

The Life and Light of Men (John 1:4-5)^a

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John 1:4-5

In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.¹

Life

1. Continued parallels between Genesis 1 (“in the beginning”) and John 1 (“in the beginning”)
2. *life, light, and darkness* themes of Genesis 1 and John 1
3. John uses the word “life” **36 times**, whereas no other NT writing has it more than 17 (Revelation; Romans = 14; 1John = 13)
4. Life in Jesus
 - A. “For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself” (John 5:26)
 - B. “. . . whoever believes in Him . . . have everlasting *life*” (John 3:16)
 - C. Eating/drinking Him required for life (John 6:53-54)
 - D. “I am the resurrection and the *life*” (John 11:25)
 - E. “I am the way, the truth, and the *life*” (John 14:6)
 - F. “. . . as You [the Father] have given Him [the Son] authority over all flesh, that He should give *eternal life* to as many as You have given Him” (John 17:2)
 - G. Not possible for death to hold Jesus (Acts 2:24)
 - H. “The *prince* (ἀρχηγὸν [*archēnon*]) of life” (Acts 3:15)
 - I. Same root word as “in the *beginning*”
 - II. Emphasizes: originator, initiator, founder, author

III. “source of life” (HCSB)

IV. “*originator* of life” (NET)

V. “*author* of life” (ESV)

I. Has the keys of hades and death (Rev. 1:18)

I. Has the authority and the means to release men from the clutches/prison of death

II. “Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself [Jesus] likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who *through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage*” (Heb. 2:14-15)

5. Life upheld moment by moment, on a continual basis

A. “ If He should set His heart on it, [If] He should gather to Himself His Spirit and His breath, All flesh would perish together, And man would return to dust” (Job 34:14-15)

B. One commentator has said . . .

The entire cosmos depends upon God’s will for its continued existence just as much as it did for its initial creation. While we type this, and while you read it, our fingers and your eyes continue to exist only because God upholds them. It is inadequate to imagine God as a cosmic clockmaker, first creating the universe, designing it to operate in a certain way, winding it up and then leaving it to tick along on its own. The fact that the universe continues to function as it does, and that certain actions have certain consequences, needs to be seen in the light of God’s continued, intentional, active, sustaining involvement.²

C. Trinitarian implications

I. Holy Spirit - life giver

Job 27:3; 33:4; Eze. 37:9,14; [John 6:63]; Rev. 11:11

II. A title of the Father, “the living God”

Deu. 5:26; Jos. 3:10; 1S. 17:26,36; 2K. 19:4,16; Ps. 42:2; Ps. 84:2; Isa. 37:4,17; Jer. 10:10; Jer. 23:36; Dan. 6:20,26; Hos. 1:10

Light

1. Creation models the stages or steps of enlightenment

A. 1 = “darkness (חֹשֶׁךְ [hōšek]) was on the face of the deep (תְּהוֹם [tehôm])” (Gen. 1:2)

I. Spiritual darkness, lack of light

II. *darkness* (חֹשֶׁךְ [hōšek]) - “note: there are many associative meanings to “darkness,” including terror, ignorance, sadness, confusion, evil”³

III. *deep* (תְּהוֹמִים [tehôm]) - “an area below the surface of bodies of water, a dark, inaccessible, inexhaustible, and mysterious place controlled only by objects with vast powers”⁴

B. 2 = “Spirit of God was *hovering* (רָחַף [rāḥaḥāp̄]) over the face of the waters” (Gen 1:2)

I. Incubation by the Spirit

II. *hovering* (רָחַף [rāḥaḥāp̄]) - “a non-linear flying motion of an object which is stationary above a surface, with a possibly associative meaning of *caring superintendence over an object* (Ge 1:2; Dt 32:11+)”⁵ [emphasis mine]

C. 3 = “Then God *said*, ‘Let there be light’”

I. The first creative act: *light* - separating light and darkness (a theme of John 1)

II. Revelation = light

III. This is the work of God's special revelation, His Word, revealing to man what could not otherwise be found out — leading man out of darkness

IV. This is also the path of evangelism leading to regeneration

2. begin in darkness, work of the Spirit, then light

3. Emphasizes the separation

A. “God divided the light from the darkness” (Gen. 1:4, 7, 14, 18)

4. Attribute of God (“God is light”, 1Jn. 1:5)

5. A light to the Gentiles

A. “I, the LORD, have called You in righteousness, And will hold Your hand; I will keep You and give You as a covenant to the people, As a *light to the Gentiles*, To open blind eyes, To bring out prisoners from the prison, Those who sit in darkness from the prison house” (Isa. 42:6-7)

B. Why the GENTILES, why not the Jews too?

I. They already had the OT revelation — this emphasizes Jesus' role as the *Word*, the revelation of God similar to the Scriptures

6. shines (present tense)

A. literally: “and the light *in the darkness* it is shining”

I. contrast between light and dark emphasized

B. φαίνει [*phainei*] - become visible, make known - the idea of REVEALING

7. “the life was the light of men”

A. “With God is the foundation of life; in your light we see light” (Ps. 36:9)

B. Blindness in John: a picture of death

I. John 9 - Jesus heals man “born blind” (a picture of our spiritual deadness at birth)

a. To the Pharisees: “if you were blind, you would have no sin; but now you say, ‘we see.’ Therefore your sin remains” (John 9:41)

8. “the darkness did not comprehend (κατέλαβεν [*katelaben*]) it” (NKJV)

A. κατέλαβεν [*katelaben*] - lay ahold of something so as to make it one's own

I. acquire, obtain, attack, seize, arrest, overpower

II. comprehend, grasp, learn about

III. “the darkness has not *mastered* it” (NET)

IV. “the darkness did not *overcome* it” (HCSB)

B. people love darkness rather than light (John 3:19)

C. Jesus came as light, so that whoever believes should not abide in darkness (John 12:46)

9. Jesus as light of the world (John 9:5; 12:35-36)

A. “[Jesus] was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world” (John 1:9)

10. Light is equated with revelation

A. Jesus' presence on earth referred to as a time when “you have the light” (John 8:12; 9:5)

B. Coming out of darkness is equated with belief in Jesus

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Endnotes:

1. [NKJV](#), [John 1:4-5](#)
2. [Ref-1291](#), 107
3. [Ref-0618](#), #3125
4. [Ref-0618](#), #9333
5. [Ref-0618](#), #8173

Sources:

- NKJV** Unless indicated otherwise, all Scripture references are from the *New King James Version*, copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.
- Ref-0618** James Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages With Semantic Domains : Hebrew (Old Testament)*, electronic ed. (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997).
- Ref-1291** Steve Jeffery, Michael Ovey, Andrew Sach, *Pierced for Our Transgressions: Rediscovering the Glory of Penal Substitution* (Nottingham, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 2007). ISBN:[978-1-4335-0108-1](#)^d.

Links Mentioned Above

- [a](http://www.spiritandtruth.org/teaching/John_by_Tony_Garland/003_John_1_4-5/index.htm) - See http://www.spiritandtruth.org/teaching/John_by_Tony_Garland/003_John_1_4-5/index.htm.
- [b](http://www.spiritandtruth.org/id/tg.htm) - See <http://www.spiritandtruth.org/id/tg.htm>.
- [c](http://www.spiritandtruth.org) - See <http://www.spiritandtruth.org>.
- [d](http://www.spiritandtruth.org/id/isbn.htm?978-1-4335-0108-1) - See <http://www.spiritandtruth.org/id/isbn.htm?978-1-4335-0108-1>.