

# Genesis

## God Creates a Family

History of the Early World	Patriarchs	Israel in Egypt	Conquest of Canaan	Judges	United Kingdom	Divided Kingdom Exile	Exile	Return	Maccabean Revolt	Jesus the Messiah	Church
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### Introduction

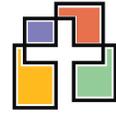
In Genesis 1, we saw God speak the universe into existence, then form it into a house, or habitation. He filled it with life by the power of His Word. With help from the New Testament, we understood that the creation of the natural order was a work of the Blessed Trinity. It culminated in the presence of man and woman on earth, creatures made in the image of God and reflecting Him in their vocation of fruitfulness and dominion. The poetic language of that chapter was itself a sign that God's purposes for His creation, most especially for the creatures who would be His presence on earth, cannot be exhaustively described by words. Poetry always moves beyond the words it uses. The words of Genesis 1 were just a hinting at the glory that lies at the heart of creation. By the end of that chapter, all that was contained in it throbbed with the love of God—an ecstasy of goodness.

In the next chapter of Genesis, the focus of the story will be on the human creatures. Having watched God build a home for them in the previous chapter, now we will observe more closely the creation of Adam and Eve, their relationship with God and with each other. In fact, chapter 2 is where we begin to see that God is not simply "Master of the Universe." He is not only "Creator." His intention for His creation was always that it would exist with Him as His family. How do we know this? One clue appears right away in Genesis 2, but in order to recognize it, we have to understand a feature of a Hebrew word. The word translated as "seven" in our English text is the Hebrew word (sheba) for "oath-sharing." When men in ancient times came together to form a relationship in which they would treat each other as family, they swore an oath to seal the agreement. In Hebrew, "to swear an oath" means literally "to seven oneself." This kind of agreement is called a "covenant." In contrast to a contract, in which there is an exchange of property, in a covenant there is an exchange of persons: "I am yours, you are mine." We don't see the word "covenant" yet in this chapter, but keep your eyes open for the clue that God intended to father a family in His creation of the universe.



### Genesis 2:1-25

1 Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. 2 And on the seventh day God finished his work which he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had done. 3 So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all his work which he had done in creation. 4 These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created. In the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens, 5 when no plant of the field was yet in the earth and no herb of the field had yet sprung up--for the LORD God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was no man to till the ground; 6 but a mist went up from the earth and watered the whole face of the ground-- 7 then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being. 8 And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he had formed. 9 And out of the ground the LORD God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.



### Genesis 1-31 (cont.)

10 A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden, and there it divided and became four rivers. 11 The name of the first is Pishon; it is the one which flows around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold; 12 and the gold of that land is good; bdellium and onyx stone are there. 13 The name of the second river is Gihon; it is the one which flows around the whole land of Cush. 14 And the name of the third river is Tigris, which flows east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

15 The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. 16 And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; 17 but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die."

18 Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him."

19 So out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. 20 The man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for the man there was not found a helper fit for him. 21 So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh; 22 and the rib which the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. 23 Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man."

24 Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh. 25 And the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed.



## Questions on the Text

### Completion and Rest: The Seventh Day

#### Read Genesis 2:1-3

1. We see that God rested on the seventh day, after six days of creative work. Surely this wasn't because He was worn out by the work. Why do you think He rested?
2. The word "seven" had special significance in ancient Hebrew (see introduction to this lesson). If the word "seven" suggests a covenant made between two parties to create a lasting family relationship, what might it have meant to the Hebrews that God rested on, blessed, and hallowed (which means "to make holy, or set apart for holy use") the seventh day?
3. When the world began, God marked out one day from the others as holy. In other words, He sanctified time. How does the Church continue this action of God in her life with Him?

### The Creation of Man

#### Read Genesis 2:4-7

4. Up until now, the Creator has been referred to as "God," or Elohim, "master of the universe." Beginning in 2:4, He is called "LORD God," or Yahweh. This is the personal, covenant name of God used by the people of Israel who looked to Him as a father. Why do you suppose this transition is here?
5. The real focus of this chapter is the formation of man. Review 1:20, 24, 26-27 along with 2:7, 18-19. What is different about the way man is created as compared with the animals? What implications does this have for man?
6. Notice that vs. 8 says that the LORD God put the man He had formed in a special place on the earth—a garden in the east, called Eden. Just as God had done with time, setting aside one hallowed day, so He did with space as well. He set aside one place on all the earth for man to live. This would be the place where God and man communed. It was holy space. How does the Church keep alive the idea that "holy space" can still exist on earth, as it did at the dawn of creation?

### The Creation of the Garden

#### Read Genesis 2:8-17

*[NOTE: If we read this chapter in terms of God establishing a covenant with those created to be his children, this section can be seen as containing the terms or conditions of the covenant at this early stage: the blessing of eternal life with God on the condition that the fruit is not eaten, and the curse of death for those who break faith.]*

7. Read the description of the place God set apart and prepared for man to live in (vss. 8-9). Describe it. What does it suggest about God's care of man and the life He intended him to have there?
8. In the middle of the garden, God planted two special trees (vs. 9). The tree of life was one of the trees available for food (vs. 16). What does the name of this tree suggest about the kind of fruit it provided?
9. In vs. 15, God puts man in the garden not simply to enjoy its beauty, but to do work in it—"to till and keep it." What does this say about the nature of work?
10. The Hebrew word for "keep" in vs. 15 is better translated "guard." If you had been Adam, hearing the charge from God to guard the garden, what question might it have provoked in you?



## Catholic Scripture Study



## Questions on the Text

## Catholic Scripture Study

11. Look at vss. 16-17. Why would a loving God, whom we just saw carefully create all things "good" and make a beautiful dwelling place for His children, put a desirable but deadly and forbidden tree in the middle of the garden?

### The Creation of Eve Read Genesis 2:18-25

12. Being alone is the first thing pronounced "not good" (vs. 18) in the account of creation. Why? (Hint. Go back and review 1:26-27). Is fellowship with God not enough for the man? Why do you think God sets out to make a "helper" and not a companion for the man?

13. Surely God did not think that one of the beasts of the field would be a fit helper for Adam. So what explains this episode of Adam and the animals?

14. What do you suppose is the significance of the LORD God creating woman from Adam's rib, instead of simply forming her from the dust of the ground?

15. Of what is "one flesh" both the sign and the expression? What does this suggest about the nature of marriage? Read also Matt. 19:1-6.

16. Why do you suppose the detail given in vs. 25 is included at the close of this chapter?

17. Adam and Eve were told to live out their vocation of fruitfulness in a time when the earth was empty. In our increasingly crowded world, does this commission from God remain the same?



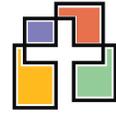
## Questions for Reflection

One of the best ways to meditate on God's Word is to take it deeply into your life through memorization. The suggested memory verse is always highlighted in the text in the lesson. Or you may choose one of your own. For further reflection, consider these questions:

1. The Church calls us to hallow time by holy days of obligation, most especially the Lord's Day. In addition, each day offers us an opportunity to hallow time by offering some of it back to God in rest and worship of Him. Have you established this habit, sometimes referred to as keeping a "holy hour," in your life? If not, reflect on the importance of hallowed time that Genesis 2 reveals. Consider imitating God by hallowing one hour out of twenty-four, saving that one for Him and Him alone.

2. Because each of us is either male or female, reading Genesis 2 enables us to see the uniqueness of our own sexual identity as we observe the design and purposes for each sex. Take time to reflect on your place in God's plan as male or female. Whether you are single or married, is there anything in today's lesson that will enable you to be a better man or woman of God?

3. The choice put before Adam and Eve, and represented by the trees of life and of death, echoes throughout Scripture and throughout our lives. It is the choice to obey God and to live as He has asked us to live. Think about the choices you face in each day of your life. Choices become habits. Ask God to give you the grace to examine your habits to see if you are choosing wisely.



### Opportunities for Additional Study

#### Points to Ponder

In the careful, patient narrative of Genesis 2, we have had the opportunity to gaze at the "picture" of man and woman in Paradise. What do we see?

The creation of man catches our eye because in it we recognize his difference from everything else in the universe. He is made from the dust of the ground, but God breathes His own life into him. He is earthy, but he is also spiritual. Because he is a duality in one person, all the other details of Genesis 2 will expand his identity in one direction or the other. He is sensual, so he is surrounded by great physical beauty. He gets hungry, so he is provided with food. He gets lonely, so a helper is created for him. He has a body of which he is not ashamed.

He is not, however, a creature like the other animals. He is made in the image of God, so there is much more we need to know about him to understand him. As God creates life, so will man be able to create life. As God worked to bring the universe into existence, man will work to keep it cared for. As God is free in Himself, so man is free in himself to choose his destiny. As God is a communion of equals, so will man be, with the creation of woman.

If we had to describe this scene, what words would we use? Although the word "love" never appears in the text, can we have any doubt that under and over and through it all, the love of God permeates every detail? Can we not feel the delight of God in these blessed creatures? Are we not moved to smile at the deep joy of human communion expressed in the first encounter of Adam and Eve? Although Adam came from the dust of the ground, does not the breath of God in him bestow on him unsurpassable dignity in this scene? And does not his helper, Eve, drawn from his side, share that dignity as she completes the image of God in them, male and female?

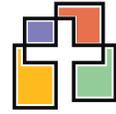
Be sure you take the time to rest in this scene and drink in deep draughts of the air that is heavy with blessedness here. Try to picture the sensuous beauty of the Garden—the sight and smell of the beautiful fruit trees, the sound and feel of rushing water in the four rivers that flow out from it, the taste of the Tree of Life. See Adam and Eve, ready to begin their family as man and wife. Let the tranquility and harmony of this chapter sink deeply into your imagination and soul. It shouldn't take too long for you to realize that Paradise is not only home for Adam and Eve. It is your own true home as well.

#### Catechism Connection

Excerpted from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*:

On Gen. 2:1-3 - "These inspired words [regarding the seventh day] are rich in profitable instruction:

- "In creation God laid a foundation and established laws that remain firm, on which the believer can rely with confidence, for they are the sign and pledge of the unshakeable faithfulness of God's covenant. For his part man must remain faithful to this foundation and respect the laws which the Creator has written into it.
- "Creation was fashioned with a view to the Sabbath and therefore for the worship and adoration of God. Worship is inscribed in the order of creation.
- "But for us a new day has dawned: the day of Christ's Resurrection. The seventh day completes the first creation. The eighth day begins the new creation. Thus, the work of creation culminates in the greater work of redemption. The first creation finds its meaning and its summit in the new creation in Christ, the splendor of which surpasses that of the first creation." (345-347,349)



## Catholic Scripture Study



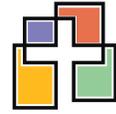
### Opportunities for Additional Study

On Gen. 2:7 - "In Sacred Scripture the term "soul" often refers to human life or the entire human person. But "soul" also refers to the innermost aspect of man, that which is of greatest value in him, that by which he is most especially in God's image: "Soul" signifies the spiritual principle in man....The Church teaches that every spiritual soul is created immediately by God-it is not "produced" by the parents-and also that it is immortal: it does not perish when it separates from the body at death, and it will be reunited with the body at the final Resurrection." (363,366)

On Gen. 2:17 - "God created man in his image and established him in his friendship. A spiritual creature, man can live this friendship only in free submission to God. The prohibition against eating "of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil" spells this out: "for in the day that you eat of it, you shall die." The "tree of the knowledge of good and evil" symbolically evokes the insurmountable limits that man, being a creature, must freely recognize and respect with trust. Man is dependent on his Creator and subject to the laws of creation and to the moral norms that govern the use of freedom." (396)

### Rome to Home

"Taking up the words of Sirach, the Second Vatican Council explains the meaning of that genuine freedom which is an outside manifestation of the divine image in man: 'God willed to leave man in the power of his own counsel, so that he would seek his Creator of his own accord and would freely arrive at full and blessed perfection by cleaving to God.'" (John Paul II, Veritatis Splendor, 38).



#### In this lesson, we observed that:

1. As the narrator moves from the grand strokes of creation we saw in chapter 1 to focus on the creation of man, he no longer calls God Elohim (Master of the Universe) but Yahweh (Lord God)--Israel's personal, covenant name for God. We also see God completing his work on the sixth day and resting on the seventh, establishing a covenant with all creation and blessing it. Even so, we who are created in God's image are to pause regularly from our work and rest to consider the Creator, to worship our Father.
2. God created man in His own image and likeness, endowing him with a dignity above all other created beings. He then made from Adam a helper, Eve, to co-labor with him. Only together as male and female and as a communion of equals did they fully reflect God's image. All people can trace their lineage back to the same first parents, and thus share equally in the dignity of the same family.
3. God formed and set apart a place of blessing and beauty where man was to live in fellowship with Him. Man was given the job of tilling and keeping (or guarding) the garden. In this work he was not a slave but a collaborator with God in perfecting creation.
4. In the garden man was offered eternal life with God but given the choice, in the form of a forbidden tree, of refusing that life. Thus their covenant family relationship with God was made conditional on their faith and obedience.
5. Although Adam and Eve had a knowledge of good and evil, the prerogative of deciding what is good or evil belongs to God.
6. Not only was woman made from man, she (as his wife) was made to once again become "one flesh" with him in marriage. They become as husband and wife a new, indivisible person. At the end of chapter 2 we are left with this intimation of future family life, and with the awareness of innocence and freedom as they know they are naked but are not ashamed.

### A Message from the Authors

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