

# The Mystery of Redemption and Christian Discipleship



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# The Mystery of Redemption

## CHAPTER 1



## In the Beginning

*Though Adam and Eve had disobeyed God, he did not abandon them; instead, he introduced a new and marvelous plan of redemption to restore the friendship they had lost.*



# The Mystery of Redemption

## CHAPTER 1

# In the Beginning

Man was created for greatness—for God himself; he was created to be filled by God. But his heart is too small for the greatness to which it is destined. It must be stretched. “By delaying [his gift], God strengthens our desire; through desire he enlarges our soul and by expanding it he increases its capacity [for receiving him].”<sup>1</sup>

Ultimately we want only one thing—“the blessed life,” the life which is simply life, simply “happiness.” In the final analysis, there is nothing else that we ask for in prayer. Our journey has no other goal—it is about this alone.<sup>2</sup>

## INTRODUCTION

The Scriptures had foretold this divine plan of salvation through the putting to death of “the righteous one, my Servant” as a mystery of universal redemption, that is, as the ransom that would free men from the slavery of sin.<sup>3</sup> (CCC 601)



In the context of theology, redemption refers to the atonement or deliverance from sins merited by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the Cross. The story of this redemption of the human race, which culminated on the Cross, began at the very dawn of creation.

The opening chapters of the Book of Genesis relate how man and woman were created out of God’s great love and were intended to share in his intimate friendship. They alone, among all of God’s visible creatures on earth, were created to know and love God so as to share in his own divine life. In the creation narrative, man and woman were made in God’s image and likeness,<sup>4</sup> thereby enjoying an exalted dignity and a special relationship with the Creator. In fact, the creation of Adam and Eve was the pinnacle of God’s visible creation. In this sense, the entire world was created to serve human people.

God entrusted his creation to the care of Adam and Eve. They lived in a paradise God had created for them, and they had dominion over all things. However, God gave one commandment to our first parents: not to eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.<sup>5</sup>

Adam and Eve’s disobedience of this one command disrupted the harmony of God’s creation and inflicted sin on humanity—a sin with consequences for our first parents and their descendants. This first, or Original, Sin introduced sin, suffering, and death into the world. From that moment, every descendant of Adam and Eve—every human person—would suffer from the effects of Original Sin and would need a Redeemer to reconcile him- or herself with God. (Later, this text will present how the Blessed Virgin Mary, by the merits of Christ, was preserved from all stain of Original Sin.)

Though Adam and Eve had disobeyed God, he did not abandon them; instead, he introduced a new and marvelous plan of redemption to restore the friendship they had lost. This first chapter will examine the creation of our first parents and their Fall so as to provide a background for understanding the necessity and importance of Christ’s work of redemption.





*The Expulsion from Paradise (detail) by Natoire.*  
 Every descendant of Adam and Eve—every human person—would suffer from the effects of Original Sin and would need a Redeemer to reconcile him- or herself with God.

### THIS CHAPTER WILL ADDRESS SEVERAL QUESTIONS:

- ❖ What is man's original vocation?
- ❖ What does the Church mean when she says Adam and Eve were created in an original state of holiness and justice?
- ❖ What is Original Sin?
- ❖ What are the consequences of Original Sin?
- ❖ How can a person overcome the effects of Original Sin?





*God Creating the Sun, the Moon and the Stars in the Firmament* by Jan Brueghel II.  
God is the First Cause and Creator of the universe both in its vast immensity and in its detailed components.

## THE CREATION OF THE WORLD

The Book of Genesis—its name coming from the Greek for *origin*—opens with an account of the creation of the world. The first verse reads, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”<sup>6</sup> Thus, the Sacred Author makes one thing abundantly clear: God is the First Cause and Creator of the universe both in its vast immensity and in its detailed components.

**“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth”:<sup>7</sup> three things are affirmed in these first words of Scripture: the eternal God gave a beginning to all that exists outside of himself; he alone is Creator (the verb “create”—Hebrew *bara*—always has God for its subject). The totality of what exists (expressed by the formula “the heavens and the earth”) depends on the One who gives it being. (CCC 290)**

The Sacred Author then describes how God created the world and everything in it. We are told, in metaphorical imagery, God created the universe in six days. The literary style employed in the creation narrative is not intended to shed light on the scientific intricacies of creation or the exact dates on which each part of the universe came into existence; rather, it teaches God created the world according to his divine plan and intention. Throughout the opening chapter of Genesis, the obvious protagonist is God, who displays his omnipotent power simply by speaking the universe into being.

One aid to understanding the creation narrative in Genesis is to note how creation is arranged in two sets of three days. According to Genesis 1:2, “The earth was without form and void.” In the first three days, God