

And there was light

Genesis 1:1-3

January 8, 2012

This is the beginning, the beginning of the Torah, the beginning of the Bible, the beginning of the story, the beginning of our story, the beginning of all stories, the beginning of all things.

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was empty and desolate. Darkness covered the face of the deep, but the Spirit of God moved over the waters. Then God said, "Let there be light." And there was light.

In the beginning, there was no sun. There were no stars, no galaxies, no supernovas, just darkness, just emptiness.

In the beginning, there was eternal night. No, that's not right. It was not night, because night only makes sense in contrast to day, and without light, there is no day. And it was not eternal, because eternal only makes sense in the context of time, but without movement, without being, there is no time.

In the beginning, all was darkness, emptiness, nothingness. There was nothing: no day, no night, no space, no time, nothing. Nothing except God. Nothing except the Spirit of God moving over the waters, moving over the face of *tehom* ... over the face of *tehom*, the deep, the primordial ocean, a Hebrew word to describe what cannot be described, the form of what is formless, the shape of what is shapeless, the name of something that is in fact nothing.

Nothing except in the imagination and the will and the heart of God! Then God said, "Let there be light," and there was light!

Light comes first. Light comes from God and light comes first. Light is the first of God's creations. Light is the first of God's gifts.

Everything else comes from light, because light brings energy and light brings warmth. Everything else comes from light, because light makes life possible. But light is even more. It is light that makes things be.

You know the old riddle: if a tree falls in the forest and there is no one there to hear, does it make a sound? The answer is ... of course, not! Because "sound" is an experience, an sensory experience that requires a "hearer."

But we can add to the riddle: if a tree falls in the forest and there is no one to see, does it fall? Well ... no! Because “falling” is a sensory interpretation of an event. To be able to say that something has fallen, there has to be a “see-er” who sees it fall! And without light, there is no seeing. Without light, there is nothing to see.

The light that comes from God, the light that God speaks into existence, reveals everything, shows everything, allows everything to be seen, allows everything to be, allows everything to be in the eyes of one who sees. And God is the One who sees! God looked at everything he had made and saw that it was good!

Do you see? Do you understand? Everything that is only is because there is one who sees it, and it is God who sees everything. It is God who sees us. God sees and God says, “It is good.” We have value, our lives have meaning, we are beautiful ... in God’s eyes, because God sees us. Light makes visible. Light makes beauty. Light reveals glory.

What was formless takes form. What was shapeless takes shape. What was nothing becomes something. What wasn’t becomes what is. *Tehom* becomes creation -- heavens and earth!

Do you see? Do you understand? We are made in God’s image. We are made out of light, to live in the light and by the light and for the light. We are made “see-ers” too, ones who see what is there, who see form and shape and meaning, ones who see goodness, ones who recognize beauty. We are gifted by God, gifted by the light that comes from God, with the capacity to recognize and appreciate and praise.

Light comes first. Light is the first of God’s creations. Light is the first of God’s gifts. The light shines in the darkness!

The light is shining in the darkness! We can see! The light has not gone out. We and all the world have not devolved back into *tehom*, back into the deep, back into desolation and emptiness and darkness. There is goodness, there is beauty, all around us, everywhere still to be seen, everywhere still to be seen by us.

This is the beginning, the beginning of the story, the beginning of our story, the beginning of all stories, but it is not the end.

This is the heart, the heart of the story, the heart of our story, the heart of all stories.

In the beginning, the Word was with God and the Word was God. From the very beginning the Word was with God. Through the Word God made all things. The Word was the source of life and this life brought light to all of us. The light shines in the darkness.

And the Word, the Word that was with God from the very beginning, the Word that was the source of life and light, became flesh and lived among us. The source of light became flesh and lived among us. The Word of God, the light of God, became flesh and lived among us! Light became flesh and lived among us!

The earth was empty and desolate, empty of truth and desolate of hope. Darkness overshadowed the face of the land. But the Spirit of God was moving! The Spirit of God was moving over mountains and plains, over rivers and lakes, over cities and towns and all the places humans dwell. Then God said, "Let there be light," and there was light! The light shines in the darkness!

Jesus Christ is the light of the world. Jesus is the light that brings energy and warmth, the light that heals, the light that comforts, the light that gives life. Jesus Christ is the light that reveals everything as it is, shows everything as it is, allows everything to be seen ... allows everything to be seen, not just as it is as it is seen by us, but as it is as it is seen by God!

Would you rather be seen, only in your own eyes or in the eyes of your neighbor? Or would you want to be seen ... in God's eyes? God sees us, in the light of Jesus!

Do you see? Do you understand? Everything that is only is because there is one who sees it, and it is God who sees everything. It is God who sees us. God sees us in the light of Jesus and God says, "It is good." We have value, our lives have meaning, we are beautiful ... in God's eyes, because of the light, because of Jesus. Christ's light makes visible. Christ's light makes beauty. Christ's light reveals glory.

What was formless takes form. What was shapeless takes shape. What was lost becomes found. What was dead is made alive. What was nothing becomes something. You are God's new creation!

Do you see? Do you understand? We are made one with Christ. We are made one with the light, to walk in the light and by the light and for the light. We are made "bearers," too, of that same light, bringing healing, bringing comfort, bringing truth, allowing everything to be seen as it is, not just as the world sees it, but as God sees it! We bear God's light! We are God's eyes!

The light is shining in the darkness! Because of Jesus, we can see! The light has not gone out. The world has not gone black, utterly engulfed by the darkness of hatred, the chaos of war, the emptiness of apathy. There is goodness, there is beauty, all around us, everywhere still to be seen, everywhere still to be seen by the light that is Jesus, by the light that is Jesus in us.

This is the heart, the heart of the story, the heart of our story, the heart of all stories, but it is not the end. Light was the first of God's gifts, and light will be the last.