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The Abyss II (Judgment and Light)

Genesis 1:1-4

Peter Hiett

April 1, 2007

Well, it's Palm Sunday, a day absolutely drenched in irony. All over Christendom, folks wave palm branches declaring, "Jesus is King!" and remember the day Jesus rode into Jerusalem. On that day, the crowds lined the road into Jerusalem chanting, "Hosanna!" It was a word of praise said to a king. Literally it means, "Save us, please!"

But in just five days, the crowd will be chanting, "Crucify him!" And all of Christ's disciples will desert him.

On Palm Sunday as the crowd chants, "Hosanna!" Luke records that Jesus is weeping . . . weeping because the people are blind to Him, and so their city Jerusalem will be utterly destroyed.

John records that the crowd came that day because they saw Lazarus raised from the dead . . . raised not to eternal life but to more of this life. They came because they thought Jesus would:

1. make their lives work: that is, save their flesh and fill their empty stomachs with fish and loaves;
2. make their world work: that is, save the old kingdom of Israel, overthrow the Romans, and establish Israel as a world power;
3. save their dark little universe.

They *thought* they saw Him in His glory. But in five days they would all abandon Him. "Jesus Christ and Him crucified"—no glory there.

In the Revelation, every creature in Heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea praises the slaughtered lamb on the throne, praises the glory of "Jesus Christ and Him crucified."

These Palm Sunday people are utterly blind to the glory of God. So folks can wave palm branches, cry Hosanna, read the book, get the T-shirt, and be utterly blind to the glory of God.

What is the glory of God?

John records that as Jesus entered the city that day, He said, "The hour has come for the Son of man to be glorified." Then He talks about death saying, "Whoever loves his life will lose it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life." A voice booms from Heaven, and Jesus says, "Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth [and He was speaking of His cross], will draw all people to myself."

He then teaches that He is the light. But they cannot see. They're blind. They *think* they see, but they're blind.

John 3:19: "And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil." This is the judgment—the light come into the world—judgment.

Judgment is “krisis” in Greek. It’s where we get our word *crisis*. It means *to separate*; judgment; separation. Now our text:

Genesis 1:1-4:

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 [Tahowm; abyss]. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness.

In a world of grey, we need the light separated from the darkness. But God must do it. And is that good news or bad news?

- In Leviticus, we read that Israel is to separate clean from unclean, holy from unholy: “separate,” same word as used in Genesis 1.
- The veil in the temple “separated” the Holy of Holies from all else.
- Isaiah prophesies that our iniquities have made a separation between us and God.
- God separates the light from the dark. All that same word: *badal* (Hebrew).

Last time we started asking the questions, “What is the dark? Why the dark? And what purpose does it serve?” Genesis 1:1 says, “In the beginning . . .” Transliterated from the Hebrew, Genesis 1:1 is, “In the beginning of . . .” which leads us to ask the question, “In the beginning of *what*?” Well, maybe it’s *all* beginnings, and the beginning of all beginnings—all things.

You realize that for thousands of years, since Aristotle, intellectuals have argued that the cosmos has no beginning . . . and that matter, space, and time are eternal. So Carl Sagan used to proclaim on PBS in the 1970’s, “The cosmos is all there is, was, or ever shall be.” That’s a bit of a travesty, because just sixty years before, Albert Einstein had postulated the laws of special and general relativity showing that matter, space, and time are not *at all* constant but are relative to light or the speed of light.

Einstein’s theories clearly pointed to an expanding universe.¹ At the time, this so disturbed Einstein that he postulated a “cosmological constant” in order to adjust his calculations and hang onto the myth that the universe is “all there is, was, or ever shall be.”

Later Einstein admitted this was the greatest blunder of his career. By the late 1920’s, Edwin Hubble had produced empirical evidence that the universe was expanding; that, in fact, it had a beginning—the Big Bang.

The Big Bang is so hard to talk about because it’s the beginning of space and time themselves. So you can’t say, “*Before* the Big Bang,” for that implies time. And you can’t say, “*Outside* the Big Bang,” for that implies space.

¹*or contracting universe*

Space and time themselves sprang into existence out of nothing . . . *or* out of something so beyond all *our* somethings that it appears to be nothing. Something utterly different, which in biblical lingo would be described with the word *holy*.

And that's fascinating, because for thousands of years theologians have been arguing that the universe was created by the Holy One *ex-nihilo*, which means "out of nothing." Yet that nothing—that no-thing—must not be *less* than something, like a void or a shadow; it must be *more* than something, like the Creator of all things.

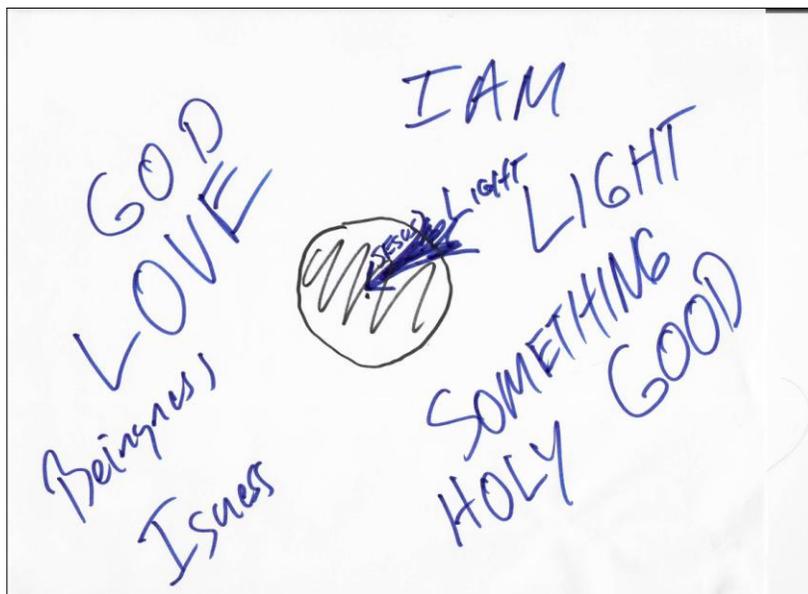
In the 16th century, the Jewish mystic Rabbi Isaac Luria explained Genesis 1:1 in this way: Originally, in the beginning, there was only "Ayn Sof" (it means "the boundless one"), only God—the simple, supernal, infinite light that was all existence with no beginning and no end. Yet in order to create, God (the "Ayn Sof") had to in some way withdraw His presence ("tzintzum" in Hebrew). He had to withdraw to make space, a void in which He could create.

So "in the beginning of" all there was or is, is God. He is "I AM that I AM." He is "Isness" and "Amness" and "Beingness." And Scripture reveals that He is holy, He is good, and He is light. He is love . . . not just *loving*, but love. And He is all, and that's something! [Peter draws these things on a white piece of paper.]

Now, if I draw anything else *on* this page, *in* this page, or *outside of* this page *at* any time, it must only be an analogy. For all prepositions like *on*, *in*, *out*, and *at* assume space and time.

Having said that, "In the beginning of, God created the heavens and the earth." The Big Bang is like this:[Exhibit A: the circle in the middle of the page surrounding a dot]

[Exhibit A]



So, you see, the Big Bang—the creation—is not an explosion of somethingness in the nothingness, but more like an explosion of nothingness in the somethingness; not an explosion of fullness in the emptiness, but emptiness in the fullness. What we thought was empty was full, and what we thought was full was empty; not an explosion of light in the dark, but an explosion of darkness in the light.

"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth, and darkness was on the face of the deep—the Tahowm—the abyss." [Exhibit A: dark inside the circle] John writes, "God is light and in him is no darkness at all." Yet Scripture says, "In him we live, move, and have our being." Yet in us, who are in God, there is darkness, isn't there?

So the preposition "in" may be part of the problem. But maybe we are partly *in* God and partly *not in* God; part light and part dark; part good and part evil.

Last week we said evil is like a darkness. You know, visible light is only one form of light in an immense spectrum of light.¹ Well, evil is like an absence—not of visible light, but of the light that is God. And sin is choosing the absence or trying to fill the absence with more absence. It’s idolizing the absence—the void.

Yet if we surrender the void and look for the light, I think it’s called hope, faith, or even love. But we can’t even do that without the power of God.

So verse 2b: “The Spirit was hovering over the face of the waters.” Like Mike said last week, the Spirit testifies to the light—to Jesus. It’s the Spirit that causes us to hope even from the depths of the abyss.

Well, in the beginning, darkness was on the face of the Tahowm. Creation was an explosion of nothingness in the somethingness, like an explosion of “not God” in God, like a wound in God—a sacrifice of God.

I’m trying to say it must have somehow hurt God to make the universe, the world, and you.

You know Eve was created from Adam’s wounded side, and you know the Church—the Bride of Christ—is created from Christ’s wounded side. It must hurt God to make us and to love us. And if we are to be made in His image, perhaps we must taste that pain to know His joy.

The great theologian Rev. Aram Haroutunian wrote this:

“In the beginning, God.” That’s it. Before space was made, there was only God. Not some dark, cold, nothingness, but light and life itself. And what did God do at the beginning? He made space. He made space within Himself for others to be. The very act of creation itself was sacrificial. God made space—for others to exist.

Isn’t that beautiful? Yet what’s the nature of that space? Well, it must be like a wound in God. If you’re a parent, you’ve felt that wound. You made space in your life for children. You made space in your life for *pain*. But you made the space in *hope* . . . that one day they’d return your love in your image.

If you’ve ever loved someone, you’ve felt that wound. You made space in your life for another, which is space for pain, but you made the space in hope of love.

God subjected the creation to futility in hope. So in the beginning, God (who is Light) made a void in which there was darkness. And then God spoke a word into that void. He said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. [Exhibit A: arrow going into the middle of the circle] In other words, “Let there be me in the void.” And there was Jesus. He poured Himself into the void.

¹Scripture says we are to walk by faith and not by sight. So the light of God is not simply visible light to be perceived with our eyes, but faith is like the eyes of the heart. “Whatever does not proceed from faith is sin.”

You know, God is light, and Jesus is the light of the world.

Those medieval rabbis said the light withdrew to make space, and then a beam of light entered that space and made matter. And once again a beam made vessels, and some vessels fell . . . Make of that what you will.

Scientists say that at first the universe was a dark, soupy plasma, like dark water. Then as electrons bound to nuclei, photons broke free from matter, and light became visible.

Whatever the case, the cosmos has been infused with light.

Remember this picture?

[Exhibit B]



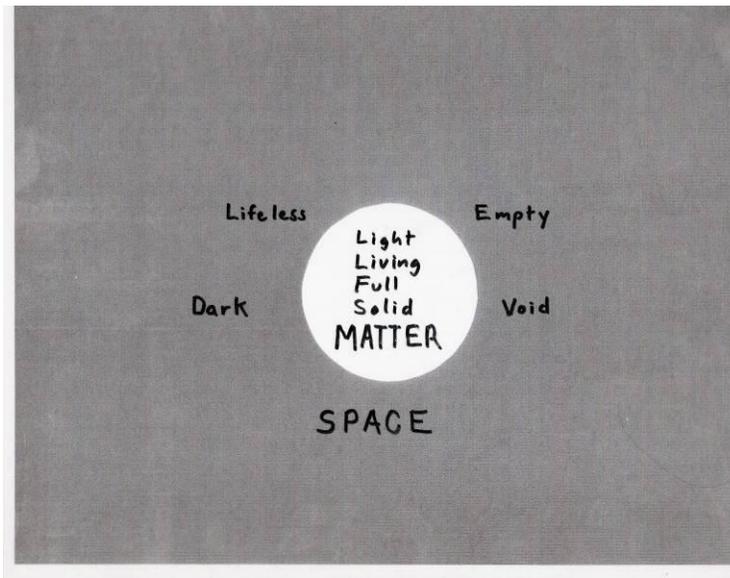
Arnold Schwarzenangel showed it to you at Christmas in preparation for this lecture . . . yah!

Do you see the light? [Peter points to the blackness of space.] Well, not really. There is light all over what we perceive as black, nothing, and empty space. You really can't see light. Scientists have been trying to "see it" for decades, and they can't even tell you what *it* is. A wave? A particle? It's like it has a mind of its own. You don't see light; you see everything else *by* light.

What you see in this picture [Exhibit B] is the earth. In other words, you perceive light bouncing off of what is *not light*. You see the skin of darkness, for where is darkness? It's underneath the surface of the earth. It's in the depths of these oceans. It's in the dark waters—the abyss.

Well, if the light is the *something* and the dark is the *nothing*, then it's just like Arnold Schwarzenangel told us on Christmas Eve:

[Exhibit C]



We think space is dark, lifeless, empty, and void, and the earth is light, living, full, and solid. It's matter, and matter is what matters.

[Exhibit D]

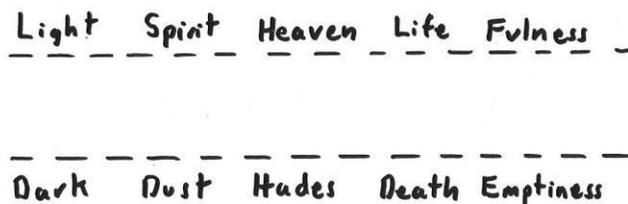


But perhaps this [space] is light, life, full, and solid—like heaven, and this [circle] is dark, dead, empty, and void—like hell, Sheol, Tahowm, the Abyss.

Well, we live on the skin of this dark bubble between light and dark, heaven and hell, being and non-being, life and death. In the antiquated, primitive, pre-modern cosmology of Scripture, our situation is something like this [Exhibit E]:

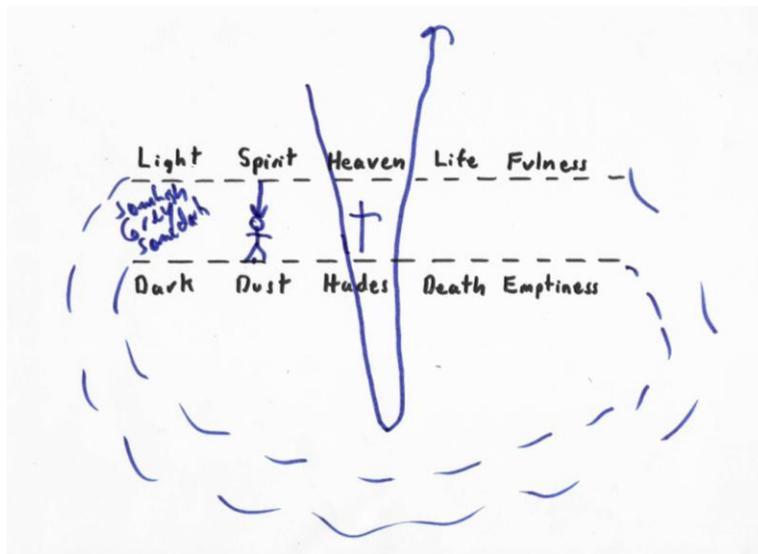
- Above us is light, and below us is dark. We exist in between, some light and some dark.
- Above us is the breath, wind, Spirit of God, and below us is dust. We exist in between, like spirit in dust.
- Above is heaven and below is Hades. Remember Jesus descended into the depths of the earth and ascended far above the heavens. [Exhibit F: arrow]

[Exhibit E]



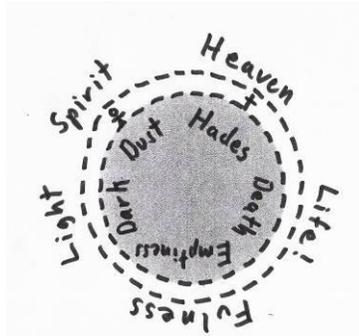
- Above is life and below is death.
- Above is fullness and below is emptiness.

[Exhibit F]



Extend the lines [Exhibit F: dotted lines], and this is what you get:

[Exhibit G]



Modern people say, “How stupid! We’ve been to space and we now know that space is empty because there is no matter there. And the depths of the earth is most full, because matter is so dense there.

Well, I’m not sure how much of scripture’s language is to be taken as analogy and how much is not analogy, but did you know scientists are now not only saying that space and time are relative to light, but that matter really doesn’t matter? So what seems to be full is really empty. And what seems to be most empty is profoundly full. Watch this:

[Science Video clip]

“We were all taught in school that the world is made of stuff, of matter, of mass, of atoms. Atoms make up molecules, molecules make up materials, and everything is made of that. But atoms actually are mostly empty. For example, if this ball were the nucleus of an atom—a proton and a hydrogen atom, for example—then the electron circling this, which would describe the outer limits of that atom, would be out by that mountain over there, roughly twenty miles away. And everything in between is empty. In fact, the universe is mostly empty. However, when we go down in scale in the emptiness, we eventually come to a level—a fundamental level of space time geometry, the fine basement level of the universe—where there’s information, there’s a pattern, and it’s called the Planck Scale. It’s the fabric of the universe. At that level, there’s information that’s been there since the Big Bang. So most of the universe, even of matter, is actually empty.”

William Teller: “Most people think that the vacuum is empty. But for internal self-consistency of quantum mechanics and relativity theory, there is required to be the equivalent of 10^{94} grams of mass energy (per cm^3), each gram being $E=MC^2$ kind of energy. Now, that’s a huge number, but what does it mean practically? Practically, if I can assume that the universe is flat—and more and more astronomical data is showing it’s pretty darn flat—if I can assume that, then if I take the volume, or take the vacuum within a single hydrogen atom, that’s about 10^{-23} cubic centimeters. If I take that amount of vacuum, and I take the latent energy in that, there is a trillion times more energy there than in all of the mass of all of the stars and all of the planets out to 20 billion light years. That’s big.”

Did you get that? What the first guy said is probably what you’re used to from school. What the second guy said is even more shocking. Now, if that second guy was simply some New

Age yahoo, maybe we could blow it off, but that guy is Professor Emeritus at Stanford University in the Department of Materials Science and Engineering: William Teller, Ph.D. And this is what he said:

Due to advances in General Relativity and Quantum Physics, physicists are now saying that in just the empty space of one hydrogen atom—just the empty space—there is a trillion times more energy there than in all of the mass of all of the stars and all of the planets out to 20 billion light years!

Do you see what that means? What we think is empty is profoundly full, and what we think is most full is really most empty. Empty space is profoundly full. And the densest matter is least full and most empty.

To put it in Bible lingo:

- The heavens are profoundly full, and the depths of the earth are most empty. Empty is full, and full is empty.
- Faith, hope, and love are profoundly full and solid. Houses, cars, and bank accounts are empty and void.
- Things not seen are eternal, and things seen are transient and fading away.
- Like Jesus said, “The Spirit gives life, and the flesh counts for nothing” (John 6:63 NIV).
- Breath, wind, spirit are most substantive—most real, while matter or dust is more non-substantive and unreal.

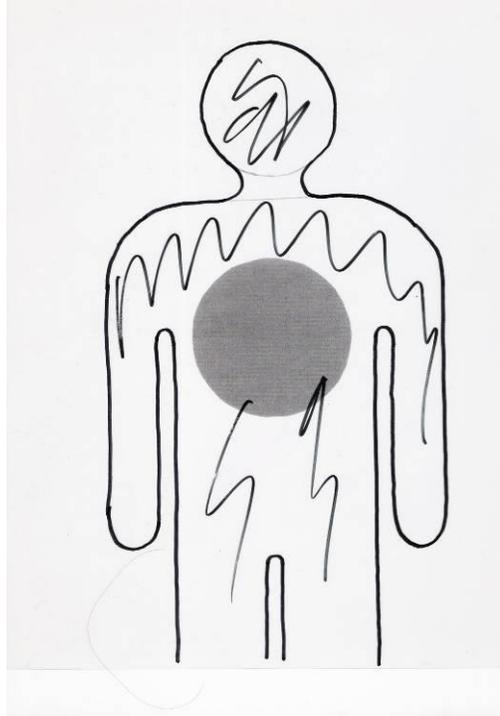
And what are we? What is Adam? He is breath and dust; spirit and matter; light and dark; good and evil; fullness and emptiness.

Adam and Eve tried to fill the emptiness themselves and only made more emptiness. They tried to separate the light and the dark, the good and the evil, and they only made more evil. They tried to create themselves *with* themselves and only desecrated themselves.

Adam and Eve “R” Us.

Arnold Schwarzenangel said that our dark, little, bubble world reminded him of our dark, little, bubble hearts. Remember this picture?

[Exhibit H]



- So “in the beginning of” the universe, there is darkness and an abyss.
 - In the beginning of our world, there is darkness and an abyss.
 - And in the beginning of *us*, there is darkness and something like an abyss. And maybe we’re only just now “in the beginning.”

Well, if we could see the emptiness, perhaps we could fill it. You can see your stomach, and you can fill it with bread or wine. A bride can see her womb and fill it with her groom—his seed.

Listen: We are the Bride of Christ, and we are hungry for God. But our emptiness isn’t a physical stomach or a physical womb. Our emptiness is ourselves: our lives, our psyche (in Greek), our flesh, our ego, our pride. We are empty [Exhibit H: the lines in the man].

And we’re blind and terribly confused, for we think darkness is light and light is darkness. We can’t separate them. We think empty is full and full is empty. We can’t judge them. In fact, for most, emptiness is the only fullness they know.

So when the crowd chanted, “Hosanna! Save us, King Jesus!” what did they want saved? Themselves, their lives, their psyches, their flesh, their ego, their pride, their temple, their city, their country, their universe . . . *their emptiness*.

And when they chanted, “Crucify him! Crucify him!” what did they want destroyed? All being and the ground of all being. That chant is evil.

So on Palm Sunday in front of the crowd (in John 12), Jesus prophesies His death and says, “Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.” A voice booms from heaven saying that God will glorify His name through Jesus, and then Jesus says, “Now is the judgment of this world.”

John writes, “And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and men loved

the darkness rather than the light.” Now follow this: Scripture says, “In Jesus was life, and the life was the light of men.” Every Jew knew that the life was in the blood. When they crucified Jesus, His blood spilled out: that is, His life spilled out, and His life is the light of men. His life and light *is love*.

God is love, and love spilled out is grace.
God is light, and light spilled out into the abyss is
Jesus Christ and Him crucified—
the sacrifice of God.

You see, all creation is made by God’s grace. How else could it be? You can’t make yourself!

You see, God does not create “*ex-nihilo*”—out of nothing—so much as God created “*ex-theo*”—out of Himself *with grace*: body broken and blood shed, the Word of God, the Light of the world shining in the darkness, Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

All creation is made with God’s grace. So God’s grace *is* the judgment. Reject His grace and you choose desecration and the void. Receive His grace and you are created in His image. “From His fullness you receive grace upon grace.”

So what are we saying? The light reveals my darkness, judges my darkness, and then fills my darkness.

1. The cross of Christ reveals my darkness like light defines shadows. In light of the cross, I see my arrogance, self-centeredness, and pride. I wake up in the middle of the night all stressed, I pray for an hour, and I realize I’ve prayed for *no one but myself*! Even my good deeds are void.
2. The cross reveals my darkness and judges my darkness . . . like the Word (the sword) that separates soul from spirit, that separates my life (my soul) from God’s life (the Spirit). On Good Friday the world rejected God’s life, revealing the judgment: All humanity is dead, blind, and empty.
3. The cross reveals my darkness, judges my darkness, and then fills my darkness with light.

Hebrews 1 tells us that Jesus is the “radiance of God’s glory.” Scripture tells us that Christ descended into the lower parts of the earth and ascended that He might fill all things—the universe. And Scripture tells us that the whole earth will be filled with the glory of God—the earth.

The universe, the earth, Jerusalem, and the temple will all be filled with glory. And *we* are being prepared for “an immeasurable weight of glory,” for we are to be filled with all the fullness of God—beginning now!

On Pentecost the fire descended, light descended, the Spirit descended and filled the temple, the city, the people of God. We are to “be filled and to keep on being filled with the Spirit.” We are like the first fruits of an entire new creation!

So why don’t we always come to the cross, surrender our emptiness, and receive His fullness?

Well, the cross hurts. It hurts our flesh, that is, our emptiness. The cross reveals it, judges it,

and then fills it. Yet emptiness that's full is no longer empty. And darkness that is lit is no longer dark.

You see, I think we hide our emptiness because we think our emptiness is *us* . . . that our flesh is *us* . . . that our sins, fears, lusts, and shames are *us*.

You think your flesh is you, and in a way it is. Yet it's only the beginning of you. It's the emptiness, the void, the Tahowm—like the abyss.

Evil tells you that the absence is who you are, but it's only the beginning of who you are. Evil demons will tell you that if you confess your sin to Jesus, that is, surrender your flesh at the cross, you'll die.

That's partly true. You'll die, yet you'll only be dying to your emptiness, for your emptiness will be filled with His fullness. You will lose your life (which is your emptiness), yet you'll find your life (which is His fullness).

Paul wrote, "It is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me." Well, it still *looked* like Paul—same shape, same form—yet he was an entirely different substance.

Kent Smith is part of our Fine Arts Ministry and a great sculptor. You may remember this piece—it's called "Jacob and Esau." [Exhibit I]

When Kent makes a sculpture, he forms it with one substance, then empties it of that substance and replaces it with another substance.

II Peter tells us that heaven and earth will be melted with fire, and we await a new heaven and earth in which righteousness dwells: a new substance.

Well, when Kent makes one of his amazing, bronze sculptures, in the beginning he painstakingly carves the figure in wax. Then he encases the wax in a

[Exhibit I]



ceramic mold (an earthen vessel). Then he takes the earthen vessel and places it in a fiery kiln. The fire hardens the ceramic clay and melts the wax, leaving a void in the earthen vessel.

Paul writes, “We have this treasure in earthen vessel to show that the transcendent power belongs to God.”

Well, then Kent takes that empty earthen vessel—the mold—and fills it with liquid bronze.

[Exhibit J]



You see, it's permanent, and it glows with light . . . burnished bronze like Jesus in Revelation. As the bronze cools, the earthen vessel (the mold) cracks and then is thrown away.

What if our flesh is like that wax that God melts away?
What if our selfishness, arrogance, and sin forms a void?

It would be a unique void of unique sin that you recognize as your self. Well, what if God were to fill that void *with Himself*? You'd lose your life and then find it. It would still look like you yet be an entirely new you—shaped like you but made of Him.

And He is grace.

And that makes sense. Your absence gets filled with His presence. The form of your void is the form of His creation. "Where sin increased grace abounded all the more." So every shame is transformed into His glory, which is grace. So the shape of your sin in *this* world becomes the shape of your glory (His grace) for all time.

St. Paul's glory is to say, "Amazing grace that saved a wretch like me, a murdering Pharisee!" And St. Peter will say, "Amazing grace that saved a wretch like me, a boastful coward!" And you will say, "Amazing grace saved me!" And you will each be solid gold, gleaming bronze, brilliant in glory, in the image of God and the brightness of His glory—the very body of Christ.

You know, Jesus came to help us die *to ourselves*. In Psalm 22, which He quoted on the cross, Jesus says, "My heart is like wax. It is melted within my breast." Jesus came to die for us and

die with us, that we might be filled with Him—the radiance of God’s glory, the bright and morning star. “We will shine like stars and never fade away.”

Even now His Spirit is hovering over the abyss. So surrender your sin, surrender your emptiness, surrender your self, surrender your world, lose your life. For all this darkness and emptiness, the void you encounter in your world and in your heart, it’s not the end of you; it’s just the beginning.

“In the beginning . . . the earth was formless and void, and darkness was on the face of the deep. God said, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light. And God separated the light from the darkness.”

In the beginning . . . Jesus took bread and broke it—separated it—saying, “This is my body which is given for you.” Likewise He took the cup saying, “This is the cup that is poured out for you in the new covenant in my blood.”

What am I saying? This communion cup is you: an empty, earthen vessel. Why the darkness, emptiness, and void? Because this is what you were made for [Peter pours wine in the cup]: to be filled with the glory of God.

In Jesus’ name, believe the gospel.

[Communion]

So do you see Him . . . a little? That’s the judgment. Do you see Him high and lifted up? What does that mean to you? When Jesus said He would draw people to Himself when He was lifted up, He was speaking about being lifted up on the cross.

What is the glory of God?

His nature.

And what is His nature?

His love.

And how is His love revealed to us?

Through Jesus the Christ.

And who is He?

He is the demonstration and revelation of grace. His glory is grace. And He wants you to see Him.

And what happens when we begin to see?

We are drawn to Him. We are drawn to His table, and the light begins to reveal my shadows, my selfishness, my consumption. Then the light judges my shadow and empties me like the wax in those statues. As I get close to the fire—the judgment—the heat melts the wax out of me, melts the old man out of me. And then the light fills me.

What does He fill me with?

Himself.

Does He love you and me, or what! So trust Him and eat your dinner. Believe His grace, and it will change you. You will begin to fulfill the whole law from the inside out.

Scripture says Jesus is filling us even now, and He will fill all things. I think that means that every dark place, every void, every coffin is just Easter waiting to happen. If He calls you to go there, you don't need to be afraid. You are called to go with faith, hope, and love, because you now are the light of the world.

In Jesus' name, believe the Gospel.

Relevant Texts and Quotations (from bulletin)

Most of the crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. And the crowds that went before him and that followed him were shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!" And when he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred up, saying, "Who is this?" And the crowds said, "This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee. . . ." So when Pilate saw that he was gaining nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of this man's blood; see to it yourselves." And all the people answered, "His blood be on us and on our children!" Then he released for them Barabbas, and having scourged Jesus, delivered him to be crucified.

~ *Matthew 21:8-11, 27:24-26*

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the **light** of men. The **light** shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. . . . The true **light**, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. . . . Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the **judgment**: the **light** has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the **light** because their deeds were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the **light** and does not come to the **light**, lest his deeds should be exposed. But whoever does what is true comes to the **light**, so that it may be clearly seen that his deeds have been carried out in God. . . . The next day the large crowd that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying out, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!" And Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, just as it is written, "Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt! . . ." Jesus answered, "This voice has come for your sake, not mine. Now is the **judgment** of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." He said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die. . . . So Jesus said to them, "The **light** is among you for a little while longer. Walk while you have the **light**, lest darkness overtake you. The one who walks in the darkness does not know where he is going. While you have the **light**, believe in the **light**, that you may become sons of **light**." Therefore they could not believe. For again Isaiah said, "He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, lest they see with their eyes, and understand with their heart, and turn, and I would heal them." Isaiah said these things because he saw his glory and spoke of him. . . . Now it was the day of Preparation of the Passover. It was about the sixth hour. He said to the Jews, "Behold your King!" They cried out, "Away with him, away with him, crucify him!" Pilate said to them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar." So he delivered him over to them to be crucified.

~ *John 1:1-5,9-14; 3:18-21; 12:12-15, 30-33, 35-36, 39-41; 19:14-16*

First this: God created the Heavens and Earth—all you see, all you don't see. Earth was a soup of nothingness, a bottomless emptiness, an inky blackness. God's Spirit brooded like a bird above the watery abyss. God spoke: "Light!" And light appeared. God saw that light was good and separated light from dark.

~ *Genesis 1:1-4 (The Message)*

The Big Bang

"In the beginning, God." That's it. Before space was made, there was only God. Not some dark, cold, nothingness, but light and life itself. And what did God do at the beginning? He made space. He made space within Himself for others to be. The very act of creation itself was sacrificial. God made space—for others to exist.

~ *Aram Haroutunian*

Know that before emanations were produced and creatures were created, there was a simple supernal light that filled all existence; and there was no empty space, like a completely empty space or vacuum, but all was filled with that simple infinite light (or, light of the *Ayn Sof*, the Infinite One). It had no aspect of beginning or end, rather all was one simple light equally distributed, and this is called the light of the *Ayn Sof*. When it arose in [the *Ayn Sof*'s] simple will to create worlds . . . The *Ayn Sof* then concentrated (*tzimtzum*) Itself in the central point in the actual centre of that light. It concentrated the light and removed it on all sides from around the central point. Then there was an empty space, a complete vacuum, from that actual central point, like this.

~ *Rabbi Isaac Luria (1534-1572)*

Originally, there was only *Ayn Sof*, the Infinite—all of reality was God. In order for the universe to exist, God had to withdraw from some part of that reality. This metaphorical withdrawal (*tzimtzum*) left a "place" devoid of God's presence, where the cosmos could come into being. God did not abandon this empty space, but projected a beam of light, which became a mass without form inside that space. From that mass, all levels of reality came into existence. God at that point injected another ray of light, which began to create "vessels"; these represent facets of God's activity and God's qualities, and each contains a portion of that light from *Ayn Sof*.

~ Rabbi Jonathan Spira-Savett

Our World

Now, with a certainty which never after deserted him, he saw the planets—the ‘earths’ he called them in his thought—as mere holes or gaps in the living heaven—excluded and rejected wastes of heavy matter and murky air, formed not by addition to, but by subtraction from, the surrounding brightness. And yet, he thought, beyond the solar system the brightness ends. Is that the real void, the real death? Unless. . . he groped for the idea. . . Unless visible light is also a hole or gap, a mere diminution of something else, Something that is to bright unchanging heaven as heaven is to the dark, heavy earths.

~ C.S. Lewis, *Out of the Silent Planet*

Blessed be his glorious name forever; may the whole earth be filled with his glory! Amen and Amen!

~ Psalm 72:19

Us

There is a God shaped vacuum in the heart of every man which cannot be filled by any created thing, but only by God the Creator, made known by Jesus Christ.

~ Blaise Pascal

“A damned soul is nearly nothing: it is shrunk, shut up in itself. Good beats upon the damned incessantly as sound waves beat on the ears of the deaf, but they cannot receive it. Their fists are clenched, their teeth are clenched, their eyes fast shut. First they will not, in the end they cannot, open their hands for gifts, or their mouths for food, or their eyes to see.”

“Then no one can ever reach them?”

“Only the Greatest of all can make Himself small enough to enter Hell. . . Only One has descended into Hell.”

“And will He ever do so again?”

“It was not once long ago that He did it. Time does not work that way when once we have left the Earth. All moments that have been or shall be were, or are, present in the moment of His descending. There is no spirit in prison to whom He did not preach.”

~ C. S. Lewis, *The Great Divorce*

Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?” that is, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” . . . And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit. And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split. The tombs also were opened. And many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many.

~ Matthew 27: 45-46, 50-53

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters. And God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated (Hebrew: *badal*) the light from the darkness. . . . The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

~ Genesis 1:1-4, 6:5 (RSV)

But I have said to you, “You shall inherit their land, and I will give it to you to possess, a land flowing with milk and honey.” I *am* the LORD your God, who has separated (*badal*) you from the peoples. You shall therefore distinguish (*badal*) between clean animals and unclean, between unclean birds and clean, and you shall not make yourselves abominable by beast or by bird, or by any kind of living thing that creeps on the ground, which I have separated (*badal*) from you as unclean. And you shall be holy to Me, for I the LORD *am* holy, and have separated (*badal*) you from the peoples, that you should be Mine.

~ Leviticus 20:24-26 (NKJV)

Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, or his ear dull, that it cannot hear; but your iniquities have made a separation (*badal*) between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear.

~ Isaiah 59:1-2

And the vision I saw was just like the vision that I had seen when he came to destroy the city, and just like the vision that I had seen by the Chebar canal. And I fell on my face. As the glory of the LORD entered the temple by the gate facing east, the Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court; and behold, the glory of the LORD filled the temple. . . . They have defiled my holy name by their abominations that they have committed, so I have consumed them in my anger. Now let them put away their whoring and the dead bodies of their kings far from me, and I will dwell in their midst forever.

~ Ezekiel 43:3-5, 8b-9

And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James, and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light.

~ Matthew 16:1-2

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? . . . I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax;

it is melted within my breast. . . .

~ *Psalm 22:1a,14*

I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

~ *Galatians 2:20 (RSV)*

God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.

~ *Hebrews 1:1-4 (NKJV)*

In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. . . . So we do not lose heart. Though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. For this slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

~ *2 Corinthians 4:4-7, 16-18*

In those famous dialogues of St. Catherine of Siena, God is reported to have said to her, "I am He who is; you are she who is not." Have you ever experienced your is-not-ness?

~ *Anthony De Mello*

It is grace that forms the void inside of us and it is grace alone that can fill the void.

~ *Simon Weil*

. . . that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith--that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. . . . He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.

~ *Ephesians 3:16-19, 4:10*