

Genesis

Her Seed

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 our lesson on Mary as "the woman" of Gen. 3:15, we observed something surprising begin to emerge. Studying the details of her life, we began to understand that the Mother and Son foretold in Genesis would not only appear someday to begin God's victorious battle against the devil, but they would, in a mysterious way, undo what went wrong in Adam and Eve. This is even more glorious than what we might have expected. It satisfies the longing all of us develop as we read the first three chapters of Genesis. St. Paul is the one who alerts us to this grand plan, in his references to Adam as "a type of the one to come." The earliest Christians bear testimony in their writings that the Church continued to reflect on the relationship between "the woman" and her "seed" and a New Adam and Eve. Already we have noted the comparison between Eve and Mary:

Eve's conversation with a fallen angel leads to the loss of God's likeness in human flesh; Mary's conversation with an angel leads to the Incarnation, God taking on human flesh.

Eve, left exposed by her husband, talks herself out of being embarrassingly gullible in believing God's Word about the forbidden fruit; Mary, full of grace through the work of her Son, chooses God's will for her life, knowing the potential for embarrassment over her unusual pregnancy.

Eve, having broken the covenant she and Adam had with God, hears God's curse on her life, which will be pain in childbearing; Mary, having accepted God's plan, hears a voice of blessing on her and her childbearing.

Eve, Adam's helper, assists him in entering the devil's bondage; Mary, at the wedding in Cana, assists Jesus in showing Himself to be the Messiah Who had come to free Israel.

Eve becomes the mother of the dying; Mary, the mother of the living.

Eve is expelled from Paradise; Mary appears as the Queen of heaven.

Now we will continue our examination of the promise of Gen. 3:15. Having recognized "the woman" in Mary, we will also see "the Seed" in Jesus, her Son. We will want to watch the details of His life to see why St. Paul refers to Him as a second Adam. Is Adam's life, without the fall into sin, recapitulated in Jesus?

There's one more question we ought to ask ourselves, too. What does all this mean? If Jesus and Mary, in the details of the lives they lived, undid the wrong of Adam and Eve, what are the implications for humanity? Dare we let ourselves think that if we find within human history a New Adam and a New Eve, we might also find a new Garden of Eden, complete with beauty, goodness, and truth?

This lesson follows the format of the previous topical study. Please read the Scripture passages in your Bible, as they are not reprinted here.



Questions on the Text

Read Luke 22:39-46

1. In an earlier lesson (Lesson Three, question 10), we compared the temptation of Jesus in the desert to that of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Remember that in both cases, the devil tempted the humans to cast off the mantle of creaturely dependence on God and to listen to the voice of pride and autonomy. In this gospel scene, which takes place in another garden (as John tells us in his gospel; John 18:1-2), Gethsemane, do you see any evidence of another kind of temptation? How is Jesus different from Adam in His response?
2. See that Jesus' sweat falls to the ground "like great drops of blood" in this scene. Remember the Garden and God's punishment on Adam (see Gen. 3:19). What do you think is the significance of Jesus sweating in His own garden of temptation?
3. Read Heb. 5:7-10. What does this text reveal about how Jesus met His temptation. What difference might this kind of reaction have made for Adam in his Garden?

Read John 19:1-11

4. We see that Jesus has a crown of thorns in this scene. What was the significance of thorns in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:17-18)? What should we understand the crown of thorns to mean?
5. See that Pilate declares to those seeking to kill Jesus, "Here is the man!" (vs. 5) How is that announcement by Pilate an unwitting fulfillment of Gen. 1:26?
6. Read vss. 10-11. What is the source of the courage Jesus shows here that Adam lacked in the Garden?

Read John 19:31-37

7. Look at vs. 34. Recall that an opening in Adam's side produced his bride, Eve. What is the significance of blood and water flowing from a wound in Christ's side?

Read John 19:38-42; 20:11-18

8. See that Jesus was buried in a garden (19:41). Thus, the Resurrection took place in a garden as well. Mary Magdalene mistakes Jesus to be "the gardener" (20:15). What do you suppose is the connection we are to make between Jesus and Adam in this scene?

Read Hebrews 2:5-18

9. Look at vss. 9-10 carefully. The writer says that God made Jesus "perfect" through suffering. This does not mean that Jesus was imperfect. "To perfect" in this context means to advance to the final and complete fulfillment. Knowing what we know about life in (and out) of the Garden, why would suffering be "fitting" for Jesus (see also 2 Cor. 4:16-18)?
10. Look at vss. 14-15. In Gen. 3:15, God said to the serpent, "he shall bruise your head and you shall bruise his heel." According to these verses, Jesus delivered that bruise through His own human death. His death destroyed the devil, who "has the power of death." What do these verses suggest is the "power" the devil has in death? Why would the death of Jesus have destroyed it?



Catholic Scripture Study



Questions on the Text (cont).

Catholic Scripture Study

We recognize in these New Testament texts all the clues that the "woman" and her "seed," Jesus and Mary, not only fulfill the promise God made in the Garden of Eden, but they do it in such a way that they recapitulate the first Adam and Eve. We are ready now to let ourselves think about a return to life in Paradise, where humans are blessed, not cursed, and where God's family thrives. In the Genesis story, we must wait until chapter 12 to fully comprehend how the victory of Jesus and Mary was not only for themselves but for all mankind. However, it is worth considering now some New Testament evidence about how sinful human beings can share in the victory over sin and death that Jesus won, experienced first by Mary.

Read John 3:1-15

11. In the Garden, we realized that Adam and Eve (and all their descendants) underwent a radical, systemic change in their human natures. In this conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus, what does Jesus present as the solution to this radical problem?

Read John 6:41-59

12. Here is another occasion in which Jesus startled Jews with His teaching. Although it surprised the Jews to hear Jesus make a connection between eating food and eternal life, why should it not surprise anyone who has studied the first three chapters of Genesis?

Read Gal. 3:27; 1 Cor. 15:53; Eph. 4:22-24; Col. 3:9

13. Remember that in the Garden, God clothed Adam and Eve with skins of an animal. According to these passages, what new garment does God give to man in Christ?

The signs are everywhere in the New Testament that the Woman and her Seed, Jesus and Mary, preside over new life in a regained Paradise, which is the Church. The Church is the family of God, people who are born anew through faith and baptism into the life of supernatural grace that was lost in Eden. That Garden was both a spiritual and physical reality. The same is true today. The Church exists spiritually, among God's people, and it also exists in a physical way, when Christians gather together to give public demonstration of their faith in God and their desire to keep covenant with Him. They do this in churches.

14. Picture the inside of a traditional Catholic church. What are some of its features that evoke the Garden of Eden?



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. In the Catechism, we read an amazing statement: "Christ's whole life is a mystery of recapitulation. All Jesus did, said, and suffered had for its aim restoring fallen man to his original vocation... Christ enables us to live in him all that he himself lived, and he lives it in us..." (518, 521). Think about your life as one who has been re-admitted to the Garden of Eden. Is your love being tested? Choose the way of Christ. And, in union with Him, ask Him to live in you His own perfect obedience.

2. We understand from this lesson that Jesus defeated the devil by conquering death and the fear attached to it. If fear has a grip on you anywhere in your life, recognize it as a sham. Name that fear, and ask the New Adam to set you free.



Opportunities for Additional Study

Points to Ponder

The Scriptures leave no doubt that all the stirrings of hope and anticipation we experienced in our study of the first chapters of Genesis, in spite of the tragedy of man's fall from grace, were not without foundation. As the gospel story unfolds, we have seen all the clues that Mary and her Son, Jesus are the long-promised "woman" and her "seed" from Gen. 3:15. By their faithful obedience, not only do they bring ruin to the devil, but they also become the human faces and bodies of a New Adam and Eve. God's lost children, barred from the Tree of Life, have now received a way back into Eden. The Garden of the Church is a haven of safety in a hostile world. Although the children of the Church are still battered by an enemy, his time is short. In this Garden, the children enjoy the presence of the New Adam and New Eve and the community of love and holiness that was supposed to fill Eden. They eat freely of the Eucharist, the food that will give them eternal life. Theirs is a blessed, happy life.

The prayer that sustains these children in their life is the "Our Father." Think for a moment about this prayer. Knowing what we know about everything that happened in the first Eden, what kind of prayer do you think men and women would pray if they were allowed back in? What would they have learned from the experiences of Adam and Eve? With their restored spiritual sight, what would they say to God in their profound gratitude for being restored to what was lost, entirely through His goodness and grace?

Surely they would adore and honor Him. "Our Father, Who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name." They would recognize the need for obedience to His plan for creation, and that no other plan will do. "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." They would know that God provides the food they need. They would have no need to lust after forbidden fruit. "Give us this day our daily bread." They would be ready to confess their faults, which Adam and Eve tried to avoid. They would recognize the need to forgive others rather than laying blame. "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us." They would live in dependence on God, knowing an enemy stalks them. Their lives would be lived in humility and faith, not pride and autonomy. "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

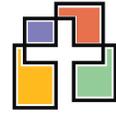
The "Our Father" is the prayer of the New Eden. It says everything.

Catechism Connection

Excerpted from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*:

Jesus as the New Adam - "Jesus is conceived by the Holy Spirit in the Virgin Mary's womb because he is the New Adam, who inaugurates the new creation: 'The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven.' From his conception, Christ's humanity is filled with the Holy Spirit, for God 'gives him the Spirit without measure.' From 'his fullness' as the head of redeemed humanity 'we have all received, grace upon grace.'" (504)

"The evangelists indicate the salvific meaning of this mysterious event: Jesus is the new Adam who remained faithful just where the first Adam had given into temptation. Jesus fulfills Israel's vocation perfectly: in contrast to those who had once provoked God during forty years in the desert, Christ reveals himself as God's Servant, totally obedient to the divine will. In this, Jesus is the devil's conqueror: he 'binds the strong man' to take back his plunder. Jesus' victory over the tempter in the desert anticipates victory at the Passion, the supreme act of obedience of his filial love for the Father." (539)



Catholic Scripture Study



Opportunities for Additional Study (cont).

Jesus as a Source of New Life - "The symbolism of water signifies the Holy Spirit's action in Baptism, since after the invocation of the Holy Spirit it becomes the efficacious sacramental sign of new birth: just as the gestation of our first birth took place in water, so the water of Baptism truly signifies that our birth into divine life is given to us in the Holy Spirit. As 'by one Spirit we were all baptized,' so we are also 'made to drink of one Spirit.' Thus the Spirit is also personally the living water welling up from Christ crucified as its source and welling up in us to eternal life." (694)

"...The blood and water that flowed from the pierced side of the crucified Jesus are types of Baptism and the Eucharist, the sacraments of new life. From then on, it is possible 'to be born of water and the Spirit' in order to enter the Kingdom of God. 'See where you are baptized, see where Baptism comes from, if not from the Cross of Christ, from his death. There is the whole mystery: he died for you. In him you are redeemed, in him you are saved.' [St. Ambrose]" (1225)



In this lesson, we observed that:

1. The gospel details of the life of Jesus lead to an inevitable comparison between Adam and Jesus. Not only is Jesus "the Seed" of Gen. 3:15, Who does battle with the devil, but He is also the Second Adam, undoing what went wrong in Eden:
 - He chooses to obey God in His garden of temptation, even though it means terrible suffering and death
 - He cries out in faith to His Father instead of remaining silent in doubt, as Adam did
 - He begins to take the curse of man's sin onto Himself, with sweat and thorns
 - A wound in His side while He is on the Cross becomes a symbol of Christ's Bride, the Church, just as from a wound in Adam's side, God created Eve; the water of baptism and blood of the Eucharist create a community of believers in union, body and soul, with Him
 - Jesus is the "gardener" of the New Eden; Mary, His Mother, is the first fruit of that Garden
2. In fulfillment of God's promise in Genesis, "the Seed" defeats God's enemy, the devil, through a Great Reversal. Although His death on the Cross had the appearance of defeat, it was actually the beginning of victory. Because Jesus perfectly obeyed God, loving not His life to the end, God raised Him from the dead, breaking the bondage that comes through fear of death. The devil is left powerless in his battle with a human being ("he shall bruise your head"), just as God promised.
3. The death and resurrection of Jesus in a garden is meant to help us understand that He has made it possible for men to return to Eden. He took upon Himself the punishment of God on man's rebellion. The innocent suffered for the guilty. As a result, the guilty can be washed clean in the water of baptism and receive the brand new life of a second birth through the Holy Spirit. They can once again live as God's blessed family.
4. Jesus offers Himself as food for those who desire to live forever. In the Eucharist, men will enjoy "the medicine of immortality," just as they would have in Eden, eating from the Tree of Life.
5. Just as God clothed Adam and Eve in Eden, in the regained Paradise of the Church, He clothes them with holiness that comes from union with Christ. St. Paul exhorts believers to "put on" their new natures and "put off" the old. To remain in the covenant with God is still a choice men must make, but God has done everything necessary for them to wear the royal robes of divine sonship. No more animal skins in the New Eden.
6. The Church, the New Eden, is the family of God, which is primarily a spiritual reality. But in its physical expression, Catholic life, especially in churches, evokes many features of the original Garden. This preserves what God intended for man from the very beginning. It is a life that is very good.