

John

5:26

Version

Commentary



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◀ John 5:26 ▶

For as the Father has life in himself; so has he given to the Son to have life in himself;

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EXPOSITORY (ENGLISH BIBLE)

[Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers](#)

(26) Hath he given to the Son.—Better, gave He to the Son also.

Life in himself.—The Son has spoken of the dead hearing His voice and living, but this giving of life to others can only be by one who has in himself an original source of life. This the Father has, and this the Son also has. To the Son in His pre-existent state it was natural, as being equal with the Father. To the Son who had emptied Himself of the exercise of the attributes which constituted the glory of that state (comp. again [Philippians 2:6](#) et seq.), it was part of the Father's gift by which He exalted Him exceedingly, and gave Him the name which is above every name. It was, then, a gift in time to One who had possessed it before all time, and for the purposes of the mediatorial work had relinquished it. It was a gift, not to the Eternal Son, but to the Incarnate Word.

[Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary](#)

5:24-29 Our Lord declared his authority and character, as the Messiah. The time was come when the dead should hear his voice, as the Son of God, and live. Our Lord first refers to his raising those who were dead in sin, to newness of life, by the power of the Spirit, and then to his raising the dead in their graves. The office of Judge of all men, can only be exercised by one who has all knowledge, and almighty power. May we believe His testimony; thus our faith and hope will be in God, and we shall not come into condemnation. And may His voice reach the hearts of those dead in sin; that they may do works meet for repentance, and prepare for the solemn day.

[Barnes' Notes on the Bible](#)

As the Father hath life - God is the source of all life. He is thence called the living God, in opposition to idols which have no life. [Acts 14:15](#); "we preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities (idols) 'unto the living God,'" [Joshua 3:10](#); [1 Samuel 17:26](#); [Jeremiah 10:10](#). See also [Isaiah 40:18-31](#).

In himself - This means that life in God, or existence, is not derived from any other being. Our life is derived from God. [Genesis 2:7](#); God "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul" - that is, a living being. All other creatures derive their life from him. [Psalm 104:30](#), [Psalm 104:29](#); "thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created; thou takest away their breath, they die and return to their dust." But God is underived. He always existed as he is. [Psa 90:2](#); "from everlasting to everlasting thou art God." He is unchangeably the same, [James 1:17](#). It cannot be said that he is "self-existent," because that is an absurdity; no being can originate or create himself; but he is not dependent on any other for "life." Of course, no being can take away his existence; and of course, also, no being can take away his happiness. He has "in himself" infinite sources of happiness, and no other being, no change in his universe can destroy that happiness.

So - In a manner like his. It corresponds to the first "as," implying that one is the same as the other; life in the one is the "same," and possessed in the same manner, as in the other.

Hath he given - This shows that the power or authority here spoken of was "given" or committed to the Lord Jesus. This evidently does not refer to the

manner in which the second person of the Trinity exists, for the power and authority of which Christ here speaks is that which he exercises as "Mediator." It is the power of raising the dead and judging the world. In regard to his divine nature, it is not affirmed here that it is in any manner derived; nor does the fact that God is said to have "given" him this power prove that he was inferior in his nature or that his existence was derived. For:

1. It has reference merely "to office." As Mediator, he may be said to have been appointed by the Father.
2. Appointment to office does not prove that the one who is appointed is inferior in nature to him who appoints him. A son may be appointed to a particular work by a parent, and yet, in regard to talents and every other qualification, may be equal or superior to the father. He sustains the relation of a son, and in this relation there is an official inferiority. General Washington was not inferior in nature and talents to the men who commissioned him. He simply derived authority from them to do what he was otherwise fully "able" to do. So the Son, "as Mediator," is subject to the Father; yet this proves nothing about his nature.

To have life - That is, the right or authority of imparting life to others, whether dead in their graves or in their sins.

In himself - There is much that is remarkable in this expression. It is in Him as it is in God. He has the control of it, and can exercise it as he will. The prophets and apostles are never represented as having such power in themselves. They were dependent; they performed miracles in the name of God and of Jesus Christ [Acts 3:6](#); [Acts 4:30](#); [Acts 16:18](#); but Jesus did it by his own name, authority, and power. He had but to speak, and it was done, [Mark 5:41](#); [Luke 7:14](#); [John 11:43](#). This wonderful commission he bore from God to raise up the dead as he pleased; to convert sinners when and where he chose; and finally to raise up all the dead, and pronounce on them an eternal doom according to the deeds done in the body. None could do this but he who had the power of creation - equal in omnipotence to the Father, and the power of searching all hearts - equal in omniscience to God.

[Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary](#)

26. given to the Son, &c.—Does this refer to the essential life of the Son before all time (Joh 1:4) (as most of the Fathers, and Olshausen, Stier, Alford, &c., among the moderns), or to the purpose of God that this essential life should reside in the Person of the Incarnate Son, and be manifested thus to the world? [Calvin, Lucke, Luthardt, &c.] The question is as difficult as the subject is high. But as all that Christ says of His essential relation to the Father is intended to explain and exalt His mediatorial functions, so the one seems in our Lord's own mind and language mainly the starting-point of the other.

[Matthew Poole's Commentary](#)

How the eternal Father hath life in himself, is obvious to every capacity; for he is the First Mover, and therefore must have his life in and from himself, and not from any other; and he is the First Cause, and therefore that life which floweth from him to all created beings, must first be in him, as in its fountain. But in what sense it is said, that he hath

given to the Son to have life in himself whether as God, by his eternal generation, or as the Messiah and Mediator between God and man, and so the fountain of spiritual life to believers, is more questioned. Those who understand it as to the Divine nature, say, that this phrase, hath life in himself, is expressive of the name Jehovah; and that Christ is proved to be the true Jehovah by what is here said, that he hath life in himself. But they distinguish betwixt having life from or by himself, and having life in himself; the text saith, it is given to Christ to have life in himself. But there are other interpreters, who seem better to understand it of Christ as Mediator, to whom it is given to have life in himself, to communicate to his creatures; and think it is well interpreted by [John 1:4](#), In him was life, and the life was the light of men.

[Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible](#)

For as the Father hath life in himself,.... Is the living God, the fountain of life, and is the author of life to all living creatures; or rather has eternal life in his mind, his heart, his counsel, and his covenant, and in his hands, for all his chosen ones, which seems to be the peculiar sense here:

so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; he hath not only made the purpose of it in him, and given the promise of it to him; but even eternal life itself, he has put into his hands, and secured it in him for them, [1 John 5:11](#), to give it to

as many as he has given him: and he does give it to all his sheep, so that not one of them shall perish; which shows that he and his Father are one, though not in person, yet as in affection, will and power, so in nature and essence. The Son has life in himself, essentially, originally, and inderivatively as the Father has, being equally the living God, the fountain of life, and donor of it, as he; and therefore this is not a life which he gives, or communicates to him; but eternal life is what the one gives, and the other receives, according to the economy of salvation settled between them: and hence it is, that all that hear Christ's voice spiritually shall live eternally; for these words are a reason of the former, and confirm the truth of them, as well as show the equality of the Son with the Father, in that he is equal to such a trust, as to have eternal life committed to him.

[Geneva Study Bible](#)

For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself;

EXEGETICAL (ORIGINAL LANGUAGES)

[Meyer's NT Commentary](#)

[John 5:26-27](#). The life denoted by the aforesaid ζήσουσιν, seeing the subjects of it were dead, must be something which is in process of being imparted to them,—a life which comes from the Son, the quickener. But He could not impart it if He had not in Himself a divine and independent fountain of life, like the Father, which the Father, the absolutely living One ([John 6:57](#)), gave Him when He sent Him into the world to accomplish His Messianic work; comp. [John 10:36](#). The following ἔδωκεν ([John 5:27](#)) should itself have prevented the reference to the eternal generation (Augustine and many others, even Gess). Besides (therefore [John 5:27](#)), if only the ἀκούσαντες (comp. οὐς θέλει, [John 5:21](#)) are to live, and the other νεκροί not, the Son must have received from the Father the warrant and power of judging and of deciding who are to live and who not. This power is given Him by the Father because He is the Son of man; for in His incarnation, i.e. in the fact that the Son of God (incarnate) is a child of man (comp. [Php 2:7](#); [Galatians 4:4](#); [Romans 1:3](#); [Romans 8:3](#)), the essence of His nature as Redeemer consists, and this consequently is the reason in the history of redemption why the Father has equipped Him for the Messianic function of judgment. Had the Son of God not become a child of man, He could not have been the fulfiller of the Father's decree of redemption, nor have been entrusted with judicial power. Luthardt (comp.

Hofmann, *Schriftbew.* II. 1, p. 78) says incorrectly: "for God desired to judge the world by means of a man," which is a thought much too vague for this passage, and is borrowed from [Acts 17:31](#). De Wette, with whom Brückner concurs (comp. also Reuss), more correctly says: "It denotes the Logos as a human manifestation,[213] and in this lies the reason why He judges, for the hidden God could not be judge." But this negative and refined definition of the reason given, "because He is the Son of man," can all the less appropriately be read between the lines, the more it savours of Philonic speculation, and the more current the view of the Deity as a Judge was among the Jews. So, following Augustine, Luther, Castalio, Jansen, and most others, B. Crusius (comp. also Wetstein, who adduces [Hebrews 4:15](#)): "because executing judgment requires direct operation upon mankind." [214] Others (Grotius, Lampe, Kuinoel, Lücke, Olshausen, Maier, Bäumlein, Ewald, and most others, now also Tholuck): "υἱὸς ἀνθρ. is He who is announced in Daniel 7 and in the book of Enoch as the Messiah" (see on [Matthew 8:20](#)), where the thought has been set forth successively in various ways; Lücke (so also Baeumlein): "because He is the Messiah, and judgment essentially belongs to the work of the Messiah" (comp. Ewald). Tholuck comes nearest to the right sense: "because He is become man, i.e. is the Redeemer, but with this redemption itself the κρίσις also is given." Hengstenberg: "as a reward for taking humanity upon Him." Against the whole explanation from [Daniel 7:13](#), however, to which Beyschlag, *Christol.* p. 29, with his explanation of the ideal man (the personal standard of divine judgment), adheres, it is decisive that in the N. T. throughout, wherever "Son of man" is used to designate the Messiah, both words have the article: ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου (in [John 1:51](#); [John 3:13-14](#); [John 6:27](#); [John 6:52](#); [John 6:62](#); [John 8:28](#); [John 12:23](#); [John 12:34](#); [John 13:31](#)): Υἱὸς ἈΝΘΡΩΠΟΥ without the article [215] occurs in [Revelation 1:13](#); [Revelation 14:14](#), but it does not express the idea of the Messiah. Thus the prophecy in Daniel does not enter into consideration here; but "Song of Solomon of a human being" is correlative to "Song of Solomon of God" (of the Father, [John 5:25-26](#)), although it must frankly be acknowledged that the expression does not necessarily presuppose birth from a virgin. [216] The Peshito, Armenian version, Theophylact, Euthymius Zigabenus, Paulus, connect the words—rightly taking υἱὸς ἀνθρ. to mean man—with what follows: "Marvel not that He is a man." This is not in keeping with the context, while τοῦτο witnesses for the ordinary connection.

ζωὴν ἔχειν ἐν ἑαυτῷ] in Himself. “Est emphasis in hoc dicto: vitam habere in sese, i. e. alio modo quam creaturae, angeli et homines,” Melancthon. Comp. [John 1:4](#), [John 14:6](#). [217] The words καὶ νῦν ἐστὶν are certainly decisive against Gess (Pers. Chr. p. 301), who ascribes the gift of life by the Father to the Son as referring only to His pre-existent glory and His state of exaltation, which he considers to have been “suspended” during the period of His earthly life. The prayer at the grave of Lazarus only proves that Christ exercised the power of life, which was bestowed upon Him as His own, in accordance with the Father’s will. See on [John 5:21](#).

[213] Or the relative humanity of Him who is God’s Son. The expression is therefore different from: “because He is man.”

[214] Comp. also Baur in Hilgenfeld’s Zeitschr. f. wiss. Theol. 1860, p. 276 ff., and N. T. Theol. p. 79 ff.; Holtzmann in the same, 1865, p. 234 f. Akin to this interpretation is that of Weiss, p. 224: “so far as He is a son of man, and can in human form bring near to men the life-giving revelation of God.” Even thus, however, what is said to be the point of the reason given has to be supplied. This holds also against Godet, who confounds things that differ: “On one side judgment must proceed from the womb of humanity as an ‘hommage à Dieu,’ and on the other it is entrusted by God’s love as a purification of humanity to Him who voluntarily became man.” Groos (in the Stud. u. Krit. 1868, p. 260) substantially agrees with Beyschlag.

[215] Weizsäcker (Unters. üb. d. evang. Gesch. p. 431) cuts away this objection by the statement, without proof, that υἱὸς ἀνθρ. without the article belongs to the explanatory exposition of the fourth Gospel. Baeumlein and Beyschlag, to account for the absence of the article, content themselves with saying that υἱὸς ἀνθρ. is the predicate, and therefore (comp. Holtzmann) the point would turn on the meaning of the conception. But the formal and unchanging title, ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρ., not agree with that; and, moreover, in this way the omission only of the first article, and not of the second (τοῦ), would be explained; υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου can only mean Song of Solomon of a man. Comp. Barnabas, Ep. xii. (Dressel.)

[216] He who is Son of God is son of a man—the latter κατὰ σάρκα, [John 1:14](#);

the former κατὰ πνεῦμα ἁγιωσύνης, [Romans 9:5](#); [Romans 1:3](#).

[217] Quite in opposition to the ἐν ἑαυτῷ, Weizsäcker, in the Jahrb. f. Deutsche Theol. 1857, p. 179, understands the possession of life as brought about "by transference or communication from the Father." Chap. [John 6:57](#) likewise indicates life as an essential possession, brought with Him ([John 1:4](#)) from His pre-existent state in His mission from the Father, and according to the Father's will and appointment, [Colossians 1:19](#); [Colossians 2:10](#).

[Expositor's Greek Testament](#)

[John 5:26](#). The 26th verse partly explains the apparent impossibility.—ὥσπερ γὰρ ... ἔχειν ἐν ἑαυτῷ. "The particles mark the fact of the gift and not the degrees of it" (Westcott). As the Father has in Himself, and therefore at His own command, life which He can impart as He will: so by His gift the Son has in Himself life which He can communicate directly to whom He will.—ἐν ἑαυτῷ [similarly used [Mark 4:17](#), [John 4:14](#), etc.] excludes dependence for life on anything external to self. From this it follows that what is so possessed is possessed with uninterrupted fulness, and can at will be imparted.—ἔδωκε, "the tense carries us back beyond time," says Westcott. This is more than doubtful; although several interpreters suppose the eternal generation of the Son is in view. That is precluded both by the word "gave" [which "denotat id quod non per naturalem generationem, sed per benevolam Patris voluntatem est concessum," [Matthew 28:18](#) [Luke 1:32](#); [John 3:34](#); [John 6:37](#), Lampe] and by the context, especially by the last clause of [John 5:27](#). The opinions of the Fathers and Reformers are cited in Lampe. See further Stevens, Johan. Theol., p. 60.

[Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges](#)

26. so hath he given to the Son] Better, so gave He also to the Son. Comp. 'the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father' ([John 6:57](#)). The Father is the absolutely living One, the Fount of all Life. The Messiah, however, imparts life to all who believe; which He could not do unless He had in Himself a fountain of life; and this the Father gave Him when He sent Him into the world. The Eternal Generation of the Son from the Father is not here in question; it is the Father's communication of Divine attributes to the Incarnate Word that is meant.

[Bengel's Gnomon](#)

[John 5:26](#). "ἔχειν ἐν ἑαυτῷ, to have in Himself) Ch. [John 1:4](#). "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men."

Pulpit Commentary

Verse 26. - This verse, introduced by γὰρ, shows that the statement about to follow will sustain some portion of the previous one. Which portion? As it seems to me, the coming clause justifies the alteration of the term "the Son" into "the Son of God;" and declares, more fully than any other passage in the New Testament, the lofty and unique character of the Sonship which he claimed. For even as the Father hath life in himself - the sublime assumption of the self-existence and eternal being of the Father, the absolute Possessor of life per se, the Source ultimate and efficient of all that is connoted by life, the eternal Fountain of life - in like manner also he gave to the Son to have Life in himself. "He generated," as Augustine has it, "such a Son who should have life in himself, not as a participator in life, but one who should be as he himself is - Life itself." It is the bona fide expression of community of nature, attribute, quality, and possession of Godhead. In virtue of this utterance, the evangelist, learning from the consciousness of Christ through long years of meditation, under the power of the Spirit, eventually formulated the doctrine of the prologue, "In him was life." "The Son," or the God-Man, is, so far as this Sonship is concerned, the veritable Son of God with such a fulness of life power and such a fountain of life flowing from him, that his voice is the voice of the Eternal Son. This is the primary meaning, though since the Lord returned to his use of the word "the Son," and since the word "gave" is also employed to denote the stupendous conception, there is also involved in it the declaration that the God-Man, seeing he is both Son of God and Son of man, is endowed with all the functions of both. In his incarnation he has not lost the infinite fulness of life giving power. "He quickeneth whom he will," having life in himself. His voice is the voice of the Son of God. The glory of the Word who became flesh was the glory of the Only Begotten. The part which this great passage took in the Arian controversy is well known (see Athanasius, 'Discourses against Arians,' 3:3, translated by J.H. Newman). Archdeacon Watkins emphasizes the position that the Lord here speaks of "life in himself," which was given to the Son (God-Man) in virtue of, and as the reward of his sacrificial work. He points to [Philippians 2:6](#), etc. But Jesus here speaks of a gift already made.

Vincent's Word Studies

AS - SO (ὥσπερ - οὕτως)

The correspondence is that of fact, not of degree.

Hath he given (ἔδωκεν)

Rev., more strictly, gave, the aorist tense pointing back to the eternal past.

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