

## **On Creation**

### **"Creation"**

*Focus Texts: Genesis 1:1- 2:25 "The Creation"*

#### **What is the purpose of studying the Bible?**

"This after all, is the object of our earnest effort, that you would know precisely the power of scripture so as not merely to understand them yourselves but also to become teachers of them to others, and so be in a position, according to the blessed Paul, to edify one another. (1 Thess 5:11) I mean if you advance in the Lord, and manifest some progress in the teaching of spiritual things, you will also bring great joy to your hearts." (The Fathers of the Church: St. John Chrysostom Homilies on Genesis 1-17, Catholic University of America Press, Vol. 74 1986, Hom 8, p. 105)

The more you desire to learn the more God pours His Grace upon our Study.

" . . . the more we see your minds stimulated, your interest on the increase, and your reasoning taking flight, the more . . . we pour upon you these spiritual streams . . . for the sake of your edification, for the salvation of your souls . . . in spiritual things, here our resources grow greater..." (Homily 8, p. 106)

#### **Authorship:**

The Church attributes Moses as the compiler and author of the first five Books of the Old Testament known as the Pentateuch the five fold book: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy.

Date: 15th - 13th C. BC

#### **Outline of the Book of Genesis**

Chapters 1-11 "The Pre-history of the Ancient Israelites"

- The Story of Creation 1:1-2:4a
- The Story of the Garden of Eden 2:4b-3:24
- The Story of Cain and Abel 4:1-16
- Genealogies of Cain and Seth 4:17-5:32
- The Angels Marriages 6:1-4
- The Story of the flood 9:20-28
- The curse of Canaan 9:20-28
- The Sons of Noah 10:1-32
- Tower of Babel 11:1-9
- Shem & Terah 11:10-32

Chapters 12-50 "Abraham and his descendants"

- Abraham 12-25
- Isaac 25-28
- Jacob 28-50

- Joseph 39-50

## **Gen. 1:1 In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth.**

### **1. Christ is the Creator:**

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it." (John 1:1-5 also see Col 1:16)

- St. Paul:

"The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by man, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all men life and breath and everything. And he made from one (man) every nation of men to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their habitation, that they should seek God, in the hope that they might feel after him and find him. Yet he is not far from each one of us, for 'In him we live and move and have our being'; as even some of your poets have said, 'For we are indeed his offspring.' (Acts 17:24-28)

"What is the beginning of all things except our Lord and Savior of all, Jesus Christ, "the first born of every creature?" In this beginning therefor, that is in His Word, "God made heaven and earth" (Origen)

### **2. The beginning of creation marks the beginning of time.**

- There was no world before it sprang up
- Time begins with creation

### **3. "The Beginning"**

"In order, therefor that the world came into existence instantaneously at the will of God, it is said: 'In the beginning he created'. (St. Basil H. 1:6)

### **4. The doctrine of Creation "out of nothing"**

"He brings all things from nothing into being and creates them, both visible and invisible, and man who is made up of both." (John Of Damaskos: Book Two p. 205)

### **5. Creation by the word of God (And God said. . .)**

- Creation cannot be understood as emanating from God's being or as being an extension of himself but it is the product of His personal will.
- The "words of God are not empty" (Isa 55:11)
- Instant Creation ( Against Evolution)

"'Let it be made,' and it was made, and immediately all the elements were produced; His word sufficed for the sustenance of all created things, not simply because it was a word but because it was God's word." (Chrysostom, H 9.3, p. 118) "The sky He produced in a

finished form but He left the earth shapeless and incomplete. (Why?) The creation of the sky proves God's power, the earth, on the other hand, if being 'our Mother and Tomb' should we be led to conjure up some grandiose ideas about it, we ought to attribute God as Creator and not the nature of the earth" ( A Paraphrase of Chrysostom, H. 9.4, p. 119)

### **6. The purpose of creation?**

"You will find that the world was not devised at random or to no purpose, but to contribute to some useful end and to the great advantage of all beings, if it is truly a training place for rational souls and a school of attaining knowledge of God, because through visible and perceptible objects it provides guidance to the mind for the contemplation of the invisible." (Rom 1:20)

a.) God operates according to his own designs.

"Notice how the divine nature shines out of the very manner of creation, how he executes his creation in a way contrary to human procedures, first stretching out the heavens and then laying out the earth beneath, first the roof and then the foundation." (St. John: Hom 2:11)

b.) On Evolution

If, "evolution" teaches that Life simply evolved on its own out of pre-existing matter the Church says no - God Created with no need for pre-existent matter.

"In the beginning GOD created"

Gen. 1:26 Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to 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 wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth." Gen. 1:27 So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. Gen. 1:28 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."

### **The Place of Mankind in Creation**

". . .the human being is the creature more important than all of the other visible beings, and for this creature all the others have been produced - sky, earth, sea, sun, moon, stars, the reptiles, the cattle, all the brute beasts." Chrysostom, H. 8, p. 107)

1 Adam = mankind collectively

2 Image denotes our Potential to be "like" God

". . . for according to His image means the intellect (nous, spiritual intellect) and free will." (John of Damaskos, p. 235)

"man created in the image is the person capable of manifesting God in the extent to which his nature allows itself to be penetrated by deifying grace." (Lossky, *The Theology of the Image*, p. 139)

- 3 Likeness denotes the extent we realize our potential of being "like God" a.)  
Likeness = virtues of holiness

" ' Likeness' . . . we become like God to the extent of our human power - that is to say, we resemble him in our gentleness and mildness and in regard to virtue, as Christ also says, 'Be like your Father in heaven' (Matt 5:45)" (Chrysostom, H. 9.7, p. 120) ". . . according to His Likeness" means such likeness in virtue as possible." (St. John Damaskos, *The Orthodox Faith*, Book Two, Catholic University of America Press, Vol. 37, p. 235)

- 4 The whole man is created in the "Image" of God - no split between the physical and the spiritual natures is present in Hebraic thought. a.) Ezek. 28:12 b. Psalm 8
- 5 Let us make man in our Image (The Son is Present)

"Who else is it than the Angel of Great Council, Wonderful Counselor, Figure of Authority, Prince of Peace, Father of the age to come, Only-begotten Son of God, like the Father in being, through whom all things were created? To him is said, "Let us make a human being in our own image and likeness." (Chrysostom, Homily 8.8 p. 109)

This text also teaches the Son is equal with the Father. Jehovah witnesses teach that Jesus was created in time and that he is not equal with the Father. This heretical teaching is also known as Arianism of the 4th C. that was condemned by the Church,.

- 6 The task which this image enables mankind to do.

"Let them have control of the fish of the sea, the birds of heaven . . . So 'image' refers to the matter of control, . . . God created the human being as having control of everything on earth, and nothing on earth is greater than the human being, under whose authority everything fall." (Chrysostom, H. 8:9, p. 110) a.) Authority of mankind to rule over all things on earth b.) Now creation has a new relationship with God - it is through mankind that creation is related to God. c.) Man is the image of God's solemn emblem upon earth through whom God maintains his dominion over the earth.

- 7 Image and Likeness - Male and Female (Di-sexuality)

"According to the second creation story, (Gen 2) God creates her (Eve) , Himself from the stuff of Adam to prove that she is what Adam is and is absolutely his equal because she is from his side and when he looks at her he says this is flesh of my flesh and bone of my bones." (Fr. Hopko, Lecture, "A Theology of Gender")

- a.) The idea of man finds its fullest expression not in man alone but in man and women
- b.) Blessed to multiply
- c.) Everything about man's life refers him to God

### **A break with modern biblical scholarship**

"In the purely Hebraic texts of the Bible, interpreted in the historic context in which the books of the Old Testament were composed, there is nothing (or almost nothing) which would permit us to base either an understanding of God or of a religious anthropology on the notion of the image of God."

### **Orthodox Theology of "Image & Likeness"**

"hold fast, I urge you, to the dogmas of the Church with close attention, without confusing the drift of the expression." (Chrysostom, H. 8.12, p. 112) 1.

### **A criticism of Modern Biblical Interpretation:**

"For there is also a dead God, the God of a particular school of Biblical purists who are too wedded to the Hebraic letter, which they study in the historical context of its "shaping," to be able to recognize the life and the living tradition which leads to the discovery in the most ancient texts of a meaning ever new, adapted to each new stage of the divine economy before Christ."

[This school of biblical criticism says there is no evidence of a theology of "image" present in Hebraic thought]

2. "Theology" (the knowledge of God in his Logos - who is the image of his Father ) is a matter of His Will when and to whom He chooses to reveal Himself:"

"Theology' in the proper sense, as the Fathers of the Church were to understand it, remains a closed book to Israel until the Incarnation of the Word." (Lossky, p. 133)

### **A Vegetarian Existence for Animals and Human beings Gen 1:29-30**

"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. 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."

### **The blessing of the seventh Day**

". . . He set aside a whole of one day in the cycle of the week and marked it off for the performance of spiritual works." (Chrysostom, H. 10.17, p. 139) Genesis Chapter 2:4-25  
Gen 2:4 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, Gen 2:5 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; Gen 2:6 but a mist went up from the earth and watered the whole face of the ground-- Gen 2:7 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. Gen 2:8 And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he had formed. Gen 2:9 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. Gen 2:10 A river flowed out of Eden to

water the garden, and there it divided and became four rivers. . . Gen 2:15 The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. Gen 2:16 And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; Gen 2:17 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." Gen 2:18 Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him." . . . Gen 2:21 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; Gen 2:22 and the rib which the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Gen 2:23 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." Gen 2:24 Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh. Gen 2:25 And the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed.

### **1. On the Two Natures of Man *A second account of creation that completes Chapter One.***

#### A.) Physical Nature

" . . . a body could never be made from the earth - a brick or a pot, yes, but never could such a body be made. Do you see that unless we take into account the Creator's power and suppress our own reasoning . . . after all, the words require the eyes of faith, spoken as they are..." (Chrysostom, H. 12.12, p. 164)

#### B.) Spiritual Nature ( The breath of Life)

##### **1. The Soul is Created**

" . . . was endowed with this breath as a vital force, and this became the origin of the soul's being . . ." (Chrysostom , H. 12.15, p. 166) 2.) Liturgical (Worship) References to the "breath of Life" a.) At the "making of a catechumen" this first part a an Orthodox Baptismal service the priest breath upon the candidate three times in the name of the Holy Trinity. This is done with reference to this first in-breathing of God done at our creation. In Baptism we are "image of God" is being re-created by this act.

##### b.) The Funeral Service Hymn

"My beginning and my essence come from your creative command. For it was your will to make me out of visible and invisible nature, a living being; you formed my body from the earth and gave me a soul by your divine and Life-Giving breath." (Funeral Service)

##### **2. The Garden of Eden**

#### A. An actual place on earth (Physical)

" . . . the divine scripture clearly teach us that paradise is under this very heaven under which are the East and the Earth." (Theophilus of Antioch, 2nd C.) " . . . that he commanded a garden to be created on earth so that the human being he had produced should live in the garden. . . (some) say the garden was not on the earth but in heaven, and dream up wild theories of that kind." (Chrysostom, H. 13.13, p. 175)

## B. Both having a Physical and Spiritual dimension

"Some have imagined Paradise to have been material while others have imagined it to have been spiritual. . . it seems to me that, just as man was created both physical and spiritual, so did this most sacred domain of his have a twofold aspect of being perceptive both to the senses and to the mind (nous, spiritual intellect). . . There he had the indwelling of God as a dwelling place and wore Him as a glorious garment. He was wrapped about with His Grace . . . he rejoiced in the . . . contemplation of God, and by this he was nourished." (St. John Damaskos, *The Orthodox Faith*, Book Two, Catholic University of America Press, Vol. 37, p. 232)

### 3. The Tree of Life

*Commentaries of the Fathers:*

#### 1. The Tree as a symbol of divine communion with God

"The tree of Life was either a tree possessing a Life-Giving force or a tree to be eaten of only by such as were worthy of life and not subject to death . . . for the sweetness of divine contemplation communicates a life uninterrupted by death to them that partake of it.." (John Damaskos, *Book Two*, p. 232)

#### 2. Naturally: it is through the Cross that our communion with God is restored

"The tree of life which was planted by God in Paradise prefigured this honorable Cross, for, since death came by a tree, it was necessary for life and the resurrection to be bestowed by a tree." (John Damaskos, *Book Two*, p. 353)

The Liturgical Tradition (Hymnography) ". . .He planted upon the earth the Life-Giving Tree of the Cross." (Katavasia: Elevation of the Cross, Ode 9)

"The Tree of true life was planted in the place of the skull, and upon it, You , the eternal King, worked salvation in the midst of the earth." (Great Vespers of the Exaltation of the Cross)

"Hail! Life-Giving Cross . . . door to Paradise" (Great Vespers of the Exaltation of the Cross)

On The Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross (Sept 14) at Vespers

Proverbs 3:11-18 is read: "She (Wisdom) is a tree of life to those who lay hold of her; those who hold her fast are called happy."

Book of Revelations:

Nourishment = sustaining power = blessed Life of the righteous as it was in the garden  
Rev 2:7 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.' Rev 22:2 through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

"St. Andrew considers the tree of life to signify Christ . . . through him also the twelve fruits i.e. the Apostles - give us the inexhaustible nourishment of the knowledge of God."

#### 4. The Tree of the knowledge of "good and evil"

A.) Adam & Eve in a developmental time

"God created Adam and Eve in an intermediate state: if they kept the commandment and not eaten they would be allowed to progress to the 'Tree of Life' (acquiring divinity) When they ate they gained knowledge of what they had lost by their disobedience." (St. Ephraim)]

B.) A Test of obedience "The tree of knowledge was for trial and proof and exercise of mans' obedience and disobedience: and hence it was named the tree of knowledge of good and evil. . .for he was destined, if he kept the command to be delivered from his natural relation to existing things and to be made one with God's estate, and to be immovably established in goodness, but if he transgressed and inclined rather to what was material, and tore his mind from God his fate was to be corruption and he was to become subject to passion instead of passionless and mortal instead of immortal... " (John Damaskos, Book Two, p. 231)

C.) Our Original State of Immortality by Grace "It follows that before eating they were in fact not subject to death; if this were not the case, he would have not imposed on them by way of penalty after eating." (John Chrysostom)

D.) The Forbidden Fruit an Image of sin.

"It was not offered as a gift to man. Not given, not blessed by God, it was food whose eating was condemned to be communion with itself alone, and not with God. It is the image of the world loved for itself, and eating it is the image of life understood as an end in itself." (Fr. Schmemmann, The Life of the World, p. 16)

E.) The "Helper fit for him"

"This is the helper fit for him, it means the person and through whom I discover myself as being made in the image and likeness of God and without whom I am not only not male I am not even human, I cannot be human as Adam alone." (Fr. Hopko, Lecture on "Theology of Gender")