

3. THE CREATIVE WORK OF CHRIST (1:3-5)

NOTE: Some of the content in this section may be a little technical, so do not allow it to detract you from the doctrinal truths that John is teaching us in these verses.

There are several questions that the scientific world cannot answer, a couple of which come out of the above text. The first is what is life? If you had to look up the word life in the Oxford English Dictionary you would find the phrase, “animate existence”. Then if you looked up either of those words you would find that they are both defined with the word “life”. None of these definitions are helpful as they use one another to define what the other is – this is circular reasoning. Another definition is, “The period between the birth and death of a living thing”. Again, not much help as it too contains similar circular reasoning.

The Encyclopaedia Britannica attempts a fuller definition:

“Much is known about life from points of view reflected in the various biological, or ‘life’ sciences. These include anatomy (the study of form at the visible level), ultrastructure (the study of form at the microscopic level), physiology (the study of function), molecular biology and biochemistry (the study of form and function at chemical levels), ecology (the study of the relations of organisms with their environments), taxonomy (the naming, identifying, and classifying of organisms), ethology (the study of animal behaviour), and sociobiology (the study of social behaviour). Specific sciences that participate in the study of life focus more narrowly on certain *taxa* or levels of observation – e.g., botany (the study of plants), lichenology (the study of lichens), herpetology (the study of amphibians and reptiles), microbiology (the study of bacteria, yeast, and other unicellular fungi), zoology (the study of marine and land animals), and cytology (the study of cells). Although the scientists, technicians, and others who participate in studies of life easily distinguish living matter from inert or dead matter, none can give a completely inclusive, concise definition of life itself.”

So despite the many disciplines and all the experts studying life, they are still unable to answer the question, “What is life?”. Wikipedia sums up this situation well when it states that “It is a challenge for scientists and philosophers to define life in unequivocal terms”. Even the Bible gives no clear definition, at least in the physical sense. Yet despite a proper definition, all people recognise that our planet is filled with life and it is a reality that cannot be ignored.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION OR STUDY

1. All of the above attempts at defining life deal with observable physical life. But how would you define life from a spiritual perspective? How does the Bible define/describe spiritual life? (see Psa. 139:13-16; John 3:1-8; Rom. 8:5-8; and Eph. 2:1-6 to help you answer).

There is a second related question that the scientific community also cannot answer – Where did life come from? Scientists give a whole range of answers to this question. Let us quickly look at the most obvious answer they give before we get into our text.

The Big Bang Theory and Evolution

This theory claims that everything came into being when nothing, for no reason whatsoever, having no power of its own or applied, suddenly exploded. From that, due to a series of random accidents, on earth, life evolved out of some kind of primordial soup. This sounds more like a fairy tale, yet this is exactly what scientists expect you to believe. This story, is taught in our schools, universities, and on practically every nature documentary you see on television. It is taught as a proven fact, and is the basis for most disciplines today, including all the life sciences listed by Encyclopaedia Britannica, as well as geology, astronomy, psychology, psychiatry, political science, and education. It is also the philosophy behind some of the most inhumane activities committed or condoned by politicians, such as Nazism, Apartheid, and the slave trade.

Unfortunately, it is also evident in the church. In 2014, Pope Francis stated that evolution and the big bang are not theories, but are true. He said, “When we read about Creation in Genesis, we run the risk of imagining God was a magician, with a magic wand able to do everything. But that is not so. The Big Bang, which today we hold to be the origin of the world, does not contradict the intervention of the divine creator but, rather, requires it. Evolution in nature is not inconsistent with the notion of creation, because evolution requires the creation of beings that evolve”.⁵ A very ambiguous statement that claims that God is not able to just create but had to use evolution and the big bang to bring about the universe and life as we know it.⁶

This line of thinking is what is referred to as old earth creationism and tries to blend creation and evolution together. This denies God of His power and makes Him and His Word out to be liars. Furthermore, there are some fundamental differences between the order of creation compared to that proposed by evolution theory, as shown in the following table:

CREATION	EVOLUTION	KEY TEXTS
Light before sun	Sun before light	Compare Gen. 1:3 & 1:14-15
Oceans before land	Land before oceans	Compare Gen. 1:6 & 1:9
Earth originally wet	Earth originally dry	Gen. 1:9
Earth before sun and stars	Sun and stars before the earth	Compare Gen. 1:9 & 1:14-15
First life on land	First life in the ocean	See Gen. 1:11-12
Plants before sun	Sun before plants	Compare Gen: 1:11-12 & 1:14-15
Land plants first	Sea life first	Compare Gen. 1:11-12 & 1:20-21
Birds and fish created on the fifth day	Fish evolved millions of years before birds	See Gen. 1:20-21
Birds before reptiles	Reptiles before birds	Compare Gen. 1:20-21 & 1:24
Birds before insects	Insects before birds	Compare Gen. 1:20-21 & 1:24
Fixed, distinct kinds of plants and animals producing after their kind	Plants and animals are constantly evolving from one kind to another	See Gen. 1:11-12; 1:21-22 & 1:24-25
Man formed by God from dust	Man evolved accidentally from primates	Gen. 2:7
Man before woman	Woman before man	Compare Gen. 2:7 & 2:20-21
Man originally a vegetarian	Man originally a meat-eater	See Gen. 1:29
All created in six 24-hour days	Millions or billions of years	See Gen. 1:31; Exo. 20:11 & 31:17
Creation is completed	Unending evolution	See Gen. 1:31
God created all things, seen and unseen	Godless chance processes did it all	See Col. 1:16
Adam’s sin the cause of death	Death existed long before man evolved	See Rom. 5:12

5 <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/pope-francis-evolution-big-bang-theory-are-real-n235696>

6 This same ideology is what is behind the apologetics in the 2014 Christian movie, God’s Not Dead, and is the position of several Christian apologetics authors and ministries (e.g. *AntWoord*, *Dialog*, and *Ratio Christi* – apologetics ministries working in South African universities).

The idea of evolution seems so right to so many Christians due to the many compelling, yet false proofs (i.e. they are not observable or testable) science provides. But as the above table shows, it completely contradicts the Bible. Evolution is a theory that begins, ends and is filled with death. If we are to hold to a biblical worldview, we must submit so-called science to the Bible and not the other way around. World-views have consequences and there will be a natural progression to destruction if our we allow the above humanistic theories to influence our theology, as the following illustrates:

- If evolution is true then God is not the Creator.
- If God is not the Creator then He has no authority and the Bible is not true.
- If He has no authority and the Bible is not true, then we can do whatever we want.
- If we can do whatever we want, then there is no need for a Saviour.
- If there is no need for a Saviour, then Jesus did not exist.
- If Jesus did not exist, then there was no death and resurrection.
- If there was no death and resurrection of Jesus, then *“we are of all people most to be pitied”* and our faith is a lie (cf. 1 Cor. 15:19)!

Ironically, one logical scientific argument calls their theories into question. For life to exist, you need some basic molecules called amino acids. On their own amino acids are useless, but in a group they form proteins that are important for life. The amazing thing though is the process by which this happens.⁷

Firstly, the amino acids need to assemble together in a particular order to form just one protein, and there are about 200 amino acids in the average protein. But the odds of those amino acids coming together in the correct order is one in ten to the two-hundred-and-sixtieth power. That is one followed by 260 zeros. One scientist claims that this number is greater than the number of atoms in the universe.

However, to be of any use, that combination of amino acids now has to fold itself into the correct shape like some kind of chemical origami. How it knows what shape to fold itself into, scientists cannot explain. But even after folding itself to form a protein, one protein on its own is useless. And the problem is, a protein cannot reproduce itself. To do that you need DNA which can copy itself within seconds. But that it is all DNA can do. Protein cannot exist without DNA, and without protein, DNA has no purpose.

But how does DNA copy itself? This is yet another miracle scientists are perplexed about. DNA is a chemical made up of four components: Adenine, Guanine, Cytosine, and Thymine (usually referred to as A, G, C, and T) that form a double strand or string of chromosomes. To reproduce itself, it copies a very short stretch, a gene, of just one of its strands of a chromosome. This newly copied strand then separates from the template to form ribonucleic acid, or RNA. This then acts as a messenger and moves out of the nucleus to become attached to a ribosome, which is a completely different, complex structure that reads the sequence of the gene and copies the gene by adding the appropriate amino acid.

But even in this there is a further complication. DNA can only be copied with the help of specific enzymes which, in turn, can only be produced by the controlling DNA molecule. They need each other. DNA cannot be copied without the enzyme, and without the DNA, the enzyme cannot exist. Both have to

⁷ The details that follow are a summary from several sources, including: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Answers in Genesis, Reasons to Believe, Scientific America, creation.org, newscientist.com, evolution.berkeley.edu, and others.

be present before replication can occur. And this is what is required for only one protein to be copied, and there are several thousands of proteins in the human body. Each of them essential in one way or another.

But there is yet another problem in all of this. Even if the proteins, DNA, RNA, and enzymes were able to correctly assemble themselves, and to exist simultaneously, they cannot survive outside of a cell – a cell membrane is needed to protect them. And yet, even with all that in place, there is no guarantee that life will be formed.

In looking at all of this one unbelieving, evolutionist author wrote, “Are we to assume then that they arose simultaneously with the purpose of supporting each other, if so, Wow!”.⁸ That’s an understatement. Creationist, Hugh Ross, once wrote, “the odds of getting all the necessary factors for the existence of life on a single planet are one trillionth of a trillionth of a trillionth of a trillionth of one percent”.⁹

This miracle causes one to ask the question, how did all of that suddenly come about? The only option seems to be that life came from somewhere else. But where? Scientists have tried to answer this question too. One theory is that life did not begin on earth but came from outer space. There are several facets to this theory that we will not go into, but even logic will tell you that this does not answer the question. Even if life on earth did come from outer space, where did that life originate?

The late, well-known atheist, Richard Dawkins, when asked about this gave the answer that life came on the back of a crystal. And when pressed about where that crystal came from, his answer was, “I don’t know, but it wasn’t God”.¹⁰ This is the root of the problem in much of the scientific world today. Despite all the theories, ideologies, and unproven facts that they claim, the general idea in the scientific community is that God is not the answer. They deny the truths found throughout Scripture. One such text is the verses before us in John 1.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION OR STUDY

1. What are some other consequences of the theories of the big bang and evolution that you have witnessed or heard about?
2. How does a clearer understanding of the contradictions to scripture and the poor logic of the big bang and evolution theories strengthen your faith in God as Creator?

JESUS IS THE LIFE-GIVING WORD (VV3-4A)

The term “*life*” (Greek: *zoë*) is used 36 times in the Gospel of John, referring primarily to spiritual life and often coupled with the adjective “*eternal*” to denote the quality of the believers life. This life was embodied in Christ, who perfectly demonstrated what eternal life is by his life (cf. John 14:6; 17:3).

⁸ Bill Bryson, *A Short History of Nearly Everything*. p. 289.

⁹ Reasons to Believe website, reasons.org.

¹⁰ In an interview with Ben Stein in the *Expelled: No Intelligence Allowed* documentary.

However, in verse 3, John provides the answer that the scientists are looking for. Remember how John began his Gospel? With the phrase, *“In the beginning”*. Words that should cast your mind back to the very first words of the Bible, in Genesis 1:1, *“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth”*.

This is no accident because John wants his readers to remember this fact. It is one of the most important truths to bear in mind that cannot be brushed aside or considered irrelevant. It is one of the foundations that you have to have, because without it, as we saw earlier, the rest of your theology and faith will fail.

Read: Colossians 1:15-17 and note the similarity between Paul’s and John’s words.

Similarly the writer of Hebrews describes Jesus as, *“heir of all things, through whom also He [i.e. God] created the world”* (Heb. 1:2).

The first thing to consider is the phrase, *“by Him”* (Col. 1:16) or *“through Him”* (John 1:3). Both Paul and John state that Jesus Himself is the creator. In other words, He was not merely the contractor that the Father hired to create as if the Father drew up the blueprints and then handed them over to Jesus to do the construction, but rather that Jesus Himself was involved with the whole process. In fact, all three members of the Trinity were involved (see Gen. 1:2). Jesus did not act on His own, but with the Father and the Spirit.

Secondly, both John and Paul say that Jesus created *“all things”*. All things. Not just some things. Not just the nice things, the things that we like, but all things. From the most beautiful flower in your garden, to the tiny aphid that destroys your prized roses, all were created by Him.

But Jesus’ act of creation is not limited to visible things, for as Paul elaborates, Jesus created all things *“in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities”*. This fact has caused a problem for many people, especially those who resist Christianity. Because to say that God created all things seems to imply that even those things that destroy our lives, such as illness, were created by God. Some would go so far as to say that because God created evil too.

But did God create evil? To say “yes” is to go against everything in Scripture as the Bible clearly states that God hates evil and that there is no evil in Him (cp. James 1:13-18). However, to say “no” seems to contradict Paul? How do we resolve this dilemma?

The answer is actually quite simple, and I will use an image that John is going to use later in our text – light. We are able to observe things around us due to the basic fact that light exists. Without it, we would not be able to see a thing and would be in darkness. But is darkness a thing in itself? Not really. Darkness is simply the absence of light. You have no light, there is darkness. Light on the other hand is energy. It is part of the colour spectrum that can be seen with the naked eye and can be measured. But darkness cannot be measured.

The same is true with evil. Evil is not something that can be defined or measured as a stand alone item. It can only be defined in relation to good – there has to be a standard to judge it against in order to know

whether something is evil or not. Evil is simply the absence, removal, or perversion of good. So, God did not create evil. He only created good (cf. Gen. 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31).

But what about those things that destroy our lives, like illness? In many cases, illness is either due to a bacteria or germ affecting the body, or a cell that has mutated. But not all bacteria is bad for you (e.g. the bacteria in yoghurt), but are essential in certain bodily functions. Even bacteria or germs that are typically harmful can be good for you (e.g. the flu germs in the flu vaccine).

But, due to sin entering the world through Adam in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3), even the bacteria and cells that should be doing us good are now causing disease, and are doing so because they are now void of some or all of the good that they were originally created with. So did God create evil or the bad things? No. But as a result of sin, the good things that He created have become corrupted.

The third thing to consider in John and Colossians 1 is the word “*made*” or “*created*”. The Greek word John and Paul use, *egeneto*, literally means, “came into being” and refers to the event rather than the process. In other words, there was a time when nothing existed, but something/everything does exist now. This is what is referred to by the Latin phrase, creation *ex nihilo*, or creation out of nothing. And as we learn in Genesis 1, God did this by simply speaking everything into existence.

And it’s this fact that God created everything out of nothing that makes the rest of John’s Gospel believable. For example, how is it possible that Jesus changed water into wine? Quite easy when He is the Creator of the water and the wine in the first place. Each sign (miracle) that John records illustrates his purpose for writing his gospel in the first place (cf. John 20:30-31). Because only God can do these kinds of things, therefore Jesus has to be God.

Paul builds on this a little more by telling you that Jesus not only created everything, but that He is also the heir of it all, because at the end of verse 16 you read that all things were created “*for Him*”. The writer of Hebrews uses a similar phrase. This idea is also contained in Paul’s use of the word, “*firstborn*”. A word that refers to inheritance and not order of birth – it is linked to the Jewish understanding of the inheritance rights of the first-born son. So creation is not only Jesus’ handiwork, it is also His inheritance.

In case you have any further objections to what John is saying in the first half of verse 3, he repeats it in a negative sense in the second half, “*without Him nothing was made that has been made*”. This phrase destroys any argument that people may have that Jesus Himself was created by God first – if there is nothing in existence that had to have been made could not have been made with Jesus being present, then logically, Jesus could not have been made in the first place, for He could not have made Himself. This goes against the Greek and Roman mythology of John’s day, as well as some modern false teachings (e.g. Islam teaches that God had physical relations with Mary to conceive Jesus).

John takes the fact that Jesus is Creator even further by stating in the beginning of verse 4, “*In Him was life*”. The reason for this is because it is not enough to just believe that Jesus is the creator of life, but you must also believe that He is life Himself. Jesus did not inherit it from someone else or obtain it else-

where. He is life. In other words, He is self-existent and self-sustaining. This is a unique claim, for unlike man and every other creature, Jesus does not need a source for His life. God created, but man can only recreate or recycle what already exists.

Understanding this principle helps to understand how it was possible for Jesus to raise Lazarus from the dead, and how Jesus Himself was able to rise again. He is life, and, therefore, He is able to give life to anyone He desires, even to His own dead, physical body.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION OR STUDY

1. What are some other ways that the fact that Jesus is the Creator and the Life-Giving Word help you to understand the Gospel of John? (Tip: Consider the rest of the seven I Am signs and statements in the book)
2. In presenting the Word as Creator, John does not begin by disproving the ideologies and philosophies of the Greco-Roman world, but simply states the truths of who Jesus is and what He did. What lessons can we draw from this for our day as we interact with those who oppose creation?
3. How does the fact that Jesus is the Life-Giving Word help you in your faith when you have to deal with sickness and death?

JESUS IS THE ILLUMINATING WORD (VV4B-5)

Verse 4b is yet another hint back to Genesis 1 where on the first day God said “*let there be light*”. The word “*light*” carries a lot of meaning to the Jews who refer to several things in their history as light. For example:

- The Law – Psalm 119:105; Proverbs 6:23.
- God – Genesis 15:17; Psalm 44:3, 94:1; Isaiah 51:4; Ezekiel 1:27-28, 8:2; Hosea 6:5; Habakkuk 3:4. Also, the presence of God in the tabernacle and the temple were seen as a bright light, and God going before the nation in the wilderness by night and appearing above the tabernacle as a pillar of fire, gave off light (cf. Exo. 13:21).
- God’s glory (referred to as His *Shekinah* glory) – Exodus 33; Isaiah 60:1; Ezekiel 10:4, 18.
- Salvation – Isaiah described the coming salvation as the people living in darkness seeing a great light (cp. Isa. 9:2 and Mat. 4:16).

But more specifically, throughout the Bible, light has to do with holiness or righteousness – often referred to as living in the light. This is the idea that John is focussing on, and he does so in three ways.

1. He says that the life of Jesus “*was the light of men*”. A tricky phrase to understand until you consider it in terms of holiness, for it is through Jesus alone that man can achieve holiness. Isaiah 64:6 reminds us that man’s holiness, his righteous deeds, are as filthy rags to God. Even what man thinks is good, what he thinks are holy deeds, are not holy before God. It is in Christ alone that we find true holiness.

2. John tells us that the light shines in the darkness. Darkness represents the opposite of righteousness – the absence of holiness. Sinful man wanders around in the darkness seeking his own desires and void of good. Man loves the darkness and as Paul tells us in Romans 3, he will never seek after God. But in that darkness, the righteousness of God shines. Note too the tense John uses – the present continuous tense, “*shines*”. Jesus is still shining His righteousness in the world today, despite how dark the world is. His light is shining in and through the lives of His true children and true church.
3. John says that the darkness has not overcome the light. The Greek word used here literally means to seize, to take eagerly in the sense of overpowering something. The idea is that the darkness in this world can not overcome or extinguish the light. No matter what man may do, God's holiness can never be destroyed or covered up. The only way for the light to disappear is for the light to stop shining.

The metaphorical contrast between light and darkness representing the powers of good and evil was as common in John's day as it is today. And in a sense, this metaphor summarises John's Gospel record:

- The Light has invaded the dominion of darkness.
- However, the Light was not recognised and ultimately resisted by the devil and the people.
- But no-one is able to overcome the Light and His power.
- Therefore, the Word will be victorious in spite of the opposition.

As followers of Christ walk in the Light, and “*let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven*” (Mat. 5:18).

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION OR STUDY

1. Jesus, the Word, is described as light. How does this truth strengthen your faith and encourage you as you continue to live in a world where governments, other faiths, secular humanism, and sinful mankind in general try to suppress this light?
2. How can you use the truths contained in these two verses to share the Gospel with unbelieving family and friends? In what other ways do they help you when it comes to evangelism?