

Genesis 1:1-5

It's no wonder that science has rejected the Creation account in Genesis 1 in favor of a Theory of Evolution. Reading verse 3..."God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light" took place on Day One, but He did not create the sun, the moon, and the stars until the Fourth Day. This stretches the minds of scientific thinkers farther than they are able to go. "How can there be light without its source?" This may confuse those outside the church, but for you who know the power of God, you believe that all things have their source in Him. Light depends upon, not the shining sun, but the Word of God which simply says, "Let there be light."

For the same reason we understand that baptism and faith do not depend upon our actions, our decisions, or feelings, but also upon God's Word alone. To gain a better understanding of such things we must, therefore, look deeper into that Word of God. You might think that to understand baptism we would study the story of Jesus' baptism in Mark 1, or St. Paul's words on baptism in Romans 6, but today we begin where it all began--by looking at the first chapter in the Bible.

"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters." Before there were plants, and animals, and people...before the mountains were formed...before lakes, and rivers, and streams...before land appeared...the earth "was without form and void." In the beginning it was unformed, a big mass of emptiness. It was incapable of sustaining life. No inhabitants of any kind could have lived on it. And it was dark. There was no light anywhere; not even a faint glimmer. And if you can accept it, this is a pretty accurate picture of our beginning in this world before we were baptized. This is not how God created us, but this is what became of us when our first parents plunged the human race into sin. We became without form and void, with darkness covering us.

A body without a head has no form. And since we cut off our Head in the Garden of Eden--cutting off our God who is our rightful Head, by our disobedience, we became, like the earth in the beginning, a body without form. Plunged into sin, cut off from God we were, also like the earth at first, void. No longer God, but now a great emptiness filled us. And we lived in darkness. No light, not even a faint glimmer. All mankind was plunged into the terrifying darkness of sin and death. And so we, too, like the earth at first, were incapable of sustaining life. God, who is our life, no longer lived within us.

It would be good for us to read these words in Genesis often to remember where we came from, to be reminded of what we were before baptism. But these words are just the beginning. We keep reading that, "the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters." God did not let the earth remain in darkness as a mass without form and void. God acted. And as He acted in the beginning, so also He acted for you. In your baptism into Christ, the same Spirit of God who hovered over the face of the waters; the same Spirit who descended upon Jesus in His baptism in Jordan's waters, was active in the waters of the baptismal font for you.

And the same voice which said, "Let there be light" in the beginning; the same voice which spoke to Jesus at the Jordan, "You are My beloved Son; with You I am well pleased;" this very voice of God spoke through the mouth of your pastor and said to you, "I baptize you in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

When God said, "Let there be light," there was light. And so the Light of the world appeared at the Jordan being baptized there for you, and when God spoke in your baptism, from that day on you no longer live in darkness. You no longer live separate from God. You no longer live without form and void. God acted in your baptism to give you back your loving Head. He acted to remove from you the darkness of sin, to cast out Satan from you so that now Christ your Light dwells within you.

All this is why we say, "I am baptized," and not, "I was baptized." You were baptized once, but the Light for you still shines; your rightful Head is still attached; your place with God is still secure. But you know very well, as do I, how easy it is to live the words not, I am..." but "I was baptized;" to go day after day not bringing to mind what our baptism into Christ really means. The world despises baptism. Perhaps many in our circles of friends also think little of it. But God highly honors it. It is not just a day in the life of a Christian, but is the foundation upon which we live--for baptism is Christ, because it delivers Christ. Without Jesus, baptism is nothing. Unless He went to the Jordan to be baptized there, the waters today would be empty for us. But He did go. He was baptized for you. He placed into baptism forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation so that today you receive these very things in your baptism.

In the beginning God created the earth to be your foundation. He filled this earth with everything you need to live. And He placed you into this earth so that you would make use of every blessing He put here for you. Just as the earth is your foundation, so is baptism. God filled your baptismal waters with everything you need for this life and for the life to come. And as He placed you into this earth, so He placed you into the waters of Holy Baptism so that every day of your life you now make full use of every blessing given you in baptism.

One of the greatest blessings you have in your baptism is that because it is your foundation, you can always return to it. It does not move, even though we do. We, sadly, leave our baptism and fill our minds and lives with sinful things. Even though God is our loving Head, we continue to cast Him aside and live how we want and not how He invites us to live as His dear children.

My fellow sinners, this is why Christ Jesus died for us. He did not die for holy people. He suffered and died for those who are disobedient. He shed His innocent blood for those who are guilty. And you who are God's baptized in Christ always have this as your foundation. No matter how far you have strayed from your Lord, your loving Father welcomes you today. "Rend your hearts" (in repentance) He cries out to us all. You still have a place with Him in your baptism. No matter how grievous our sins against Him have been; no matter how much we have hurt our neighbor, you have forgiveness in Jesus in your baptism. These waters never run dry. This forgiveness is yours now. God, for Jesus' sake, declares to you that Christ died for you no matter how much you have sinned. 'You are My baptized child in Jesus,' He says, 'I forgive you of every wrong you have done.'

This earth is our foundation, but only as a temporary one. When we die it will no longer be a foundation for us. But baptism remains your foundation forever. In baptism you die with Christ, and in baptism you rise to new life with Him. And this life continues even beyond the grave. This is why the church uses a baptismal pall when her members die in Christ. No funeral coffin is more beautiful than the white pall of Holy Baptism laid over it which symbolizes that this child of God, even though he or she has died, still lives with Jesus. For the Christian being buried into the ground, this white pall proclaims to all who are gathered at the funeral service, "I belong to Jesus. He is my Savior." Through the baptismal pall the dead in Christ still speak, and their voice is always in the present tense. With all the company of heaven, and will all the saints here on earth, the white pall of Holy

Baptism shouts out to all, “God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.” “In Christ, I who have died, still live, for it’s not just that ‘I was,’ but ‘I am, even now, I am baptized into Him!’” Amen.