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## Chapter 2

# *The Big Picture: From Adam to Christ*

**Purpose:** The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of the Bible and to mention briefly the principal actors, events, and themes in the drama of salvation history.

**Tips for Teachers:** The best way to introduce students to this chapter might be to go over the poem/song on pages 36-37 of the text. Having them put it to music and learning to sing it will help to fix the “big picture” of Bible history in their minds. You could have the students make a large jigsaw puzzle consisting of fourteen pieces, each representing an era covered by two lines of verse. They could write on each piece the names of key persons, places, and events during the era. Also, different groups in the class could act out or dramatize things that happened during the various periods of salvation history.

Students should also be familiar with the “Salvation Timeline” that appears on page 22 of the text in order to trace their Church’s ancestors and to see how God’s interventions in human history have impacted secular civilizations and events and been influenced by both.

The main goal of the chapter is to give readers an overall understanding of Bible history that does not overwhelm them, a synopsis that introduces them to the world of the Bible without confusing or discouraging them.

### **Topics for Discussion:**

1. Who is the most important person in salvation history and why?
2. What is the most important event in salvation history and why?
3. Why did God wait so long to send the Messiah?
4. Why did the people complain so much after all the great things God had done for them?
5. Give some examples of how God brought good out of evil.

6. After reading this chapter, how can you persuade others to take an interest in reading the Bible?

### Some Questions and Answers:

**Q. Are we required to accept every statement in the Bible as literally true?**

**A.** No. For instance, Catholics are not required to believe that the earth was created in six 24-hour days. This was the human author's way of making the people of the time understand that God created the world out of nothing. Whether it took him six days or six centuries is immaterial. As St. Augustine explained, the Bible tells us how to go to heaven, not how the heavens go.

It should be noted, furthermore, that the Church encourages scholars to investigate the Scriptures carefully to see what literary forms were used, what meaning the human authors intended, and what truths God wanted to communicate through their words. The teaching authority of the Church, of course, reserves the right to determine definitively whether the interpretations of scholars and theologians are correct and whether they are worthy of belief by the faithful.

**Q. Is it still okay to use the abbreviations B.C. and A.D. for the time periods before and after the birth of Jesus? I have seen other terms used.**

**A.** Yes, Catholics should still use B.C. ("Before Christ") and A.D. (*Anno Domini* or "in the year of our Lord") because it keeps Christ at the center of human history. One would not expect Jews to use such terms because they don't believe that Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah. So they use the terms B.C.E. ("Before the Common Era") and C.E. ("Common Era"). But followers of Christ ought to stick with abbreviations that give the Lord his proper place in human history.

**Q. What is the importance of covenants in Scripture?**

**A.** A covenant is a solemn agreement between God and human beings that involves mutual commitments or guarantees. Examples include God's covenants with Noah, Abraham, and Moses, all of which foreshadowed the new and everlasting covenant that Jesus sealed with his own blood on Calvary. These covenants showed how serious God was in trying to lead his

people to heaven, which the *Catechism* describes as “this perfect life with the Most Holy Trinity — this communion of life and love with the Trinity, with the Virgin Mary, the angels, and all the blessed” (n. 1024). Yet, at the same time, God made clear that it was not a one-way street, that he expected people to honor their commitments, just as he would honor his.

### Projects:

1. Put the poem/song on pages 36-37 to music and perform it for the class or for other groups in the school or in the parish.
2. Make a large jigsaw puzzle, with a piece for each period of salvation history introduced by two lines of verse. Put information about each period on the particular puzzle piece.
3. Make a poster showing the “Salvation Timeline” on page 22 and use it as a teaching tool and memorization device.
4. Read a chapter of the Bible every day.

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## Chapter 3

# *Creation, Fall and Flood: From Adam to Noah*

**Purpose:** The purpose of this chapter is to learn what happened in the beginning — from creation and the fall of Adam and Eve, to the Flood, Noah's Ark, and the Tower of Babel.

**Tips for Teachers:** The stories of creation and the fall of Adam and Eve are very familiar to many people, but these events at the beginning of time are also often misunderstood. It is important to distinguish between what is literally true and what is true from a religious perspective. The statements in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (cf. nn. 282-289 and 355-421) are must reading before presenting this material in class.

The truths that we are to believe about the first three chapters of Genesis are summarized on page 40 of the text, and some additional material can be found in the questions and answers on the next page.

Among the points to be emphasized when teaching this chapter are that the people and events mentioned are not mythical, that God is responsible for all of creation, that because he was made in the image of God, "man occupies a unique place in creation" (*Catechism*, n. 355), and that Adam and Eve prefigured all their descendants, including us, in their succumbing to pride, rebelling against God, and seeking to escape responsibility for their sinful actions.

Also to be stressed are the divine origins of sex and marriage, using the quotations from Genesis 1 and 2 and bringing in the "Theology of the Body," and also using the acronym SLIC to explain the Creator's plan for marriage. At a time in history when marriage is under attack by those who would change its definition to include various combinations of men and women, it is crucial to equip Catholics with the truth.

It is also vital to discuss the good news (the promise of a Redeemer) and the bad news (the effects of Original Sin) that followed the sin of Adam and Eve because the current state of the world can only be understood in light of what happened in

the Garden of Eden, when our first parents lost their original holiness, justice, and immortality.

The consequences of Original Sin can be illustrated in the story of Cain and Abel and in the widespread sinfulness that led to the Flood. On the positive side was the faith and obedience of Noah, and the foreshadowing of Baptism in the waters of the Flood and of the Church in the ark that brought Noah and his family to safety.

Note, too, that the sin of pride was not dormant for very long after Noah's time, but raised its ugly head in the attempt to construct a tower that would reach to heaven and make humans equal to God. Make sure to emphasize that we must strive continually to resist the ever-recurring temptation to be "like gods."

### Topics for Discussion:

1. Why did God create the world and human beings?
2. What is the significance of his "resting" after six days?
3. What special gifts did Adam and Eve possess before they succumbed to the temptation of Satan?
4. If everything that God created was good, where did sin and evil come from?
5. How does Original Sin affect us many years later?
6. What can we do to overcome our tendency toward sin?
7. What does Original Sin have to do with the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary?
8. What does it mean to be our brother's and sister's keeper?
9. What types do we find in the story of Noah?
10. Why was God unhappy with those who wanted to erect the Tower of Babel?

### Some Questions and Answers:

#### **Q. How are we made in God's image and likeness?**

**A.** Since God is a spirit, and has no body, we do not image him physically, but rather in a spiritual way in that we possess a rational soul that enables us to think, to choose, and to love. "Being in the image of God," says the *Catechism* (n. 357), "the human individual possesses the dignity of a person, who is not just something, but someone. He is capable of self-knowledge, of self-possession and of freely giving himself and entering into

communion with other persons. And he is called by grace to a covenant with his Creator, to offer him a response of faith and love that no other creature can give in his stead.”

**Q. Why should we be punished for the sin of Adam and Eve when we didn't do anything wrong?**

**A.** Suppose Adam and Eve had not sinned, would we be complaining about enjoying the rewards of their fidelity? Would we be asking why we should benefit from their good deeds since we had nothing to do with them? Not likely. We are only entitled to complain about inheriting the punishment given to our first parents if we are perfect and have never rebelled against God or failed to keep his Commandments. God tests us all the time, just as he tested Adam and Eve, and we often fail, so we have no business criticizing others for failing to do God's will.

We should instead concentrate on the good news, namely, that God didn't abandon us after the Fall, but sent his only Son to die for our sins so that one day we would be able to enjoy the wonderful paradise that Adam and Eve lost because of their sin. We should express gratitude to God for giving us chance after chance after chance to turn away from sin and follow him and then live in such a way that no descendants of ours will ever be able to look back and say that we let them down.

**Q. What does the Church teach about the evolution of humans from lower forms of life?**

**A.** The Catholic Church teaches that there are several scientific theories or explanations for the origins of the human race, but that no theory or explanation can be credible if it excludes God. God could have fashioned the universe through an evolutionary process, but whether he did it that way or by direct creation, he must still be acknowledged as its Maker and as the One who creates each human soul. The human soul cannot emerge from lifeless matter because it is spiritual.

While some scientists contend that the universe emerged via an unguided, purposeless, and random process of natural selection, others argue that such a process cannot account for the incredibly complex and diverse universe in which we live. The complexity and diversity of the world are evidence of intelligent design, and that means the existence of an Intelligent Designer, whom we call God.



At a general audience in November 2005, Pope Benedict XVI recalled a homily by St. Basil the Great and said that “when this Father from the fourth century says that some people, ‘deceived by the atheism they bear within them, imagined that the universe was deprived of any guidance and order, as though it were at the mercy of fate,’ his words are surprisingly relevant today.”

The Holy Father asked, “Who are these people today, who, deceived by atheism, hold onto and try to prove that it is scientific to think that everything is deprived of any guidance and order, as though it were at the mercy of fate? The Lord, through sacred Scripture, awakens the reasoning that is asleep within us and tells us: In the beginning was the creative Word – the Word that created everything, that created this intelligent design that is the universe — and also love.”

Those interested in compelling evidence of intelligent design should consult such books as *Darwin's Black Box* by Michael Behe, *Intelligent Design* by William Demski, and *Doubts About Darwin* by Thomas Woodward.

**Q. Where did the heirs of Cain and Abel come from?**

**A.** There are two possible explanations: (1) They married other human beings on earth who did not take their origin from Adam and Eve. (2) The descendants of Adam and Eve produced heirs by intermarrying among themselves.

There is a theological problem with the first explanation since the Church rejects the notion of polygenism, i.e., that there existed on earth after Adam persons who did not take their origin through natural generation from him, or that Adam represents a certain number of first parents.

In his encyclical *Humani Generis*, Pope Pius XII said that “it is in no way apparent how such an opinion can be reconciled with that which the sources of revealed truth and the documents of the teaching authority of the Church propose with regard to Original Sin, which proceeds from a sin actually committed by an individual (Adam) and which through generation is passed on to all and is in everyone as his own” (n. 37).

There is a moral problem with the second explanation since it involves intermarriage among family members. But in the beginning God permitted the marriage of brothers and sisters, nephews and nieces, for a limited time in order to propagate the human race. He protected the earliest humans from the prob-

lems usually associated with intermarriage within families and, when these special circumstances were no longer necessary, God forbade such intermarriage.

**Projects:**

1. List some of the religious truths found in chapters 1-3 of the Book of Genesis.
2. Clip three stories from the newspaper showing the effects today of Original Sin.
3. Stage a baptism ceremony in the classroom or arrange to attend a baptism.
4. Recall a time that you evaded responsibility for an action.
5. Perform a work of mercy illustrating that you are your brother's or sister's keeper.
6. Reenact a marriage ceremony and take notice of the promises made by the parties.
7. Write a newspaper story about the temptation in the Garden or about the Flood.
8. Read a chapter of the Bible every day.

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