



In Him was life,
and the life was
the Light of men.

John 1:4

It is not surprising that we, mere humans, have such a hard time understanding this. We live in an environment filled with things—both living and otherwise—that sprang from something else. Look around you; what is there, in your sight, that did not come from something else?

The books on the shelf across the room came from trees and cotton plants, their words from the minds of authors influenced by others. The carpet beneath my feet came either from sheep or spun chemicals. My desk was hewn from the wood of one or more trees. The walls of this room were made from the wood of trees, and thin slabs of pulverized stone wrapped in paper from trees. Outside my window are actual trees, all of which sprang either from seed or root. All the bushes, flowers and grass originated, in one way or another, from something somewhere else. The water in the pond came from the clouds drifting by in the sky; those clouds were formed from moisture gathered somewhere else on the planet. The fish in the pond were birthed somewhere else.

Everything around us came from somewhere else. Living things around us—and including us—were birthed by something or someone older.

So it is not surprising at all that we have such a hard time grasping the truth that the Son of God, incarnated on earth as Jesus, did not spring from something or someone else. He did not acquire His life from a parent, or an external source.

There was life in the word with respect to himself; a divine life, the same with the life of the Father and of the Spirit; and is in him, not by gift, nor by derivation or communication; but originally, and independently, and from all eternity.

John Gill

Because Christ the Word created, from nothing else, all that is on earth, He is the ultimate

source of its life. That He is the source is a given—a law of nature, as it were. It is not dependent on any external agency or recognition by man. It just is. Those who do not believe it do not alter its truth.

In Him was life. . .

The scope of His life given to man does not end with that, however, for He did not wash His hands of the earth once it was created. After the Son of God created life in the world, He then brought a new and expanded form of Life to earth in the person of Jesus.

The Son did not carry Life as a parcel from heaven to earth. “Here, Jesus, I’ve packed your satchel, wrapped it strongly with twine. Life is fragile, so be careful with bumps along the way. And since Life is perishable, keep it in a cool, dry place once you get there.”

No, it didn’t work that way. Jesus was not a courier, transporting Life to earth for someone else. He made it. He gives it breath. He sustains it. He embodies it. Jesus *is* life.

What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life—and the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us—

1 John 1:1-2

Adam proved that the original life of his creation was not sufficient. He had breath, he had being, he had a spirit, he had a soul. But he discovered something else in him that nullified the rest: sin. The existence of sin meant Adam’s end would be death—death and darkness. Sin meant that his end would be an eternity away from the God who made him, and who had happily communed with him up till then.

So God, knowing that the basic, material life of creation was not sufficient, and wishing to restore His communion with man, sent new Life—*eternal* life—to man in the person of Jesus.

“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.”

John 3:16

. . .and the life was the Light of men.

Every Christmas we remember and celebrate the moment when the Son, as the baby Jesus, entered our world with His new Life. But we celebrate, as well, His *light*.

Unlike the Cynic Diogenes, who carried a lighted lamp through the streets of Athens looking for an honest man, Jesus did not come *carrying* a light, nor was He looking for an honest man. Jesus came *as* the Light, proclaiming His own illumination to enlighten not “honest men,” but sinners.

Since Adam’s fall, man had been born into darkness. The dim light of this world is a false and deceiving illumination. It tricks the ignorant into believing lies—into believing that what is really there is better than it truly is. The Light of Jesus is the true, informing, enlightening Light without which the world, and all who will not believe, will perish.

Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, “I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life.”

John 8:12

The Light transforms our earthly vision. It removes the veil of lies and gives us the ability to see the world as it truly is: Beauty yellowing and curling up at the edges, majesty that cannot live forever, compassion tinged with guile, love made fragile by conditions, life that is already dying.

With His Light we understand our own weaknesses, but we now understand them in the context of His grace. We can stand unflinching in the light of His presence, imperfect but forgiven.

Those who have Jesus have Life—*real* life: life to the full presently, and life in His glory eternally. Those who have Jesus also have Light—light that shines the white beam of truth into the darkest corner of our sad habitation.

And all of that is there, embodied in the Child nestled quietly in the manger. 

Reasonable creatures have their *light* from him; that *life* which is *the light of men* comes from him. Life in man is something greater and nobler than it is in other creatures; it is *rational*, and not merely *animal*. When man became a *living soul*, his life was *light*, his capacities such as distinguished him from, and dignified him above, the beasts that perish. *The spirit of a man is the candle of the Lord*, and it was the eternal Word that lighted this candle. The light of reason, as well as the life of sense, is derived from him, and depends upon him. This proves him fit to undertake our salvation; for life and light, spiritual and eternal life and light, are the two great things that fallen man, who lies so much under the power of *death* and *darkness*, has need of. From whom may we better expect the light of divine revelation than from him who gave us the light of human reason? And if, when God gave us natural life, that life was in his Son, how readily should we receive the gospel-record, that he hath given us *eternal* life, and *that life* too *is in his Son!*

Matthew Henry