

## The Light in the Darkness

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Our text for the Baptism of our Lord is from the Old Testament reading from Genesis. **And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.** Here ends our text.

Who am I? Where did I come from? What is the purpose of my life? What happens after I die? These are all questions you may have asked about your life. But you're not alone. These are basic questions that men and philosophers have been seeking to answer for thousands of years. But just what are the answers? Well, that depends. It depends on whether you dwell in the darkness or in the light.

The wisdom of the world claims to have the answers. Where did you come from? Well, in the beginning there was a big bang. Some 15 billion years ago, all the matter in the universe collected into one solid mass and suddenly exploded. Where did all the matter come from? We don't know? What caused the explosion? We don't know. We're in the dark. But apparently from this explosion and chaos all the billions of stars and planets organized themselves into galaxies and solar systems. After another 10 billion years or so, the earth was formed, a mass of rotating elements and chemicals. By mere chance, lightning struck some of this primordial ooze on the surface, and life began. Not simple life, but complex life with long chains of DNA, packets of genetic information arranged in perfect order. Doesn't this go against the proven second law of thermodynamics that all things left to themselves move from a state of order to disorder? Yes, it does. Doesn't this go against the proven law of biogenesis that life can only come from life, not from non-life? Yes, it does. We're still in the dark about that. But then, through a slow series of mutations, genetic information was added randomly to these life forms, and new species evolved. By natural selection, species with beneficial mutations continued to propagate while defective ones died out. It was survival of the fittest. But do mutations ever add new genetic information? No. Are mutations ever beneficial? Not that's been observed. Is there any evidence of species evolving into other species, any transitional figures in the fossil record? No, not one. Changes must have happened very fast then. A lizard laid an egg and out popped a chicken. It was spontaneous. Or, if it wasn't something like that, since there's no evidence for evolution, then maybe life was brought here from somewhere else. It was space aliens. That's it. But where did they come from? Don't know. More darkness.

Who are you? Well, according to the world's wisdom, you're just a series of accidents evolved from a primate. You're a more developed species of monkey. Do you have a conscience, any sense of morals? No. It's up to you to decide right and wrong. Is there any authority over you, any duties you're bound to perform? No. Only those things which a stronger organism can force upon you. Otherwise, you're completely autonomous. Do what you like, or whatever stimulates the chemicals in your brain. Lust, take, kill. Is there any absolute truth? No. It's all relative to the individual. As a society, we're still in the dark.

What's your purpose in life? Only to survive as long as you can. Unless of course you're a defective organism. Then it's your lot to die and make way for a new and better species. Should you show any compassion and mercy to others? No, that would upset the natural order of things. By helping those with birth defects, or hereditary diseases, or any who can't survive on their own, you're only weakening the species. The more evolved race should actually follow Hitler's example and purge the earth of the those we think are less developed and inferior. But what a dark world that would be.

What happens after this life? Nothing. Only darkness. You have no soul. You're body is just carrion for vultures or fertilizer for plants. There is no afterlife. Only darkness.

These are the answers to the questions of life according to the wisdom of the world, a world that dwells in darkness, a world without God. Of course, this goes against everything we see and observe and sense in this life. This view of the world doesn't match the real world. In this world view there is only darkness.

But according to the wisdom that comes down from heaven, there is light. In Genesis 1:1, we read, "In the beginning God." Not a big bang, but God. God was there before the beginning of time. He is eternal. And on the first day of time, God created the heavens and the earth. He made all the matter, all the elements and chemicals, all the raw material of the universe. But it was in chaos, without any order. The earth was without form. And darkness covered the world. But God was there. The Triune God was there. The Spirit of God was there hovering over the waters ready to give life. God the Father spoke His Word who is God the Son. And

God said, "Let there be light," and, just like he said, there was light. God brought light out of a dark world. And the light was good. God separated the light from the darkness. God was beginning to organize the world. It was like someone had dumped a bunch of materials at a building site in a heap and now the architect and contractors and builders were designing and putting it all together to make a house. "For every house is built by someone, but God is the builder of everything." God separated the waters above from the waters below and made the sky. He gathered the waters below into seas and dry land appeared. God organized the heavens, the galaxies and solar systems. He set the sun in its place to govern the day and the moon to govern the night. God was bringing order from disorder, a synchronized dance of the stars and planets from chaos. And then by his Word, God brought forth life, plants and trees, sea creatures and birds, animals upon the ground. Coming from one creator, one designer, these living organisms shared similar designs and genetic building blocks, but they were unique species which only reproduced according to their kind. The crown of God's creation was man. God made man specially from the dust of the ground and breathed life, his Spirit, into man. Man has a body and a soul. God made man in his image, holy and righteous, merciful and loving. God wrote his Law on man's heart. Man has a conscience and morals, a knowledge of right and wrong. He has a knowledge of God from his creation. For "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands." This is the wisdom from above. God was there in the beginning giving order from disorder, life from non-life, light from darkness.

This week we begin the season of Epiphany. Epiphany comes from the word for light. In our Old Testament reading we remember how the Triune God brought light out of darkness at the creation of the world. But in our New Testament reading we also remember how the Triune God brought light to a world darkened by sin. God the Holy Spirit hovered over the waters of the Jordan river and descended upon God the Son while God the Father spoke from heaven. At Jesus' baptism he began his public ministry. He began his work of redeeming a fallen world. "The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world." Jesus Christ, who is the light of the world, came to bring spiritual light to those in spiritual darkness. He came to give spiritual life to the dead in spirit. He who is Life, came to die in order to give life to the dead.

These are the answers to the questions of life according to the wisdom from heaven, the wisdom God reveals to us in the Bible. This view of the world matches what we observe and see and sense. In this world view there is light.

So where did you come from? Not from an explosion, by accident or chance. Not from a lizard's egg or from space aliens. You were created by God. He created your inmost being; he knit you together in your mother's womb.

Who are you? Not an ape or brute animal with no reason or sense. You are God's special creation. You have a body and a soul. You have a conscience with a knowledge of God's Law, right and wrong. But you are also a fallen creature. You were born with a spiritual birth defect, a sinful nature inherited from your parents. But God didn't exterminate you from the planet. He had mercy and compassion on you. At your baptism, the Holy Spirit hovered over the waters and gave you new spiritual life through faith in Jesus Christ. You are now a redeemed child of God.

What's your purpose in life? Not to live like an animal, satisfy the appetite of a beast, or sacrifice others for your own preservation. No, you live like the child of God you are. As God has done for you, so you do for others. You have mercy and compassion. You sacrifice yourself for their preservation. You are the light of the world. Let your light shine before men that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven. You point others to Jesus Christ and his light.

What happens after death? For you, not darkness, but light. Not eternal death but eternal life. A soul that's immediately with God in heaven and a glorified body that's raised on the Last Day. A new creation. A place that doesn't need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp. A place where you'll dwell in the light forever.

God doesn't keep you in the dark. He gives you his Word. He gives you his Son. He says, "Let there be light," and there is light. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.