

EARLY WORLD: PART 1A : Creation

Before completing this lesson:

- *Read Genesis 1-2. Slowly read it again.
- *Optional but rich in content: CCC 279-384

Note: We are dividing the “Early World” material into two parts: (1) the Creation, (2) and then the Fall. Within the first two chapters of Genesis is found the basis for three Church doctrines: The Doctrine of Creation, the Doctrine of Man, and the Doctrine of Marriage.

Looking ahead: In Early World: Part 1B, we will examine Genesis 3 (the Fall) and CCC 385-421.

How to Read Genesis

*Everything you need to know about the entire Bible is found in the **first three chapters of Genesis**- and so let’s not rush through it! It **answers all the “why” questions, but not the “how” in the strictly scientific method sort of analysis.** Genesis is Hebraic poetry, not fiction, and it expresses “in solemn language the truths of creation—its origin and its end in God, its order and goodness, the vocation of man, and, finally, the drama of sin and the hope of salvation” (CCC 289).*

It is absolutely necessary to keep in mind what genre you are dealing with when reading a particular book of the Bible. So what is Genesis? “Genesis is not science first and foremost, but theology and mysticism. In fact, it is exquisite theology. For example, from the very first pages can be gleaned basic truths, such as:

God is the powerful Creator who designed and brought into being from nothing all that exists, and it “was good.” He created Man to enjoy and exercise dominion as steward over all of creation. With the creation of woman, marriage was born and the first covenant was established, with the family reflecting the communion and community of the three Persons of the Trinity.

1. If someone were to ask you: “How can you believe in talking snakes and a man named Adam? Do you interpret the Bible literally?” --how would you reply? _____

Why is learning about Creation, the beginning of the Story of Salvation, so important?

Genesis (and theology in general) answers much deeper questions than Science (which is restricted and limited to the visible world) ever will be able to do. The story of Creation tackles all the big questions with which every created person will wrestle at some point or another:

- Where do we come from? Where are we going?

-What is our origin? What is our end?¹

-What then is the meaning of Creation?

-Is the universe governed by chance or by a transcendent, intelligent, and good Being called God?

-And if the world does come from God's wisdom and goodness, why is there evil?

Where does evil come from? Who is responsible for it? Is there any liberation from it?²

Remember: The first eleven chapters of Genesis are poetry! Although they are not fiction, they nevertheless use figurative language that speaks of deep truths of a real event that did occur in the far past that affects us still.

2. In your own words, how would you explain CCC 390- "Genesis 3 uses figurative language, but affirms... a deed that took place at the beginning of the history of man." _____

Genesis is not "myth" in the sense of what we tend to think of as myths of ancient civilizations. **The Hebrew account of Creation is radically different in two ways** from the creation stories of other cultures:

1-It states God alone is King, and the first man and woman were made in His image.

2-God relates to man and woman as a Father to a son/daughter, not as master/slave.

Also, God makes the whole world -even now. "How? Through a nonviolent act of speech. He says let there be light and there was! This is in stark contrast with the mythology of the time, where in the surrounding cultures, the gods made order through violence."³ Likewise, Jesus came as Word in a non-violent way to wreak havoc on Satan's kingdom and conquer it.

There are two accounts of the Creation of Man- (Genesis 1:26-31, 2:4-25)

3. How are they similar? different? _____

We see here a common Jewish storytelling technique called the "**Synoptic-Resumptive technique**," which is "*the juxtaposition of two stories in which one story looks at the big picture in a brief overview ("synoptic"), while the second story resumes ("resumptive") and retells the first in more detail, focusing on its climatic events.*"⁴ Here the first creation story paints a picture of God creating a very good world, with the creation of man and woman seen as its climax, while the second story, generally held to be the oldest one, gives greater details on how it was not good for man to be alone, followed by the advent of marriage.

¹ CCC 282

² CCC 284

³ Barron, Bishop Robert. "How Should the Book of Genesis Be Read?" YouTube, *Word on Fire*, Feb 28, 2011.

⁴ Cavins, Jeff with Tim Gray. *Walking with God*. © 2010 by Ascension Press, West Chester, PA, p 12.

God the Creator

4. All of Scripture is designed to show us what God is like and what He desires of us. What truths about His character can you glean from this passage? _____

Summary: When God said, “Let there be...” His ‘word’ went forth and whatever he declared came into being . What (or better, “Who”) is the “word” of God that created everything? Compare Genesis 1:2 to John 1:1-3, Colossians 1:16-17, Revelation 22:13, and CCC 291.

Breath of God: Holy Spirit Theme

What/ “Who” is “sweeping over the waters” in Genesis 1:2? _____

Note: The “breath of God” will be a major theme throughout all of Scripture.

5. How will Jesus’ breath create new life? John 3:1-9; Acts 2:1-2 _____

6. How is the Holy Spirit creating a “new you” now? See Psalms 51:12; Genesis 2:7. _____

“Each time we encounter God we have the possibility of being changed, forgiven, restored, filled, and freed. God’s breath gives life to our tired spirits.... I’m always intrigued when I think and pray about the event of the Acts of the Apostles with the reception of the Holy Spirit found in John 20:22. The account of thunder, shaking room, and tongues of fire are certainly more familiar. But John’s account of the apostles receiving the Holy Spirit is equally compelling. While the effect is the same—the apostles are empowered—the means by which this happens is remarkably different.

Jesus reveals his wounds to those present to let them know it is really him. He then breathes on them, and that’s it. He breathes on them and invites them to ‘receive the Holy Spirit.’ That’s all; no driving wind shaking buildings, or tongues of fire. Just a simple breath, the breath of God. It’s an image we see in Genesis where God ‘blew into the nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being’ (Gen 2:7). The breath of God, the *‘ruah,’* in Hebrew, brings life to humanity’s flesh. Humanity is not truly alive until the breath of God enters us.

I find this a beautiful image. From the dust of the earth God forms humanity and then in a deeply personal action, God draws humanity close to himself and bringing man’s face to his own, God breathes life. God himself breathes life into humanity.

Jesus breathes life *into* them, not merely *on* them. The breath of Jesus consumed them; it entered their very beings. The disciples received the breath of Jesus; they breathed in his breath and received his life. The breath of the Spirit changed the disciples... and will change you.

The breath of God rushes throughout all of Scripture. Elijah did not encounter God in the earthquake or the fire but in the gentle breeze (breath of God) (see 1 Kings 19:12). Job proclaims, 'For the spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life' (Job 33:4). In Ezekiel 37:1-4, we find a stark image of God showing the prophet Ezekiel a valley of dry bones."⁵

7. What happened to the dry bones? _____
Has the Spirit made you come to life? _____

"The challenge for us is to be able to perceive the breath of God. The only way this can happen is for us to stay close enough to God that when he breathes we are aware of it. Imagine the closeness of an infant being held to her mother's chest. When either the baby or mother breathes the other is aware. That's how close I want to be to the Lord: the Lord breathes and I am filled. The Spirit's movement is often subtle; it's essential for us to be aware of this in order to experience the Lord's grace. If we are only looking for the earthquake we will always miss the breath.... Oftentimes it begins with a simple prayer: 'Jesus, come with your Holy Spirit.'

Jesus, your breath of life changed the disciples; may it change me."⁶

Man and woman made in the image of God

8. What clue of God as Trinity surfaces in Gen 1:26? _____

"Creation is the common work of the Holy Trinity" (CCC 292).

Genesis tells us who we are:

*We are creatures; not God.

*We are made in the image of God.

9. What did St Augustine mean when he wrote: "Image calls out to Image Maker"? _____

"The greatest attribute of God is love and mercy. It unites the Creature to the Creator" – (St Faustina).⁷ This is the Good News!

Summary: How are we different from the animals? We alone are created in the image of God (Gen 1:26-31). As such, we enjoy:

-A mind –(intellect/reason)

-A will –(which was governed by the intellect before the Fall)

-Freedom.

- Capacity to love (-the Trinity is a family)

- Dominion over animals and the earth

10. In what ways do you, the creature, act like God? _____

⁵ Pivonka, Fr Dave. *Breath of God: Living a Life Led by the Holy Spirit*. © 2015 by Ave Maria Press, Notre Dame, IN, pp xi, 1-6.

⁶ Ibid, p 7.

⁷ *The Diary of St Faustina Kowalska*, (180).

-In prayer, do you tell God exactly what you need Him to do for you and spend no time listening to what He wants of you? _____

-Do you make your plans and then ask God to bless them? _____

11. If you viewed others as truly made in the image of God, how might you treat them differently, especially those who annoy you most? _____

“I love people because I see the image of God in them” – (St Faustina).⁸

12. We are all called to holiness. Do you want to be a saint? What might need to change this Lent to become holy, whole, healed? _____

“Each and every human being is created in the image of God and given a vocation to manifest by his redeemed existence a facet of the beauty of Christ in a way that no other being in the cosmos is capable of doing. What an amazing vocation each person has! No wonder Christ longs for us to become saints. A saint manifests the unique face of Christ he or she is called to be. Thus a saint helps reveal Christ to us, and Christ is so beautiful in his saints!”⁹

Male and Female He made them

“Marriage is a precious gift from God by which we are called to live in the shelter of one another’s care and love. Marriage throughout Scripture is regarded as sacred; ordained and blessed by God.¹⁰ Marriage creates a mystical union in which husband and wife are somehow seen as one in the eyes of God.¹¹ God is present in marriage as the third person.¹² Both are equals, are they are called to be a servant to one another.”¹³

Marriage has two purposes:

- (1) We are in a sense co-creators with God in the act of marriage, helping build God’s family.
- (2) Marriage also has a unitive purpose, so the two become one.”¹⁴

13. How does Genesis emphasize that man and woman are equal in dignity and marriage involves monogamy (one man with one wife) in a union that is to be permanent & fruitful? Gen 2:21-25 _____

Why could they be naked but experience no shame? _____

⁸ *Diary of St Maria Faustina Kowalska*, (503).

⁹ Gaitley, Fr Michael. *Consoling the Heart of Jesus*. © 2010 by Marian Press, Stockbridge, MA, p 149.

¹⁰ Genesis 1:27-28a; Gen 2:18; John 2:1-10

¹¹ Genesis 2:24; Gen 1:28a, 31a

¹² Matthew 1:18-25

¹³ Christian Healing Ministries. *Level 2: Student Manual: School of Healing Prayer*. Lesson 7: Healing in Marriage, pp 59-61. Conference in South Carolina, November 12-15, 2019.

¹⁴ Hahn, Scott. *Salvation History*. © 2002 by St Joseph Communications, West Covina, CA, pp 12.

Sabbath Rest

14. Why would God rest? What is the purpose of the Sabbath rest? _____

15. What competes for your attention and time to give God his due worship on Sunday? _____

God created all the stars and sun and animals. However, they are not to be worshipped, as the ancient men did--- only God is worthy of our worship. Genesis asserts that while these created things are all good, they are not themselves God. Rather, this book will begin to reveal God's nature (as Creator and protective Father). We will then be encouraged to set aside time (the Sabbath) to rest and focus on God, worship Him, wiping away any competition for our affection for this One who loved us into being.

16. Note: "Anthropomorphism is the attributing of human shape and characteristics to God. Examples of this are found in Genesis. God is said to walk in the Garden (Gen 3:8). In Genesis 2:2-3, He is said to have rested from all the work He had undertaken. Was God tired and in need of rest? Explain. (CCC 2172)"¹⁵ _____

Putting It All Together:

17. Let's look at an overview of the picture coming into focus within these first chapters.

Who is the Protagonist? Gen 1:1 _____

Who are the main players? Gen 1:27 _____

Who is the Antagonist? Gen 3:1 _____

What is the plot? What hope is found in Gen 3:15? How is Mary the Mother of God seen as the New Eve by the Early Church? _____

"Our Lord Jesus himself described his mission as a *Reconquista*, an enterprise to wrest man from his servitude to Satan and to restore him to God. He came, after all, to 'proclaim release to the captives...to set at liberty those who are oppressed.' He, Jesus, is the 'one stronger' who overcomes the strong, well-armed man-(in other words, Satan)—and despoils him of his goods (Luke 11:22). **Jesus' mission appears as a colossal and salutary exorcism, a vast clean-up operation, a merciless battle against the unclean spirits that disfigure the image of God.** He 'went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed by the devil' (Acts 10:38).

The first act of Jesus' public ministry, after his baptism and the call of his disciples, was to expel the unclean spirit from a possessed man (Mark 1:23-28), and the crowds marveled because Jesus 'commands even the unclean spirits and they obey him.' The actual coming of

¹⁵ Hahn, Scott. *Study Guide: Our Father's Plan: A Catholic Bible Study of Salvation History*. © 2002 by Ignatius Press, San Francisco, CA, pp 2.

the Kingdom of God in Jesus Christ is indeed inseparable from the fall of Satan—from the end of his dominion over us.”¹⁶

18. How is Jesus the key of understanding all of Scripture, even the Old Testament/ Genesis?

Optional: For Further Study:

Engaging our Culture: Apologetics (*Explaining the Faith*):

Proving the Existence of God

Gen 1:1- “The earth was without form and void.” God creates out of nothing and “shows His power by starting from nothing to make all He wants” (CCC 296).

Explore: How to answer atheists with St Thomas Aquinas’ First Cause Argument. Google Bishop Barron’s videos on how to interpret Genesis, Creation, the existence of God, how to answer atheists and agnostics, etc.

Creation vs Evolution

Can a Catholic believe in evolution?

Note that “evolutionary” theories cannot tell us the origin of matter, just how matter may have developed after it was created. Catholic belief maintains that at a particular time God willed man to be created with a soul, different from the animals, and not the result of chance; man was created to enjoy a special relationship with His Creator (as father to son/daughter). How this progressed over time is open to discussion within these parameters. Research by googling Catholic sources (Bishop Barron, Catholic Answers, LifeTeen, etc.)

***Sexual Ethics: The Flashpoint of Dialogue with Our Culture**

Why is the Catholic Church opposed to contraception, the use of contraceptives, artificial insemination, surrogate pregnancies, etc.? The reasons are all found in the exalted Doctrines of Man, Creation, and Marriage found within Genesis 1-2.

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¹⁶ Father Bonino, Dominican priest, professor at the Pontifical University of St Thomas Aquinas in Rome.