

Life in Christ

What is the stated purpose of the Gospel according to John? The answer is plainly found in John 20:31: "But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name." The Greek words for life: "zoe, zoepoieo, zao" occur 56 times in John alone, whereas they occur only a total of 36 times in all the other gospels combined. It is clearly one of the key words in John, and for good reason. Irrespective of calling, John is foundational, dealing with belief in the Son of God and the free gift of eternal life. I wanted to do this study to examine and compile all these occurrences of life in John. I feel very humbled and thankful to experience the full weight of all these passages, and I hope this study will bring them together in a richer way for you as well.

Life pre-existent in Christ

Everlasting, eternal life which has no beginning and no end, which is perfect and complete in its nature is that same life that is and always has been in Christ. Our inherited eternal life, that is by God's grace alone, originates and is inherent in Christ. Christ bestows His life in two ways. First, He voluntarily laid down His life to pay the price for our sin, but He also gives life in another way. By His further miracle, He gives the gift of the eternal life that is already in Him. The following verses seem to speak of this directly:

(John 1:1-4 KJV) "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. {2} The same was in the beginning with God. {3} All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. {4} In him was life; and the life was the light of men." (Notice the life we enjoy both now and eternally is first of all *in* Him.)

(John 5:25-26 KJV) "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. {26} For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself;"

(John 6:47-49, 57-58 KJV) "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life. {48} I am that bread of life. ... {57} As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. {58} This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever." (A further discussion of the figurative language of this passage will be examined later in this paper, but notice here how this life is both through Him and by Him.)

(John 10:17-18 KJV) "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. {18} No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father." (The Greek word for lay in these verses is tithemi which means to place. Though it was wicked hands that slew Him (Acts 2:23), still Christ voluntarily died, saying, "It is finished". And he bowed His head and gave up the ghost." (John 19:30) Here again, life is inherent in Christ and at all times under His power. For a fascinating discussion of this aspect of Christ's death see pp. 251-253 of C.H. Welch's wonderful book *Life through His Name*, available through a link on this web site.)

(John 11:25 KJV) "Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:" (As Welch says, in the W327-338 series on John contained in this web site, this is the stupendous claim in heaven or in earth, yet the blessed truth is that He who possesses that life can just through word of His mouth call the dead to life as He did with Lazarus, and as He will yet do eternally for all of us who are in Him!)

(John 14:19 KJV) "Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also." (Dead with Him, buried with Him, raised with Him. Blessed be God that He so identified with us in our sin, that we can in turn be so identified with Him in sinless, eternal life. Paul speaks so aptly of this in Gal 2:20 (KJV) "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.")

Believing to Life Eternal

The second, imposing aspect of the occurrences life in John is the emphasis on believing in Christ in order to receive this wondrous, sacrificial gift of life. The work of salvation is all of God, and as Welch has often pointed out, ours is nothing more than the outstretched hand to receive it. Even the ability to hear and understand the word of salvation is God's doing. Therefore, in no way, do I ever want to give the impression that I feel that our belief in Christ is somehow a work unto salvation. Salvation, as you know, *cannot be a work* on our behalf in any way, otherwise it can no longer be of grace, which by the mercy of God it is entirely. (Rom. 11:6, Eph. 2:8)

The Greek word for believe in John is "pisteuo." It is a key word, occurring 99 times in this gospel alone. If we must believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and in believing we have life through His name, what does believing mean? Simply put, the Greek word "pisteuo" means to adhere to or to trust in. The following verses in John might show what "pisteuo" simply means by the use of a comparison, which the Lord used in speaking to the Pharisees.

John 5:45-47 KJV) "Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is *one* that accuseth you, *even Moses*, in whom ye trust. {46} For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. {47} But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?"

These Pharisees prided themselves in being Moses' descendants and followers. They felt that they adhered to and trusted in Moses' teachings. The word used for believing Moses is "pisteuo," just exactly the same word used in the same verse for believing Christ. The Lord exposes their actual lack of "pisteuo" in what Moses wrote, for what Moses wrote in every way leads directly to Christ. Still, I think it demonstrates that there is no inherent wonder about what it means to believe (pisteuo) in Christ. In your mind, you are fully convinced of the fact that Jesus Christ is God manifest in the flesh, and that everything the Bible says about Him is true. You hear His voice (the written word for now). You are His follower. Your trust rests in Him for this life and the next.

This is echoed again and again in these further examples from John.

(John 3:14-18 KJV) "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: {15} That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. {16} For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. {17} For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. {18} He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

If there is a key verse in the Bible, wouldn't it have to be John 3:16? There is so much teaching in these few verses that a whole study could easily be done on just this. I would highly recommend Welch's excellent exposition of these verses on pp. 103-119 in his book *Life Through His Name*. Suffice it to say here that the very first time that the love of God appears in the New Testament is John 3:16. Furthermore, the first time the word love appears in the Old Testament is in the foreshadowing episode of Abraham coming to the brink of sacrificing his only son as well (Gen. 22:2).

Gen 22:2 KJV) "And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into

the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of."

How very wise of God to make these occurrences first, since the love of God is expressed in just this way, by the offering of His only begotten Son! Even the word "so" in God so loved is best translated "thus, or in this way." God loved the world *in this way* that He went to the extreme of sacrificing His one and only Son for us! Moreover, the phrase "whosoever believeth in him" actually should be translated "every believing one." Therefore, every believing one shall have eternal life and not perish. The Greek word for perish here is "apollumi," which means to destroy fully. Its first occurrence is Matt. 2:13, in which Herod seeks to destroy the Christ child. "Apollumi" occurs 92 times in the New Testament, and it is translated to destroy, to die, to lose, to mar, and to perish. Here, it speaks of a death that is final as opposed to the gift of age-abiding life which shall never cease.

(John 3:36 KJV) "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

Here, just as in John 3:18, the contrast is given of life over against condemnation. What are the wages of sin? Death-eternal death, a final, second death that lasts for all time (everlasting), but not in the sense that there is eternal, conscious suffering that goes on forever. In my opinion, this is a doctrine rooted more in tradition than actual Scripture. For much more detail on this subject, see the study entitled "Hell," on this web site and "Hell, Pure from the Blood of all Men," by C.H. Welch, which is also available through a link on this web site. The following verses also incorporate this same line of teaching.

Hearing His Voice

Notice the emphasis in 5:24-26 on hearing the voice of the Lord, in the spiritual sense now, where God accounts you as passing from death to life. Upon physical death, it is again the literal voice of Christ calling you to life (John 5:28-29). For a very complete discussion of these verses see pp. 162-166 of *Life through His Name*, and tape "W332 John's Gospel 6" by Welch also on this web site.

(John 5:24-26 KJV) "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. {25} Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. {26} For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself;"

(John 5:28-29 KJV) "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, {29} And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."

I don't think that the last half of this verse is in conflict with all the many Scriptures that teach that eternal life is entirely a gift from God, neither earned or lost on the basis of works. Rather, positive righteousness is imputed on our behalf by Christ's atoning work on the cross. When God sees His redeemed child, there is not only the negative stripping of our sins forgotten even by God Himself (Isa. 38:17), but there is the positive clothing of His righteousness. The unredeemed however, must stand before God still clothed in their own fleshly evil. This is certainly meat for a whole study in itself, but two supporting verses that immediately come to mind are:

Zec 3:3-5 KJV) "Now Joshua was clothed with **filthy garments**, and stood before the angel. {4} And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, Take away the **filthy garments** from him. And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and **I will clothe thee with change**

of raiment. {5} And I said, Let them set a fair mitre upon his head. So they set a fair mitre upon his head, and clothed him with garments. And the angel of the LORD stood by."

(Rom 4:3-8 KJV) "For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. {4} Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. {5} But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. {6} Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, {7} Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. {8} Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin."

Welch makes the further point on page 166 of Life Through His Name that the verse may be translated they that have "practiced good" as opposed to "practiced evil."

A redeemed child certainly does not live a sinless life by any means, but it is also true that one who professes to believe in Christ will demonstrate fruit to that account as a natural outgrowth of his belief. The Judge of all the world knows the true hearts and minds of all.

The Good Shepherd and His Sheep

Speaking of judgment, it is a great comfort to know that our salvation is as secure as the very grip of the Father's hand as the following verses plainly say. Those who believe in Christ are His sheep. He is the Good Shepherd, and His sheep hear His voice. The gift is great: life, eternal life, abundant life and blessed be God that our standing in Christ is sure.

(John 10:9-11 KJV) "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. {10} The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. {11} I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep."

(John 10:28-30 KJV) "And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. {29} My Father, which gave *them* me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck *them* out of my Father's hand. {30} I and *my* Father are one."

The Added Element of Reward:

Whereas eternal life itself is by means of grace alone, I believe rewards bestowed by the Lord for our service are that added thing. The following verses talk of the "fruit" unto life eternal not the life itself. Here, I believe this is speaking of rewards that can be earned or lost, based on our walk.

(John 4:36 KJV) "And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together."

(John 6:27 KJV) "Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed."

Notice the emphasis in these previous verses on work and wages. Scripture speaks of rewards in this light

irrespective of a particular calling, and this is again a vast subject in and of itself. Just a few more supporting verses would be:

(2 Tim 4:7-8 KJV) "I have fought a good fight, I have finished *my* course, I have kept the faith: {8} Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."

(1 Cor 3:13-15 KJV) "Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. {14} If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. {15} If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire."

(Heb 10:34-35 KJV) "For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance. {35} Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward."

Contrasting Responses to the Evidence

The following verse, directed at the Pharisees in their unbelief of the Lord, raises some very interesting contrasts about merely being familiar with the Scriptures and actually believing in the One in whom they speak.

(John 5:39-40 KJV) "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. {40} And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life."

Welch believes that the original grammar and the context of this verse easily supports the rendering, "You search the Scriptures..." as a statement of fact rather than an imperative command. Also, the word *think* in verse 39 is the Greek word "dokeo" which also can be translated suppose or imagine, as it is in Mark 6:49 and Luke 12:51. It is a word that carries uncertainty in its context. Therefore, the verse may be paraphrased, "You Pharisees do search the Scripture and in them you imagine that you have eternal life, but they speak of Me and you will not come to Me."

As Welch is quick to point out, the Scriptures make you wise unto salvation.(II Tim.3:15), but they themselves do not save you. It is the risen Lord who does that. The Pharisees were well familiar with the Holy Writ, yet they were also full of unbelief when confronted by the Lord Himself. Refer to W334-John's Gospel 6 and pp.180-186 in *Life Though His Name* for Welch's in depth analysis of this verse.

Now contrast the unbelief of the Pharisees at the works of Christ with the attitude of Peter and Martha in the following verses:

(John 6:68-69 KJV) "Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. {69} And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God."

(John 11:24-27 KJV) "Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. {25} Jesus said unto her, **I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: {26} And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this? {27}** She saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world."

Notice how in each instance they not only verify the Lord's claims, but they go further to confess their

assurance that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, which is the very essence of the purpose of John. Now, add to that the climatic exclamation of Thomas in the following verse, and we have great examples of how we should react when confronted with Christ Himself as He is presented in this gospel.

(John 20:27-29 KJV) "Then saith he to Thomas, **Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing.** {28} And Thomas answered and said unto him, **My Lord and my God.** {29} Jesus saith unto him, **Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."**

Wellspring of Eternal life

(John 4:14 KJV) "But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

Consider this; the first miracle performed by Christ is that He turned the water into wine at the marriage at Cana. When the servants drew out the water, it became the best of wine. Was that miracle (or sign as it is called in John) a foreshadowing of the greater spiritual truth contained in the figurative language of John 6:55? "**For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.**" Remember there are eight signs in John's gospel, and the first corresponds to the eighth, the second to the seventh etc. (See page 17 of *Life through His Name*.) The first sign is parallel to the eighth sign, where the Lord provides meat (fish) for the disciples, hence the spiritual significance may be that the water to wine stood for His blood which is drink indeed, and the fish provided in the eighth miracle may represent His flesh given for us which is meat indeed, as John 6:55 above indicates. This sacrificial gift of His blood and His body is the wellspring of eternal life for us, as shown by the above verse. I think the following verses speak to this directly as well.

(John 6:32-35 KJV) "Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. {33} For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world. {34} Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread. {35} And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst."

(John 6:46-58 KJV) "Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he which is of God, he hath seen the Father. {47} Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life. {48} I am that bread of life. {49} Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. {50} This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. {51} I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. {52} The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us *his* flesh to eat? {53} Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. {54} Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. {55} For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. {56} He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. {57} As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. {58} This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever."

(John 6:63 KJV) "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life."

First, in the previous verses notice the emphasis on the phrase "from heaven." It occurs 10 times in verses

31-58 (v. 31,32,33,38,41,50,51,58). Manna was literal bread from heaven that sustained the Israelites' lives in the wilderness, but it was also a type of Christ, who is that true, antitypical bread from heaven. He gives and sustains life eternally for all of His redeemed.

If anyone doubts about whether Christ is speaking spiritually or literally in terms of eating His flesh and drinking His blood, you need only to look to verse 63 above for the answer. These comments by the Lord are in the spiritual sense, of course. Furthermore, Welch makes a good case on pp. 195-202 in *Life Through His Name*, that the Pharisees were also very familiar with this figurative expression of eating and drinking someone's teaching. It was a common way of speaking at that time, and it appears in their own writings as well. Historically researching this point, Welch finds that the Rabbinical writings used such figures as, "Israel shall eat the years of the Messiah." Eating and drinking someone's teaching was an expression meaning that you fully enjoyed and adhered to it. See also, E.W. Bullinger's commentary in the margin of this verse on page 1532 of the *Companion Bible*.

As Welch further points out, the Pharisees' problem was rather that they had no room for a suffering Messiah, and they also did not believe that Jesus Christ was that Messiah. Hence, their comment in verse 42: "Is this not Jesus, the Son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know?" As verse 60 says, even some of the Lord's own followers felt His words were a hard saying, and some left Him. However again, I think the "hard saying" was not that they were repulsed because they took His words literally, but they also did not look for or even desire a suffering Messiah. The climax of the chapter is then Peter's confession: (John 6:68-69 KJV) "Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. {69} And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God." Indeed, to Whom else is there to go? May we also believe and be as perfectly sure that He is indeed the Christ, the Son of the Living God.

The Glorious Purpose of Eternal Life

(John 17:1-4 KJV) "These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, **that** thy Son also may glorify thee: {2} As thou hast given him power over all flesh, **that** he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. {3} And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. {4} I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do."

The prayer of Christ in the garden to the Father is such a precious sacred portion of Scripture. Here is a window into an actual conversation of the Son with the Father. For a complete and wonderfully done exposition of this entire prayer see pp. 364-412 of *Life Through His Name*. But since the purpose of this paper is to examine the occurrences of the word life in John, it seems very fitting that we should end with the revelation of the actual purpose in view of this unfathomable gift of eternal life.

A very important key to these first four verses is in the little conjunction "that" which is highlighted in each of the first three verses. The actual Greek word in all three is "hina", which both Bullinger on pg. 1562 of the *Companion Bible* and Welch on page 373-374 of *Life through His Name*, define as always carrying the idea of purpose or design. The word "that" in all the above instances could best be translated "in order that" or "with the object that." So let's insert "with the object that" in all three instances below and see how it illuminates a fuller meaning of the passage.

(John 17:1-4 KJV) "These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, **in order that** thy Son also may glorify thee: {2} As thou hast given him power over all flesh, **in order that** he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. {3} And this is life eternal,

in order that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. {4} I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do."

See the emphasis on the completed work of the Son which only glorifies the Father. See how power is given to the Son universally, but with the object that eternal life could be given only to those limited number given to Him. Then what is the great purpose of eternal life for those so blessed? It is the greatest of all pursuits, both in such a limited sense in this life and in a perfectly united and full sense in the next life, to know the one and only true God and His Almighty Son!

Jesus Christ is the great Sent One whose wondrous work of redemption was the finest, most self-sacrificing act of pure love ever wrought in all creation. Praise God for His mercy to us through the Lord Jesus Christ! Can any purpose surpass the awesome task of intimately and personally knowing God?

Furthermore, just contemplate what Christ further petitions the Father for in the following verses of this prayer. Amazingly, the Lord asks that we would be one with the Father as the They are with each other!

(John 17:20-23 KJV) "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; {21} That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. {22} And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: {23} I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me."

Praise God for His magnificent mercy towards us, for the true hope of glory and eternal life in our Lord! Because of Him, we can always confidently say, "The best is yet to be!"

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