

Creation of the World: Days 4-7

I. REVIEW

In the first three days God creates the environment [the home] in which His creatures will live. The universe is no longer formless – it now has structure.

In those first three days, God created a world fit to live in. He has provided the threefold form of earthly life.

- Day and night give us time;
- Sea and sky give us space;
- Land and vegetation give us a place to live in which life can be sustained.

In the first three days God creates TIME; SPACE, and LIFE.

II. DAY FOUR: SUN AND MOON

The next three days correspond to the first three. On the first three days God establishes a form. On the second three days God creates the inhabitants to fill or occupy the forms or realms he created in the first three days.

Read: Genesis 1: 14-19

[14] And God said, "Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years,

[15] and let them be lights in the firmament of the heavens to give light upon the earth." And it was so.

[16] And God made the two great lights, the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night; he made the stars also.

[17] And God set them in the firmament of the heavens to give light upon the earth,

[18] to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good.

[19] And there was evening and there was morning, a fourth day.

On the fourth day, God creates the sun to rule over or provide light for the day, and the moon and stars to shine (or rule over) the night.

Note that the sun and moon are not named. This shows clearly that the sun and moon and stars are simply created things, not gods to be worshipped, as the neighboring religions did.

In the ancient world, the very words "sun" and "moon" were synonymous with the names of deities. In contrast, Genesis teaches that the sun and moon are not powers to be feared but created things with a God-given purpose in the universe. Their purpose is to serve man by giving him light by day and night, and a way of measuring time.

III. DAY FIVE – BIRDS AND THE FISH

On the fifth day God creates the birds and the fish to inhabit the sky and the sea.

Read: Genesis 1:20-23

[20] And God said, "Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the firmament of the heavens."

[21] So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarm, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

[22] And God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth."

[23] And there was evening and there was morning, a fifth day.

IV. DAY SIX – ANIMALS AND HUMANS

On the sixth day God creates the animals and man to live on the land and its vegetation. The biblical term “man” here refers to both genders.

Read: Genesis 1:24-31

[24] And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds: cattle and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds." And it was so.

*[25] And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the cattle according to their kinds, and everything that creeps upon the ground according to its kind. **And God saw that it was good.***

[26] Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth. . . "

Creation of Man and Woman

[27] So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

[28] And God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth."

[29] And God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food.

[30] And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so.

[31] And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, a sixth day.

V. OVERVIEW

As the very last act of creation, God creates human beings. The sacred text emphasizes the special significance of this moment. God seems to stop to reflect and plan every detail of his next creation – man.

“Man” here, has a collective meaning including woman.

We see that he is to be in the image and likeness of God, reproducing in his earthly life Who God is in His inmost nature. By sharing His image with man and imparting to him His goodness, God makes clear that this communion is one of love.

Only love can explain the condescension of God to man. Only love will qualify as the appropriate response to it.

VI. THE PLURAL “LET US MAKE . . .”

In verse 26 God says, *"Let us make . . ."* What does this use of the plural suggest about God? There are at least three explanations:

- Ancient Jewish interpretation (followed also by some Christian writers) saw the use of the plural “Let us make . . .” as meaning that God deliberated

with his heavenly court, that is, with the angels, implying that they were created before man.

- The use of the plural can be taken as reflecting the greatness and power of God. In ancient times when the king spoke he used the “royal we,” instead of the singular “I.”
- Read in the light of the New Testament, the plural “us” suggests the Holy Trinity – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

VII. CREATED IN THE IMAGE AND LIKENESS OF GOD

“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.”

What does it mean to say that we are created in God’s image and after his likeness?

A. God is Our Father.

- When Genesis next uses the terms “image” and “likeness” together, it is speaking of Adam becoming the father of Seth. *“When Adam had lived a hundred and thirty years, he became the father of a son in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth [Gen 5:3].*
- So if we are created in the image and likeness of God it means, among other things, that God is our father, that we are his children and that we were made to have a loving personal relationship with him.

B. We are Like God.

- We have intelligence, free will, and the capacity to love.
- Furthermore, God made our nature unlike any other. As human beings we find ourselves somewhere between the angels and the beasts, with physical bodies and rational souls.
- Our love in our families is an image of the love and life of the Trinity – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

C. Human Life Possesses Great Sacredness.

- Old or young, healthy or sick, every person of whatever race, colour or faith or no faith, is sacred because every person is created in God’s image.

D. Our Work Has Special Value.

- Our dignity does not come from what we do. Our work has dignity because we bear the image of God.
- Work itself is not a curse, even though it is cursed with toil because of Adam’s sin, as we’ll see shortly.
- God himself labored to bring creation into existence. We are called to work in imitation of God our Father.

E. Man and Woman are Equal in Dignity.

- Genesis teaches that both men and women participate in the divine image that God imprints on human nature.
- Men and women are inseparably joined in the one human family.
- Modern gender clashes, setting men against women, distort Biblical teaching and God’s plan for man and woman.
- The interaction of human society with its two genders is somehow part of what the Bible means by “the image of God.”

God, who is Spirit and thus neither male nor female, is nonetheless reflected in mankind only by male and female together. Man and woman are created "equal as persons and complementary as masculine and feminine" (CCC 372).

Each has the inherent dignity of being created in God’s image. In communion together, and particularly in the context of the family, they fully reflect the image of the Divine Family, which is God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

F. The Greatest Gift.

Of all the wondrous endowments God granted the human race, perhaps the most extraordinary was that of genuine freedom.

- For man was created perfectly free, able even to accept or reject his Creator.
- The choice was man’s: either to take part in God’s plan for the universe and the human race or to refuse this cooperation, to rebel.

VIII. THE FIRST COMMANDS IN THE BIBLE

After creating man and woman, God blesses them and gives them two responsibilities or commands.

[28] And God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth."

These commands are:

1. “to be fruitful and multiply” and to
2. “fill the earth and subdue it.”

In his vocation, which is to be fruitful and exercise dominion over the earth, man carries on the work of God begun in creation. God’s delight, satisfaction, and pleasure in man is verified by His blessing.

G. Be Fruitful and Multiply

13. In asking man to reproduce and fill the earth, God is asking man to help complete that which He began to do in the beginning.

- In giving man the responsibility to be fruitful, He allows him to participate in the creation of human life.
- In giving him charge over the earth, God is vesting man with some of His own authority, in effect asking man to share in His work of ruling.

Man’s two-part vocation is thus a reflection of God Himself. It enables him to be what he was created to be: a creature made in God’s image.

- And it is in fulfilling this vocation that he gives praise and glory to God.

H. Subdue the Earth

Man is charged with subduing the earth and having dominion over it. Dominion means "supreme authority; sovereignty."

- God, who is absolute king over all His creation, shares His authority with man by entrusting him with the earth and its resources, thus giving man the dignity of cooperating with Him in completing the work of creation.
- Man’s dominion is not intended to be domination; he is rather to care for the earth, to oversee it, to work it and enjoy its fruits.

Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC 2415)

CCC on Gen. 1:28:

"...man’s dominion over inanimate and other living beings granted by the Creator is not absolute; it is limited by concern for the quality of life of his neighbour, including generations to come; it requires a religious respect for the integrity of creation." (CCC 2415)

CCC on man’s cooperation in God’s work:

"God is the sovereign master of his plan. But to carry it out he also makes use of his creatures’ cooperation.

- This use is not a sign of weakness, but rather a token of almighty God’s greatness and goodness.
- For God grants his creatures not only their existence, but also the dignity of acting on their own, of being causes and principles for each other, and thus of cooperating in the accomplishment of his plan." (306; see also 307).

I. All Creation is Good

[31] And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, a sixth day.

IX. THE SEVENTH DAY - COMPLETION AND REST

Read: Genesis 2:1-3

[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.

J. God Rested on the Seventh Day

God rested not because He was tired but because He was finished. Nothing formless or empty remained in the world; it was complete and perfect.

When God’s creative work was finished, he gave man the task of continuing that creative work and caring for it. By resting on the seventh day He set a pattern, a rhythm of work and rest that would be reproduced in man’s life on earth. Six days to work and one day to enjoy and celebrate his harmony and communion with God.

Notice that that is no mention of the Sabbath, only the Seventh Day.

K. Rest is a Commandment

Rest is an example set by the Creator. Later God gives the third commandment, to keep holy this [seventh] day: *“God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it.”*

We shall later find it as one of the Ten Commandments [Ex. 20:8-18; Deut. 5:12-14]. See also CCC 2184 and 2185 below.

Catechism of the Catholic Church

2184 Just as God "rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had done,"¹²¹ human life has a rhythm of work and rest. The institution of the Lord's Day helps everyone enjoy adequate rest and leisure to cultivate their familial, cultural, social, and religious lives.¹²²

2185 On Sundays and other holy days of obligation, the faithful are to refrain from engaging in work or activities that hinder the worship owed to God, the joy proper to the Lord's Day, the performance of the works of mercy, and the appropriate relaxation of mind and body.¹²³

Family needs or important social service can legitimately excuse from the obligation of Sunday rest. The faithful should see to it that legitimate excuses do not lead to habits prejudicial to religion, family life, and health.

L. Seventh Day: A Day of Unending Rest

Unlike the other days there is no reference to the evening and morning of the seventh day.

"It is as if the rhythm of time were being broken by the Sabbath – prefiguring the situation in which man, once he has accomplished his mission of mastering the earth, will enjoy an unending rest, at an eternal feast in God’s presence" [Genesis: Navarre Bible]. See Heb 4:1-10.

In Biblical language, "feast" or "festival" means three things:

1. Obligatory rest from everyday work;
2. Recognition of God as Lord of creation, and joyful contemplation of the created world; and
3. A foretaste of the enduring rest and joy that will be man’s after he leaves this world.

Rest means that there is more to life than work; rest is the goal and the fulfilment of work. "Rest" is not inactivity. It involves living (and working) in fruitful harmony with God, as Adam did in the garden. It is a time set aside for worship and being in God’s presence.

The blessing of the Seventh Day in Genesis 2 is fulfilled when Israel occupies the Promised Land (i.e. enters into rest).

M. Sabbath Covenant with Creation

“The Hebrew word that means “to swear a covenant” is based on the Hebrew word for seven.

“So in creating the world in seven days, God is *swearing a covenant with the universe*. He is not just the master, and we are not just slaves. He is more than creator, and we are more than his creatures.

If God had stopped on the sixth day, we would be only creatures: we would be slaves and the private property of God. But God went on: “*So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all his work which he had done in creation.*”

“God invited us into that rest, because that rest represents the covenant relationship that he establishes with his creation” [Scott Hahn – Understanding the Scriptures].

The Creation of Adam

I. INTRODUCTION

This section begins a new creation account which scholars identify with the “Yahwistic” tradition and is considered to be older than the “Elohistic” account of Chapter 1. It runs to the end of Chapter 4 and covers:

- The creation of man and woman [chap 2];
- The fall of our first parents and their expulsion from Paradise [chap 3]; and
- The continuation of human life in the context of sin.

Yahweh is rendered “LORD God” in the text below.

The difference in names reflects a difference in how the author looks at what God is doing. “Elohim” suggests the infinite power of the Creator, while “Yahweh” suggests God’s covenant Love – the love of the Father for us his children.

All this is described in symbolic language and a very vivid style.

Read: Genesis 2:4-7

*[4] 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.

II. SOUL OR SPIRIT, AND BODY

God created man in His own image and after His likeness. Whereas He told the waters and the earth to bring forth creatures, God Himself formed man "from the dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life."

A. The Breath of Life

This breath of life is the soul, "that by which (man) is most especially in God’s image" (CCC 363). It is this that separates man from the animals, which are living beings and which have souls - the life principle in a body - but not the spiritual soul that comes from God that has free will and is imperishable.

B. Body

Man comes from the Earth, as far as his body is concerned.

Genesis calls the universal father ADAM; from the Hebrew word ADAMAH, which means “earth.” The Bible shows the first man is earthly or earthy, but fashioned by God [so of divine origin] from the mud of the earth [*adam* means man in general].

C. Body and Soul - Hybrid Nature

But the fact that man belongs to the earth is not his most characteristic feature. What makes man different from the animals and plants is that God breathes his Spirit into him, and gives him Life. The soul or the spirit does not belong to the earth – it comes directly from God.

- We have a hybrid nature with bodies of earth [material], but souls that are of heaven [spiritual]. We are spirit and matter!
- There is nothing else like us on earth or in heaven, because we are the only beings that have citizenship in both universes – the visible and the invisible.

D. Evolution

Although earthly, man’s body also comes from God, but the Bible does not explain the precise origin of the human body. See *Humani Generis* #36 [64] below:

For these reasons the Teaching Authority of the Church does not forbid that, in conformity with the present state of human sciences and sacred theology, research and discussions, on the part of men experienced in both fields, take place with regard to the doctrine of evolution, in as far as it inquires into the origin of the human body as coming from pre-existent and living matter - for the Catholic faith obliges us to hold that souls are immediately created by God.

III. ONE HUMAN FATHER

Genesis teaches that we all share one human father.

Anthropologists have proposed the theory of polygenism [many original parents], imagining that the human race evolved simultaneously in many parts of the earth over a long period of time. There is no scientific proof for polygenism – this is mere speculation.

Pope Pius XII rejected this notion of multiple parents in his great 1950 encyclical *Humani Generis*:

For the faithful cannot embrace that opinion which maintains that either after Adam there existed on this earth true men who did not take their origin through natural generation from him as from the first parent of all, or that Adam represents a certain number of first parents.

IV. MAN IN PARADISE

A. Overview

The Garden of Eden was a place of beauty and harmony containing everything that our first parents could want or need for their enjoyment, work, and sustenance.

The garden was full of trees pleasing to the sight and taste. In other words, not only was man provided with what he needed, but he was also surrounded by sensuous beauty - unutterable beauty in the place where God meets man. If the world was a temple, as the Bible suggests,, Eden was the Holy of Holies.

Adam possessed the highest good, which is God and out of that relationship all other needs were fulfilled. God and man are friends and there is no such thing as evil or death.

Adam appears in the garden with perfect health of body and of soul. These perfect gifts of nature were crowned by the so-called “preternatural” gifts, special

blessings from God above and beyond what was required to be merely human. They included immunity from death and suffering, and integrity – perfect harmony of intellect, emotions and will.

Read: Genesis 2:8-15

[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.

[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.

B. The Trees in the Centre of the Garden

The garden had a special feature – two trees in the centre: the Tree of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, symbolizing the power to give life and the ultimate source of man’s moral behavior.

C. The Tree of Life

The Tree of Life symbolizes what Adam and Eve will become if they remain faithful to God: they will possess eternal life.

The "tree of life" grew fruit that imparted life. Something man ate would enable him to live forever (see Gen. 3:22). It is the first occasion of a natural element signifying and making present a grace from God, immortality.

We call these "sacraments." Understanding this scene prepares us to understand what Jesus said to His disciples in John 6:51: "I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any one eats of this bread, he will live forever."

D. The Tree of Knowledge

The tree of knowledge represents what Adam and Eve will experience if they become unfaithful: they will taste good, but they will taste evil also. No meal can be good if it contains any poison at all.

E. Care of the Garden

The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it.

God gives Adam instructions about the garden. He is to till the garden [even in Paradise there was work!] and to “keep it” – the word literally means to guard it, as though Adam might have to defend it from intruders.

F. Forbidden Fruit

Read: Genesis 2:16-17

[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."

Adam could eat the fruit of any tree in the garden, including the tree of life. There was only one exception: the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

God warned Adam clearly that if he ate of this tree he would die. Adam was given the freedom to choose: if he chose to disobey God the punishment would be death. Spiritual death immediately, followed by physical death eventually.

It is clear in this scene that God designed man with the capacity to make a choice that would determine his fate. Man understood that the choice to disobey God would result in death. Long before the serpent tempted him, he was aware of good and evil.

- Good meant living the way God asked him to and living forever;
- Evil meant disobeying God and facing death.

We can see that man was, at the beginning, designed to achieve the end for which he was created by means of a choice.

Of course, it had to be a real choice (what kind of choice would it have been if God had told man not to eat the thorns from a misshapen bush?).

- Because God is Himself free, He desires man to freely choose to love and obey Him. The choice is man’s to make.

Summary

God alone, Yahweh, the God of Israel, is the master of life, because he gave life to man and the animals.

From the very start God looked after man most lovingly and established a covenant with him.

Man was created free with the capacity to choose his ultimate fate by obeying or disobeying God.

Obedience to God would bring eternal life. Disobedience would bring death: spiritual and physical.

Questions

- 1) What should faithful Catholics do on Sundays? CCC 2185
- 2) How did man come into being? Genesis 2:7 CCC 703-704
- 3) What command did God give and to whom? Genesis 2:16-17
- 4) In vs. 26, God says “let us make man in our image.” What does this use of the plural suggest about God?
- 5) Read John 1:1-5, Colossians 1:15-18, and Hebrews 1:1-3. How do these NT references to the creation of the world expand the picture that we get from Genesis 1?
- 6) Read Genesis 1:2. Who else was present in the beginning, and how?
- 7) God created time and space, as we see in Genesis 1, yet He lives outside of them. It is a difficult concept to comprehend, isn’t it? And yet Catholic life can be said to be predated with an element of “timelessness”. Can you describe why that is true?
- 8) Now go back to vs. 1. What two realms of existence does God create, and of what does He make them?
- 9) The rest of the chapter tells how God transform formless, empty chaos into an ordered universe. What did God create the first three days? The second three days? How are they related?

- 10) Who or what does God put in positions of dominion, and over what two realms are they to rule?
- 11) Note that the very first thing God does for the living creatures (vs. 22) and for man and woman (vs. 28) after creating them is to bless them. In the context of this chapter, what does it mean for man and beast to have God’s blessing?

Preparation for Week #3

Read:

1. Genesis: Chapters 2 and 3 - RSV Catholic Edition;
2. *Come and see Catholic Bible Study – Genesis*: Chapters 2 and 3
3. The Navarre Bible: Genesis – Chapters 1 and 2