HN, SS 28/12/03 am

Study: John 1:3-5

Psalms: 27:1-4, 36:5-11, 119:129-136, 63:1-4

In the beginning was the word. We have seen in the first two verses that the word- the second person of the Trinity – was there in the beginning with God. *He was in the beginning with God.* Now in verses 2-5 we learn something more about the Word. We learn what he did there in the beginning. We learn what his ministry unto men is.

Remember this is the prologue, the brief and concise introduction to the doctrines which will be outlined in this gospel. In this text we are introduced to three of these doctrines.

Creator

The word was active in the creation there in the beginning. Genesis 1 is the context we are taken to as we start reading this gospel – *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.* In Genesis 1:26 is evidence of the plurality of the Godhead – of more than one person in the Godhead – *let us make man in our image.* John identifies the word, Jesus Christ, as being part of the Godhead of creation – *all things were made through him.*

We find the same truth in others passages of Scripture. Colossians 1:16 – *for by him all things were created, things visible and invisible.* And in Hebrews 1:2 – *through whom also he made the worlds.* With one voice therefore the Scriptures tell us that God the Son created all things. Together with the God the Father and God the Holy Spirit, he was active in creation.

John goes on to set this truth in negative terms just to make sure we understand – *without him nothing was made that was made.* There is a fullness, a totality here. There is nothing in this universe that was not created by Him. Man has great ability to build things from what was created and to change things, but he cannot create anything-least of all life as we will see.

Jesus Christ came into this world 2000 years ago but he existed long before that – he existed from eternity. He took on flesh and blood and entered this world as a baby. He was despised and rejected by men. He was condemned to death, to the cruel death of crucifixion. They failed to see that this Jesus whom they crucified was God the Son, that he was part of the Godhead that created all things including man.

Not only do we see a unity in the creating Godhead – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – but also a unity in the work of the Son. The Jesus we proclaim as the word became flesh, the Jesus we proclaim as redeemer, as our saviour from sin, is the same Jesus who made all things in the beginning. We cannot believe that the world came about by some sort of 'big bang' or evolutionary process and at the same time believe in a Jesus who is our saviour from sin. Jesus who is our saviour is also Jesus who created all things according to this Scripture.

Light

As we seek to understand the concepts of light and life we must continue to look at Genesis 1 and 2- at least for a starting point. Some people want to jump into a spiritual understanding of these terms – which is here of course. But we can learn from the physical aspects as related in Genesis – indeed we should probably be less eager than we are to draw this line between the physical and the spiritual.

At creation there was darkness over the face of the deep. *Then God said let there be light and there was light.* Then on the fourth day he made the sun and the moon. In Revelation 21 we learn that God himself is light – God Almighty and the Lamb. There is no need for sun or moon in the new heaven and the new earth – God himself is the source of light.

God made the sun to give light to the earth. That light sustains all life. Without the sun plants would not grow and we would have no food. We tend to forget this in the city where we can flick a switch and there is the light. But for many in the world still their life is governed by the sun, by day and by night. Pagan man lives in fear of the sun and its power. Some worship the sun. The sun is a religious symbol to many people.

Now when Jesus says, *I am the light of the world*, what does he mean? He is not talking only about physical light; he is talking about spiritual light. He is talking about light that enters the heart of man, because the sinful heart is described as being full of darkness. The wicked prefer darkness to light for their deeds are evil. He is the light that reveals the truth of mans heart.

Nathaniel was amazed to learn that Jesus saw him under the fig tree and that he knew him as a man in *whom is no deceit*. Jesus knew what was in man, he knew all men. Jesus opened the eyes of the man born blind. But more importantly this man's heart was opened and he believed, while the 'seeing' Pharisees remained in their blindness.

So just as the light created by God dispelled the darkness in the beginning, so the Light that he sent into this world dispels the darkness of sin that entered every human heart at the Fall.

Light is more powerful than darkness. Darkness is not so much the opposite of light but the absence of light. It is very difficult to escape the powerful rays of light coming from the sun. Have you ever tried to keep out the light from a room on a bright sunny day? Yet with a small candle you can see into a dark room at night.

Our text says that *the light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not comprehend it*. Some translate *did not overcome it*. The verb *lit* means to 'take hold of'. So it could mean that the darkness was not able to overcome or to quench the powerful light. It can also mean those in darkness did not take hold of the light as they had opportunity. They did not comprehend, did not appropriate the light for themselves. In the context of what follows this would be the preferred understanding – for there we read – *he came to his own but his own did not receive him* 1:11 (although compare 12:35).

Life

Life is a major theme running through John's gospel from start to finish. It is a theme by which this gospel speaks to man today just as it did 2000 years ago. What is life many ask? It is difficult to define life, much less to understand the meaning of life. Some people try anything and everything in a desperate search for the meaning of life. They try religion, philosophies, drugs, sex, materialism and so on in the search for meaning. For some the meaning of life is to go hunting for bargains at post Christmas sales – retail therapy I heard it called.

In our scientific age we are led to believe that life is in our hands or in the hands of the scientist. We are in control of our life. We are told to make our own destiny. But does it work. No. Things always happen that our outside our control. Oh -man is powerful to take life away just like Satan, but is powerless to give life.

We are not making a distinction between the physical and spiritual as yet. Why? Well again we go back to Genesis 2 where we also find life spoken of. Genesis 2:7 *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 being.* God gave life to man. Our text tells us that the word, God the Son, was life. John 14:6 says: Jesus said, *I am the way the truth and **the life**.* In I John he is called *the word of life – The life that was manifested.*

Man became a living being but what happened? He sinned and he died. Death entered the world through sin. Man's heart became spiritually dead as he was separated from the source of life. And he died physically when the time came.

In him was life and the life was the light of men. Jesus is the light of the world, and he is the life, the giver of life to all who believe. Light and life are closely related as we have already seen with the sun in the sky – so with the Son of God. John 8:12 – *I am the light of the world. He who follows me shall not walk in darkness, but have **the light of life**.*

Jesus came to reverse or to undo the effects of the Fall. He came to give new life to those who believe in him. He came to destroy the one who has the power of death, viz. the devil. In John 11 we see the power of Jesus displayed in giving life to the dead, the very dead Lazarus. He was raised from physical death and presumably died again later. But Jesus declared to Martha *I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in me shall never die.* He is talking here about a different life. He is talking not only about physical life but about eternal life.

Do you know what it means to have eternal life? There are many so called Christians who do not know what eternal life is. I remember overhearing some such people once as they asked one another what does this talk about eternal life mean. They live in this vague hope that they will go to heaven when they die. But Jesus said that if you believe you have eternal life now – here and now.

Most assuredly I say to you, he who hears my words and believes in him who sent me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life (5:24). Do you believe this? – that is what Jesus asked Martha.

How wonderful, how blessed you are if you believe and have eternal life in Jesus Christ. This is not something optional but the very essence of your salvation. Sin brought death – Jesus brought life. To know him is to have eternal life (17:3). *Whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life.*

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