

## John 1:1-4 His Word is Light and Life

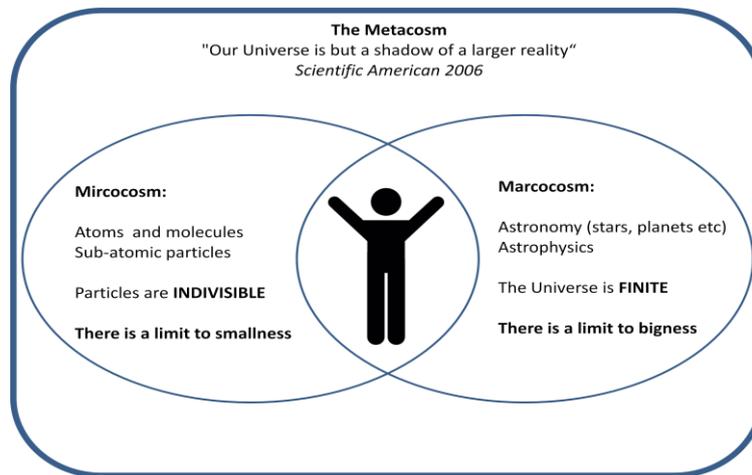
The Bible tells us that God's word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path (Psalm 119:105). When it is dark, we need a light, such as a torch, to see our way. Likewise, in life we need guidance, which can be found in God's word. However, we need to be Berean Christians who examine the Scriptures to see if the things we hear are true (Acts 17:11). We shouldn't uncritically swallow everything we hear. Yet the Bereans also received the word with all eagerness. This can be especially difficult if we are struggling in our faith. There are many ideas around these days that can make us immediately suspicious of the Bible. For example, many, including some politicians, believe that the Bible condones slavery. But when you read and study the Bible for yourself you find a very different message. God is a loving and powerful God who wants to set people free from slavery! This is why it was Bible believing evangelical Christians who lead the abolitionist movement in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. And it was why so many of the African American slaves got such strength from the Exodus motif, believing that God would set them free also. Sometimes we need to set our presuppositions to one side and come afresh to the Scriptures.

With that thought, let's ask, *Why did John write his gospel?* Was it to make us religious? Was it to write a good story? No! John tells us why: *these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name* [John 20:31]. John wrote so that we his readers might have Life (also called eternal life in John). Life is a main theme in John's gospel. For example, in John 10:10 it says, *The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.* Abundantly means, generously, lavishly, richly, profusely, inexhaustibly. John introduces this theme of Life in the prologue: *In him was life, and the life was the light of men* (John 1:4). Then, in John 1:1-2 John shows us the origin of this Life, which is the Word (the *logos*). This abundant Life finds its origin in God.

The Synoptic gospels begin with Jesus as a human being. But John goes back much further than the historical person of Jesus. He begins before time itself. Is this possible? Many scientists who are also atheists assume that since science only works within the realm of time and space, there can be no reality outside of time and space. Reality, they believe, can be only understood by observing the material world (a form of materialism). Therefore God cannot exist.

If we come to the Bible with this mindset we will soon run into problems. It will prevent us receiving the word gladly, for this simple reason, the people who wrote the Bible weren't materialists. They believed in a God who stands outside of space and time and the created order.

Yet science itself is now coming to interesting conclusions. Scientists who study the microcosm study the world of atoms and sub-atomic particles. They have discovered that particles are INDIVISIBLE, i.e. there is a limit to smallness. Scientists who study the macrocosm study the world of astronomy and astro-physics. They have discovered there is a limit to bigness, i.e. the Universe is FINITE. Therefore there must be reality that is smaller than small and bigger than big (the metacosm). In 2005, an article in Scientific American confirmed this view, *Our Universe is but a shadow of a larger reality.* But this is what the Bible has been saying all along. It talks about invisible things, things that we can and ought, at least to an extent, recognise and appreciate (Romans 1:20).



John begins his gospel talking about these invisible things, which existed before the creation of the Universe. There are clearly similarities between John 1:1 and Genesis 1:1. Both begin with the words, *In the beginning ... God*. This is not a coincidence; John is drawing a parallel, which he develops further in the prologue.

Yet if we are struggling in our faith we will stumble over the very first verse in the Bible! We want proof that God exists, then, we think, we will believe! But neither Genesis nor John give us any proof, they just say, *In the beginning ... God*. The website gotquestions.org says,

"The existence of God cannot be proved or disproved. The Bible says that we must accept by faith the fact that God exists: "And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him"  
 (Hebrews 11:6)

Convincing proofs of God exist, but it is equally possible to give convincing proofs that God does not exist. Trying to prove the existence of God to someone who doesn't believe can be a thankless task. The reason is because the only way we can come to God is by faith, and faith, by definition, believes that He exists.

There are also differences between John 1:1 and Genesis 1:1. John adds extra words, which act as a kind of commentary on Genesis 1. A 'word' is *that by which the inward thought is expressed*. A 'word' is something spoken. We find this idea of the spoken word many times in the creation story: *God said ... and there was*. According to Genesis, creation itself and life on earth exists because of God's powerful and creative Word, by which He spoke everything into existence. In doing so He brought order out of chaos and filled emptiness with abundant life. He wants to do the same in our lives!

The idea of the Word as co-existent with God was not original to John. Philo, a famous Hellenistic Jew from Alexandria (in North Africa) wrote, *The most universal of all things is God; and in the second place the Word of God*. He said, *The shadow of God is His Word, which He used like an instrument when He was making the world*. John puts it this way, *All things were made through Him* (John 1:3). John presents the Word (who is a 'Him') as the Creative Agent of Creation, and who in some way is eternally co-existent with God, and who is God.

While this was not a new idea, the idea that the Word became flesh (John 1:14) in the person of Jesus Christ; and that Jesus was the Lamb of God who died on the cross to take away the sin of the world, was utterly new.

It is interesting, not to say somewhat mysterious, that *God* in Genesis 1:1 is in the plural (Elohim). This implies a Godhead, of at least two, God and the Word. In Genesis 1:2 we also have the Spirit, who hovered over the waters, making three, in the one Godhead.

John continues to make parallel with the creation account in Genesis 1,

	<b>Genesis 1</b>	<b>John 1</b>
<b>Pre-Creation</b>	In the beginning (v1)	In the beginning (v1)
<b>The Word</b>	And God said (v3,6,9,11,14,20,2,26)	was the Word (1-2)
<b>Creation</b>	The 6 days of creation	All things were made through Him (v3)
<b>Light (Day 1)</b>	Let there be light (v3)	In Him was life, and the life was the light of men (v4)
<b>Darkness (Day 1)</b>	God separates light from darkness (v4)	The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it (v5)
<b>Humans (Day 6)</b>	Creation of human beings in His image, male and female (v27)	Re-creation of human beings in His image (v12-13)

John is making these parallels because he recognises that the Word become flesh signifies the beginning of a new creation, which is our redemption. Simply put, God gives humanity a second chance.

John is writing that his readers might have Life in His Name, a Life that was lost at the Fall through sin. He points us to faith in Jesus the Son of God, who is the Word, and the Source.

Genesis however presents us with a problem. How is it possible that God could create light on Day 1 when the Sun, Moon and stars were only created on Day 4? With a scientific mindset it's impossible. How can we have light without a source? But I think John gives us insight into the nature of the light on Day 1. It wasn't a physical light, but the supernatural light of God's Presence, the Light of his Life! In other words, that which John calls *The Word* is the true origin of all LIFE on earth. In fact, at the end of the Bible, where we get a glimpse of the new creation, yet to come, it says, *There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will be their light. And they will reign forever and ever* (Revelation 22:5).

Amen