

“The diligent reading of Sacred Scripture accompanied by prayer brings about that intimate dialogue in which the person reading hears God who is speaking, and in praying, responds to him with trusting openness of heart. If it is effectively promoted, this practice will bring to the Church-I am convinced of it-a new spiritual springtime..” - Pope Benedict XVI

First, Did it Really Happen?

As has been established, although the bible contains history, the bible is not a history book. When we go back to the time of the bible, we do not have such undisputable evidence about events as we do now. Questions about what really happened are more complicated. For centuries, no one questioned the reliability of the Bible. It was simply accepted as an accurate record of human history. Over the course of the last four hundred years our knowledge of the world has increased exponentially and thus has challenged our understanding of sacred scripture. This is a good thing, because it has forced us to understand sacred scripture in a new light. We are still very much novices in our understanding of sacred scripture, and using the principles established in the last class, we understand the varying natures of sacred scripture. Although Genesis may use mythic language and it may not be an accurate account of our human history, it is not a myth and it is an account of the beginning of salvation. The inaccuracies are there for a reason. Not to confuse us, but rather they are there because God wishes to use reveal himself.

Definition: Covenant

The word covenant is multiple meanings and the ones that we are most familiar with are those that we participate in. We hear the word covenant at mass, and those who are married have entered into a covenant. The typical definition of covenant is that it is a contract that is based upon persons, not property. Another expanded definition is that a covenant is a formal way to make someone part of your family. This is more or less what God is doing when he makes covenants with us, trying to bring into the family. Therefore, another common covenant would be adoption. This is key for our purposes.

The Purpose of the Covenants

So why did God decide to make covenants with mankind? Well God created us and then we abounded Him through sin. The covenants were His attempt to adopt us back, but through sin we have separated ourselves from the eternal love of God, preferring instead the temporary pleasures of this world. Hell awaits us if we fail to unite ourselves to Him while we are still alive. To help show us the way, God our loving Father initiated 6 major covenants in Old Testament to adopt us back into His family. The 7th covenant, the Christian Covenant, founded through Christ was foreshadowed in the in 6th covenant. In this covenant God sent his Son, as fully man and fully God, to build a bond with us tight, that it could never be undone. In each covenant there is a progression to who God is trying to adopt, starting with the individual with Adam, to the family of Noah, to the tribe of Abraham, to the nation of Moses, to the kingdom of Moses, to the entire world that forms the church of Christ.

When held in light of each other, the covenants of the Old Testament paints the cycle of sin. God establishes something good with man, man breaks whatever God asks of him to do, man repents, God forgives and promises restoration, restoration is finally given and a new covenant is established. This cycle is the cycle of the Jewish people. In Christ this cycle is made present totally and completely in Christ, therefore the covenant that God established by with Him can never be broken. The cycle of sin and redemption is the story of our own salvation, it is the story of our lives, every time we sin, we in some ways breaks God’s law, but upon our reconciliation we our restored. Our formal “adoption” happens at baptism, where our souls are wash cleaned and we are configured to Christ.

The Seven Covenants:

1. The Covenant with Adam: The first Son of Creation (Covenant with individuals)
2. The Covenant with Noah: A restart of man's relationship with God (Covenant with a family)
3. The Covenant with Abraham: A renewed hope (Covenant with a tribe)
4. The Covenant Through Moses: God's covenant with a chosen people (Covenant with a Nation)
5. The Covenant of David: God adopts a king (Covenant with a Kingdom)
6. The New Covenant in the Prophets: The unbreakable covenant (Covenant with the entire world)
7. Our Covenant: The Eucharist (Covenant with the Church of all nations)

Author Source Point of View:

The primary historical author of the Pentateuch, the first 5 books of the bible, is Moses. However, a more accurate statement would be the Pentateuch is the story of Moses which formally begins in chapter 12 of Genesis with the introduction of the Abraham. Initially the stories contained in the Pentateuch were part of an oral tradition, especially those contained in the Genesis. When the sacred author(s) were inspired to write the texts it was for the purpose to reveal God's message to his people. Genesis is not a history book, it is not a science book, rather it's the beginning of man's relationship with God. The inspired author was immersed into Hebrew cultural and used references and approaches that related most to those people. Although the texts have been separated into chapters, these separations are artificial. Initially the bible was written onto scrolls and were a compilation of written oral traditions. Therefore neighboring sections of the texts may have similar themes, but serve different purposes and use different approaches. The author(s) in Genesis may use mythic language, hyperbole, Hebrew idioms, and cultural references to support how God wishes to reveal himself.

The Story of Creation: The prequel to the Covenants

The story of creation is really the preface to the story that begins in Genesis 12; it tells us why God decided to call this particular tribesman and why Abraham's "yes" to God's plan is worthy of telling. The reason behind the story of creation is to tell us the purpose for which God made the world and why it is worth being saved. The opening chapters of the bible sets the stage for a drama. Namely, the unfolding of our salvation. Our salvation is a drama, not a tragedy, because we have a resurrection. Creation is the stage, and the creation of mankind is its actors. In many ways the totality of the human story exists within the opening pages of the bible: God, creation, man, woman, marriage, sin, pride, sex, jealousy, nudity, murder, evil, sacrifice, and redemption.

Setting the Stage(s): Genesis 1 and 2

There are two stories of creation that serve two different purposes. Chapter 1 & 2 of Genesis most likely come from two different traditions and very likely two different authors. Chapter 2 explains the creation of man and woman and their relationship with God and their role of creation. Chapter 2 sets up the narrative for the fall of man and thus is not necessarily focus on creation in the perfect light. Chapter 1 resolves this. Chapter 1 was written to emphasis that prior to sin, what God created was intended to be good. It builds the stage of our salvation, the temple of our redemption, day-by-day declaring the creator's actions to be good. There is a crescendo present in the building of creation the begins with the humble phrases "in the beginning" and concluding with God blessing the seventh day and resting viewing his creation. Adam and Eve are created and declared good but are not given any character development, however they are said to be made in the image and likeness of God; they are made to be his children. And thus man before sin was intended to be good.

Establishing the Actors: Genesis 2 & 3

Chapters 2 & 3 of Genesis appear to mostly come from the same tradition, and perhaps even the same inspired author. God gives his first command regarding the tree of knowledge of good and evil, and then allows Adam to have dominion over creation by naming each creature of creation. God creates man and

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woman in detail, with woman coming from man, and man speaking for himself for the first time. Quickly thereafter the tone changes, sin enters into the world by the temptation of serpent to the woman, Eve. The frailties of humanity quickly start to show and the consequences of God's gift of free will reveal themselves. The character development of our human nature begins to show, for man looks to avoid punishment and to defer guilt. They look to hid from God, for they do not wish to be exposed. Suddenly they are embarrassed of their nudity and they have to receive God's punishment. They also experience the beginning of God's mercy, for God clothes them before casting them out of the garden. The rest of the bible is about how to resolve this initial conflict of man sinning against God.

Covenant Mediator and his role	Blessings and Promises	Conditions	Sign	Form
Adam Husband (<i>Genesis 1:26-2:3</i>)	Be fruitful, fill the earth, rule over it	Do not eat the fruit of tree of knowledge of good and evil	Sabbath	Marriage
Noah Father (<i>Genesis 9:8-17</i>)	Never again to destroy the world by flood, be fruitful, fill the earth.	Not to drink blood of animal, not to shed human blood	Rainbow	Family
Abraham Chieftain (<i>Genesis 12:1-3, 15, 17, 22</i>)	Land, great nationhood, bless the nations	Circumcision	Circumcision	Tribe
Moses Judge and liberator (<i>Exodus 19:5-6; 3:4-10; 6:7</i>)	God's precious and chosen people	Keep God's Law and commandments	Passover	Nation
David King (<i>2 Samuel 7:8-19</i>)	Make his son a king and punish him if he does wrong but never take away his royal throne, establish his kingdom forever		Throne and the Temple (built by his son Solomon)	Kingdom
Jesus Christ Priest, Prophet, King, (<i>Matthew 26:28; 16:17-19, Heb. 8:10</i>)	God's law would be written on men's hearts	Believe in Jesus, be baptized, eat his flesh drink his blood (Eucharist), live by all that He taught	Eucharist	Catholic Church