

- 2) Closely related to the theme of light, and also a key thematic element in John's gospel, is the motif of *life*. The concepts of light and life are interwoven at the very outset of John's account and both remain central points of focus throughout his gospel. The life that is inherent in the Logos (1:1) has now come into the world in the person of the incarnate Son, and that life – openly manifest in Him – shines into the darkness, illumining Adam's darkened race (cf. 1:4 with 8:12; also 2 Timothy 1:8-10).

And as was the case with the theme of light, one finds that John's association of Jesus (whom he explicitly presents as the fulfillment of the concept of temple or *sanctuary*) with the principle of life has its point of reference in the Old Testament and its developing promise of the restoration of sacred space.

- The theme of life is also introduced in the very beginning at the time of the first creation. At one level, the possession of life characterizes the entire animate creation (Genesis 1:20ff), but at another it is uniquely the property of man (Genesis 2:7). In that regard it speaks to man's unique participation as divine image-bearer in the life of God Himself. This aspect of life is *spiritual*, and is the primary matter of concern in the rest of the Scripture.
- The nature of this life is revealed by its forfeiture and replacement by *death*. If life and death are antithetical realities, and death is shown to be grounded in estrangement from God, then life must have its essence in intimacy with Him. Genesis, in fact, reveals that man was created in the divine likeness for the express purpose of such intimacy; he was created to be God's image-*son*. Being divine image-bearer, man's self-knowledge depends upon his knowledge of God; at whatever point man's intimacy with God ceases, so does his capacity to know himself and fulfill his created identity. In that sense he *dies*, regardless of whether his physical processes continue to operate. He is dead even while he lives.
- Adam and Eve were seduced by the offer of independent equality with God, but their newly-gained freedom resulted in estrangement and, therefore, death. The curse that had come upon the creation was its terminal alienation from its Creator (and thereby also from itself), so that the promise of the protoevangelium (Genesis 3:15) was ultimately the promise of Creator-creature reconciliation. The renewal of *life* is the very heart of God's recovery of sacred space.

God's oath to conquer the serpent was the promise of *life out of death*, and since this primal promise was the foundation of all of His subsequent activity leading to His work of recovery in Christ, it is not surprising that this theme is a central thread woven through all of salvation history.

- Renewal as life out of death is first portrayed in the Flood event. There the truth of universal alienation and enmity was attested in a divine act of global punishment and purging; The Lord brought physical destruction upon the “dead” world in order that a living remnant should reintroduce “life” into a cleansed “new creation.”
- From there it is suggested in the Lord’s calling of Abraham. At that time the patriarch was living as the son of a worshipper of false gods in the midst of a pagan culture. Abraham existed in the darkness and “death” of alienation from the true God, and Yahweh’s call was a summons to life out of death; it was a call to recovered relationship. He would be Abraham’s God and Abraham and his descendents would be His people (Genesis 17:7-8).
- This theme is then explicitly bound to the Abrahamic Covenant in that the covenant seed Isaac and Jacob were brought forth out of barren wombs (cf. Genesis 11:29-30, 16:1-2, 17:15-19, 25:20-21). So also the *nation* of Israel descended from the man Israel (Jacob) enjoyed its own “genesis” of life out of death when Yahweh brought it out of its fatal bondage and bestowed upon it the “life” of communion with Him in His sanctuary-land.
- Centuries later the writing prophets promised another deliverance when the Lord would restore a remnant from their captivity. This, too, would be life out of death for the seed of Abraham. More importantly, that miniscule physical restoration served as the springboard for the prophets’ promise of a future universal redemption in which Yahweh would “take captivity captive” by a triumphal theophany in which He would deliver His creation from the death of its estrangement and restore all things to Himself.

The promise of a redemptive and restorative theophany was the promise of the “kingdom of God.” In this kingdom the Lord would at last fulfill the principle of life out of death – not physical life out of a barren womb or physical deliverance of a people from temporal bondage, but the recovery of spiritual life through the vanquishing of Creator-creature alienation and the recovery in perpetuity of true and full communion.

As it had been in the first creation, the prophets revealed that this work of bringing forth life into a “dead” world was to be accomplished by the Lord’s *Spirit*. At the appointed time, the Spirit would breathe life, not only into the dead bones of the house of Israel (Ezekiel 37:1-14; cf. 36:16-29), but the whole of Adam’s dead race (Joel 2:21-32; Micah 4:1-7). More than that, He would renew the estranged and cursed creation in its entirety; what had been portrayed in the abundant splendor of Eden would be realized in consummate perfection (cf. Isaiah 32:9-20, 35:1-10).

The prophets proclaimed that the “life” that is comprehensive renewal would be effected by the life-giving power of God’s Spirit, but they also associated His presence and renewing work with the coming of the Lord’s *Servant*, the Davidic “Branch.” Renewal had its goal in reconciliation.

- Thus the prophets revealed first that the Spirit would accomplish His work in and through His *indwelling presence* in David’s Son (Isaiah 11:1-11, 42:1-7, 6:1-11). That One was to be preeminently the “man of the Spirit,” embodying in Himself what God intended for His image-bearers. In the Spirit-filled Servant the prophets disclosed Yahweh’s appointed destiny for the human race.
- But the prophetic connection between the Servant and God’s Spirit wasn’t simply one of indwelling; the Spirit’s work of renewal was to stand upon the Servant’s work of *redemption*. By His indwelling presence, the Spirit would empower the Branch to accomplish the redemptive work for which Yahweh was sending Him. Isaiah prophesied that, anointed with the Lord’s Spirit, the Servant would proclaim the great Jubilee – the “favorable year of the Lord” that is the full release of all captivity (61:1-11). But He would do so by virtue of His accomplishment, in the power of the same Spirit, of God’s promised redemption and recovery (48:16-49:13, 59:1-21).

These things are central to the prophetic portrait of the kingdom as the fulfillment of God’s promise to restore life to His creation and recover sacred space. So the gospel writers, intent on showing that the kingdom has been inaugurated in Jesus, labored to demonstrate that all that the prophets had spoken of had been fulfilled in relation to Him. The promise of the kingdom was the promise of life out of death, and the gospel writers – and John in particular – insisted that this life has now come in Christ.

- At the outset of his gospel John declared that “*in Him was the life.*” In context, this statement indicates that the eternal Logos possessed the *divine* life. But that life continued in the incarnate Word (1:14-18); Jesus is **True God**. John recognized that this truth is crucial not only to the prophetic promise of Yahweh’s theophany in establishing His kingdom, but also to his own contention that Jesus is the fulfillment of the concept of *sanctuary*.
- The divine life existing in Jesus also affirms His status as **True Man**. Man was created in God’s likeness, and the biblical narrative emphasizes this by employing the imagery of God breathing His own life into Adam, the image-son. The divine life animating and communing with the human creature is the essence of what it means for man to be *man*. And what was introduced in the first Adam was consummated in fullness in the Last Adam.

Thus life is *in Christ*, not only in the fullest sense, but in a unique sense. In Him “*all the fullness of deity dwells in bodily form*”: From all eternity He, as the second member of the triune Godhead, has possessed the life that is peculiar to God. But, with the incarnation, that divine life now resides forever in the unique *theanthropos* (God-Man).

In this sense life is uniquely the property of Jesus Christ. The fullness of divine and human life exists in Him alone, and they do so in perfect (albeit non-commingled) unity and harmony. In the hypostatic union God has provided the greatest and most comprehensive explanation of both deity and humanity: *deity*, because God’s self-revelation is thereby made most thorough and accessible to human beings; and *humanity* in that, in Christ, men are enabled for the first time to behold authentic humanness.

But God’s intention in the incarnation wasn’t primarily revelatory; it was redemptive and restorative. The eternal Son became man not simply to *reveal* God and man, but to *reconcile* God and man; the divine Word came into the world as a **new Adam** in order to be the foundation of a new creation and fountainhead of a new humanity. The Father sent His Son for the express purpose that, through His redemptive work, He would reconcile to Himself all things in His creation, making peace through His self-sacrifice (Colossians 1:19-20). At the same time, that universal reconciling work has its focal point in man, the image-son. *The Father’s goal in having all His fullness dwell in His incarnate Son was that mankind should enter into its own created fullness by sharing in His likeness* (Colossians 2:8-10, 3:9-10; cf. 2 Corinthians 3:18; 2 Peter 1:2-4).

Stated differently, God’s eternal design was that, through the unique Living One, His own life would flow out to the being created to be image-son. The Father’s goal is the obtainment of *sons* in the *Son* – a work of consummate renewal and reconciliation in which Christ would be the first-born among many brethren (Roman 8:28-29; Hebrews 2:5-17). *His intent was that, as He lives, they, too, should live.*

But men enter into His life solely by **faith** in Him (John 5:24-27): They come to Him as the “*resurrection and the life*” (John 11:5-27) and feed upon Him as the “*bread of life*” (John 6:47-58). The recovery of life first pledged in the protoevangelium has come in the Living One (Revelation 1:12-18). He holds the power of life and death and confers life upon whomever He pleases, but He does so through the life-giving power of the Spirit – the Spirit who now operates in the world as the Spirit of Christ: “*The first Adam became a living soul; the Last Adam a life-giving Spirit*” (ref. 1 Corinthians 15:45-49). God has recovered sacred space in the One who is the fulfilled sanctuary, but He has done so in order that humanity should become His everlasting dwelling in the Holy Spirit (ref. Ephesians 2:11-22; cf. 1 Corinthians 3:16-17; 2 Corinthians 6:14-16; Revelation 21).