

BIBLE



*for Young
Catholics*

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THE BOOK OF GENESIS

The first book of the Bible is called *Genesis*, which means “the Beginnings.” It contains stories that people told for centuries before anyone wrote them down. The stories in the first eleven chapters are about prehistoric times. (See glossary, p. 318, ff.) They don’t contain science or history. Instead, they tell us basic truths about God and people.

Genesis belongs to the *Pentateuch*. “Pentateuch” means “five books.” The books of the Pentateuch are the first five books of the Hebrew and Christian Bibles or Scriptures. Jewish people call the Pentateuch “the *Torah*,” the Law.

Genesis begins with a story of the creation of the world and everything in it, including human beings. Through this story of creation, God through the human writer tells us that God loves and cares for us members of the human race in a special way.

Genesis 1

In the beginning God created heaven and earth. The earth was wasteland, and the deep waters were covered by darkness. But the spirit of God was soaring above the waters. God said, “Let there be light.” And there was light. God saw that the light was good. Then God separated the light from the darkness. He called the light “day,” and he called the darkness “night.” Evening came and then morning. It was the first day.

God said, “Let there be a dome in the middle of the waters, and let it divide the waters from each other.” So God made the dome to divide the waters under the dome from the waters above it. And God called the dome “sky.” Evening came and then morning. It was the second day.

God said, “Let the waters under the sky come together in one place and let dry land show.” And that was what happened. God called the dry land “earth,”

and he called the gathered waters “the sea.” God saw that it was good. Then God said, “Let the earth produce grass and plants that make seeds—trees that produce their own kinds of fruit with seeds inside.” And that was what happened. God saw that it was good. Evening came and then morning. It was the third day.

God said, “Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate day from night, to mark the times for celebrations, to separate the days and years, and to shed light on the earth.” And that was what happened, God made the two great lights—the stronger light to rule over the day, and the weaker light to rule over the night—and the stars. God saw that it was good. Evening came and then morning. It was the fourth day.

God said, “Let the waters be filled with groups of living things, and let birds fly above the earth against the dome of the sky.” So God created huge sea-monsters



and different kinds of living things with which the waters are filled, as well as different kinds of flying birds. God saw that it was good. Then God blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful and multiply, so as to fill the waters of the seas, and let the birds multiply.” Evening came and then morning. It was the fifth day.

God said, “Let the earth produce different kinds of living things—cattle, reptiles and wild animals.” And that was what happened. God saw that it was good. Then God said, “Let us make human beings in our image, resembling us, and let them rule over the fish of the sea, the birds in the sky, the cattle, and all the earth.”

So God created human beings in the image of himself. He created them as male and female. Then God blessed them. He said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, so as to fill the earth and take care of it; and rule over the fish of the sea, the birds in the sky and everything alive that crawls on the ground.” God also said, “Look, I am giving you every seed-producing plant on the whole earth, and every tree on which there is seed-producing fruit. You will have these for food.” And that was what happened.

Then God looked at everything he had made, and it was very good. Evening came and then morning. It was the sixth day.

And so, the sky and earth, with everything in them, were finished. And on the seventh day God rested from all the work he had done.

The Second Story of Creation

Genesis 2

The second creation story tells some of the same truths that the first story does, but in different order.

When the Lord God made earth and heaven, there weren't any bushes or plants on the earth, because the Lord God hadn't sent rain. Instead, water flowed out of the ground.

The Lord God molded a man out of dust from the ground. Then he blew the breath of life into his nostrils. Adam ["man"] became alive.

Then the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, toward the east, and there he put Adam, whom he had made. And from the ground the Lord God made all sorts of beautiful trees grow. They produced delicious fruit. In the middle of the garden stood the tree of life, and also the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

The Lord God told Adam, "You may eat fruit from any tree in the garden. But you must not eat fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. On the day you eat that, you will certainly die."

Then the Lord God said, "It is not good for Adam to be alone; I will make the right partner for him." He made Adam very drowsy, so that he fell asleep. Then he took out one of Adam's ribs and built the rib into a woman. He brought her to Adam. And Adam said, "At last, this per-

son comes from my own bones and flesh. She will have the name Woman."

Adam and his wife were without clothes but they did not feel ashamed in front of each other.

Our Parents Turn from God

Genesis 3

The serpent, who was the most clever animal that the Lord God had made, said to the woman, "Maybe God told you, 'You must not eat fruit from the trees in the garden.'"

The woman said to the serpent, "We do eat fruit from every tree in the garden, except the tree in the middle of the garden. God has given this order: 'You shall not eat that tree's fruit—you shall not even touch it—or you will die.'"

The serpent answered the woman, "You will not die at all! Instead, God knows that the day you eat it your eyes will be opened and you will know good and evil."

Then the woman noticed that the tree's fruit looked delicious and beautiful. It would also help her to know more. So she took some of the fruit and ate it. She also gave some to her husband. He ate it too. Then they realized that they had no clothes on. So they sewed fig leaves together and made clothes for themselves.

This is the Bible's way of saying that something changed inside Adam and Eve after their sin. They lost much of their self-control.

As the day cooled, they heard the Lord God's voice ringing out in the garden. Adam and his wife hid among the trees,



avoiding the Lord. But the Lord God called out and asked, “Where are you?”

Adam answered, “I heard your voice and was afraid because I didn’t have any clothes on, so I hid.”

God replied, “Who told you that you needed clothes? Have you eaten fruit from the tree that I warned you about?”

Adam answered, “It was the woman you gave me to be my partner. She gave me fruit from the tree, and I ate it.”

Then the Lord God said to the woman, “Why did you do this?” The woman answered, “The serpent tricked me, so I ate it.”

The Lord God said to the serpent, “Since you have done this, as long as you live you shall crawl on your belly and swallow dust. Besides that, I will make you and the woman enemies of each other, and also your descendants and her descendant. He will strike you on the head and you will strike him on the heel.”

To the woman he said, “You will give birth to children in pain. Your husband will make life hard for you.”

And he said to Adam, “Since you have listened to your wife and have eaten fruit from the tree that I told you not to eat from, the ground will give you thorns and thistles. With sweat on your face you will eat your bread, until you return to the ground, since you were taken from it. You are dust, and you will become dust again.”

Adam gave his wife the name “Eve,” since she would become the mother of everyone alive.

The Lord God made clothes out of animal skins for Adam and his wife and dressed them. Then he sent them out of the garden of Eden.