

## Lesson 3 Genesis Chapter 2

### Creation

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.

### **Read aloud Chapter 2 of Genesis**

1. **Compare the creation story in Chapter 2 with the creation story from Chapter 1.**

**Point out that Jewish chronology is not always linear, and very often is circular, resulting in perceived incongruities.**

**Chapter 1 is a global (or bird's eye) view of the creation story, whereas Chapter 2 focuses in on the creation story from Man's perspective.**

**How does the difference in the stories reflect the differences between a Creator and a Father?**

**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?**

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. In His essence, God is not just a being who works. He is a being who IS. When God rested from His work, He existed complete in Himself, in glad harmony and communion with all His works. 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 glad harmony and communion with God.

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?

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?

**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?**

In chapter 1 we see God in all His power, creating the universe. In chapter 2, we narrow our focus on the creation of man and God's relation with him. We also see God establish a covenant relationship between Himself and creation. Hence His name change. God is not just Master but Father. The universe is His household and the people He creates are not mere creatures or slaves but God's children.

**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?**

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." 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 the spirit of life in them but not this soul that comes from God, that has free will and is incorruptible.

**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?**

"Holy space" is that space on earth where God and man commune in an intimate and unique way. God is Spirit, so He is omnipresent. He is everywhere. Yet from the beginning, it has been His desire to be near to His people in their human lives, within the boundaries of time and space. The Garden of Eden was just such a place. This is seen most clearly, perhaps, in the next chapter, where the text tells us that God was "walking in the Garden in the cool of the day" (Gen. 3:8). This is not to say that He was in the form of a man there but that His presence and accessibility to Adam and Eve were like what one experiences during a conversation on a pleasant walk. When this "holy space" was lost through disobedience, God restored it first in the Holy of Holies, that special place in both the Tabernacle (the tent where Israel worshipped God during their desert wanderings) and the Temple in Jerusalem, where God met with Israel's High Priest. The full restoration of communion between God and man took place in Jesus, when "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). Forever after that, until He returns, Jesus makes Himself present and accessible in that flesh to humans in the sacrament of the Eucharist. The red Tabernacle lamps in our churches are the sign that, just as in the Garden, we are standing in "holy space."

**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?**

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. The presence of unutterable

beauty in the place where God meets man continued in the worship of Israel. The Holy of Holies contained the Ark of the Covenant, which was covered in gold and heavenly sculptures (see Ex. 25:10-22). The vestments of the High Priest were studded with gems so that when he went into the Holy of Holies on behalf of the people, he was arrayed in "beauty and glory" (see Ex. 28:40). The Church's tradition of exquisite beauty in her architecture and art continue what we see here in Genesis. God intends for man to experience beauty in His presence. As St. Thomas Aquinas taught, man's senses are ordered to beauty.

**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?**

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 for ever."

**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?**

Mankind was not created simply to enjoy creation but to take care of it and work it, to make it productive. In the Garden, work was not a curse before the Fall. Sharing in God's work is one way in which we live in His image. At this point in Genesis, according to the Catechism, "work is not yet a burden, but rather the collaboration [co-labor-ation] of man and woman with God in perfecting the visible creation." (378)

**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?**

The need to keep or "guard" the garden makes one ask, "against what?" After all, this is Paradise, is it not? And haven't we just seen that God called all creation "very good?" This is a detail that should leave us on alert.

**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?**

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

**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?**

Being alone is not good because God is not alone. Within the One God are Three distinct, equal Persons in a communion of love. Fellowship between man and God was good, but man alone, without an equal, could not be fully in God's image. Man must be in communion with others like himself, and in that communion he reflects the Blessed Trinity. Because the creation was a work of all Three Persons of the Trinity, man's companion will be one who can help him do his work of fruitfulness and dominion-"a helper fit for him."

**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?**

Adam's not finding a suitable helper among the animals is for his own benefit. He will know from his own experience that while he is like the beasts of the field in many ways, he is different and set apart from them. What he needs in his helper is one equal to himself. Notice here that this kind of knowledge is something Adam reaches through his own experience. It is different from the knowledge that is revealed to him by God. God told him what to eat and what not to eat in the garden. It wasn't left up to him. Man's knowledge in the Garden was of two types: one was revealed knowledge and the other was knowledge obtained through experience and reason.

**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?**

In order for there to be a second human, God goes into Adam's body and creates Eve. Adam awakens with delight, exclaiming, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh"-someone who shares equally his humanity, like him and yet not him. And from that point on, God shares the divine prerogative of creating human life with them and their offspring. They now can procreate in the act of sexual union, an act which takes on a sacred nature in this context because it not only perpetuates the creation of life, which is a divine act but also because the life it produces bears God's image.

**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.**

"One flesh" is both the sign and the expression of the indissoluble union of marriage. When a man and a woman come together in marriage, they become in effect a new, indivisible person. The child that their cleaving begets is the expression of that oneness. In words of the Catholic marriage rite, "You gave man the constant help of woman so that man and woman should no longer be two, but one flesh, and you teach us that what you have united may never be divided." This is simply a statement of what Jesus teaches in the gospels. Marriage was always intended by God to be permanent.

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

"And the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed." You should leave chapter 2 and go into chapter 3 with the awareness of innocence and unfettered freedom. Their lack of clothes is a metaphor: Adam and Eve are in a state of innocence, delighting in each other. There is as yet no guilt or shame in the Garden

**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?**

In our study of Genesis thus far, we have been able to recognize that man's vocation of fruitfulness and dominion had nothing to do with "efficiency." Procreation and work are man's calling because he is in God's image, not because they are efficient means to an end. To be human is to be ordered to procreation and work, since God is One Who creates life and works. The purpose of sexual union, referred to euphemistically in Gen. 2:24 as "cleaving" and becoming "one flesh," is revealed by the context to be the perpetuation of what happened when God went into Adam's body to produce another human being. The creation of human life is meant to be a source of joy for man. When Adam beheld

Eve, he did not moan, "Oh no, not another mouth to feed!" He was delighted in her being. Sexual union is meant to continue this joy, within the covenant of marriage. That is why the text of Genesis immediately refers to marriage after God's creation of Eve and Adam's delight in her. The simple phrasing of the two becoming "one flesh" covers the entire explanation of sexual union. It is an act that unites man and woman so closely that they are like one person, as Eve had once been "one flesh" with Adam because she came out of him. In addition, it is an act in which two literally become "one flesh" in another human being, as God and Adam together became Eve. But what if, after so many years, we now have a world crowded with people? Are we at liberty to engage in sexual union but restrict its fruitfulness? Shouldn't we be alarmed at the total population of the world and the strain that it puts on its resources? A quote from the Catechism is useful here:

"Fecundity is a gift, an end of marriage, for conjugal love naturally tends to be fruitful. A child does not come from outside as something added on to the mutual love of the spouses, but springs from the very heart of that mutual giving, as its fruit and fulfillment. So the Church, which is 'on the side of life,' teaches that 'each and every marriage act must remain open to the transmission of life.' 'This particular doctrine, expounded on numerous occasions by the Magisterium, is based on the inseparable connection, established by God, which man on his own initiative may not break, between the unitive significance and the procreative significance which are both inherent to the marriage act.'" (2366)

If we restrict the fruitfulness of sexual union out of fear or selfishness, we become less than fully human. Are we afraid of overcrowding on the earth? Take a plane ride anywhere to see that most of the earth is empty! When man and woman are faithful to God's vocation of fruitfulness and work, more human beings mean more joy, not less.

## **2. The First Covenant between God and Man.**

God enters into a covenant with Adam and Eve. This covenant establishes first Man's sonship into God's family. We are adopted children of God, not just mere creations to serve Him. The creation of Eve as Adam's helper and mate is significant because God gives Adam a way to share his love, although imperfectly, with someone else, just as God shares His love perfectly between the Father, the Son, and The Spirit. It is through this love that Adam and Eve share with each other that they will learn to learn share their love with God.

It is important to note that although Adam and Eve are created as adults, their emotions, and maturity are at the level of small children. How hard is it for a two year old to learn to share? Or put someone else first? Could this have possibly been a reason for the placing of the "Tree of Life? Could the graces derived from the tree of life help them learn to love?

## **3. Discuss why man was created in the first place.**

Can other Creation accounts make sense?

Does the Genesis account in Chapter 2 place too much emphasis on Mankind?

Who are we? Why were we created? What is our relationship to each other?

What is God's plan for us?

How do we know that Man is born with both a body and soul?

## Angels

Discuss Angels.

What are they?

Angels are a creation of God that are all spirit. Angels are created by God with infused knowledge.

Nine Choirs (or ranks) of Angels from the highest (Closest to God's Throne) to the lowest).

Highest Order: **Seraphim, Cherubim, Thrones**. Noted for their zeal & ceaseless contemplation of God.

Second Order: **Dominations, Virtues, Powers**. Make known God's authority.

Lowest Order: **Principalities, Archangels, Angels**. Charged with making announcements to mankind.

Point out the significance that it is not until we get to the book of Revelation (Rev 3) that we finally get the story of who angels are and how they fit into Creation (and it is clearly not the full story). Isn't it ironic that it is the last book of the Bible that puts the first book in perspective.

How many Angels are there? Who are the fallen angels?

If Angels did not exist, how would that affect the Genesis creation account? What would that mean to us today? Why does Satan hate man?

## **Conclusion**

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.