

Salvation History

Student Guide

FOCUS

Vision for Life

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FOCUS

Vision for Life

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Welcome

Salvation history is God's saving love throughout history to bring about the salvation of His people that culminates in the Passion and Death of Jesus Christ on the cross.

Many times when we study the Bible, we read just bits and pieces of Scripture. The study you are about to participate in will take a look at Scripture from a broader view. Specifically, we will study the six different covenants that form the major moments of salvation history. By hitting the main threads of the storyline, we will be able to see not only how each of the individual pieces fit together, but also how the whole picture came to be.

God begins his covenant with Adam and Eve and then will slowly enlarge it from this one couple to larger proportions. See the table below:

<i>Covenants</i>					
Adam	Noah	Abram	Moses	David	Jesus
<i>Couple</i>	<i>Family</i>	<i>Tribe</i>	<i>Nation</i>	<i>Kingdom</i>	<i>Church</i>

For this study, you will need this book, a Bible (your small-group leader can recommend a translation if you don't have one), the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC), a notebook, and a pen. Throughout the study, there will be questions that will help you understand the passages that you are reading, questions that will show how the passages apply to Jesus Christ, and questions that will show how the passage can apply to your life. While understanding Scripture is a wonderful thing, we want you to be able to live out the story in your own life as well. This small-group setting is an excellent way to do this as you can share your own life and hear from others.

Chapter One Adam (Genesis 1-3)

Covenants

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Adam

Couple

Reading for this chapter: Genesis 1:1-2:3; 3:1-19

I. Summary

For many modern readers, the opening story of the Bible seems almost unbelievable. On Scripture's very first page, Genesis 1 presents an account of God creating the world in six days. While there are several ways to understand the first six days of creation, it is more important to not get caught up in how God created the world, but what this creation tells us about God, the world and mankind. (See Appendix for more of the Catholic understanding of creation).

In the beginning, God's creation is good. He brings order to the world and makes Adam and Eve in His own image and likeness. Here, God establishes His Covenant with man with this first couple.

While everything was so good in the beginning, the drama of the story emerges as a law is given to Adam and the serpent comes to tempt Adam and Eve. Genesis' depiction of Adam and Eve's falling into temptation reveals the nature of human beings and how we view God. Through this Original Sin, man's relationship to God is now broken and Genesis 3 will describe the effects of The Fall on Adam and Eve and the rest of humankind. Most importantly, God promises to bring about a solution to his sin and announces a future destruction of evil and the salvation of man. To dive deeper into this story, follow the discussion guide below.

II. Discussion Guide

In the Beginning...

The story of creation offers not simply a succession of six days, but the first three days are presented in striking parallel to the last three days. For example, in the first three days, God creates day and night (Day 1), sky and sea (Day 2), and land and vegetation (Day 3).

This corresponds exactly to what God creates in the next three days, when God will set up the rulers over day and night, over sky and sea, and over the land and vegetation. On Day 4, God creates the sun and moon, setting up the sun “to rule the day” and the moon “to rule the night” (corresponding to Day 1). On Day 5, God creates the birds and sea creatures, with the birds to fill the sky and the sea creatures to fill the waters in the sea (corresponding to Day 2). Finally, on Day 6, God creates the animals and man, who is given all the earth to rule and all vegetation to eat (corresponding to Day 3).

What else do the creation stories tell us about God?

God’s Gifts to Man

Read Genesis 1:26-29

In Genesis 1:26, God makes man in His image and likeness. What do you think this means?

How does being in the image and likeness of God affect the way we view Him?

Covenant: In Genesis 1:28, God blesses Adam and Eve. This blessing, along with Adam and Eve’s status as children made in God’s image, is a sign of the relationship and friendship between God and man. We will explore more about covenants in Chapter 2.

Read Genesis 2:15-17

The Fall

Read Genesis 3:1-7

In Genesis 3:1, the devil enters the story. Reflecting on the devil’s words to Eve in this verse, what do you think is the specific nature of his temptation? What is the devil trying to get Adam and Eve to do?

What is unusual about Eve’s response to the devil’s temptation in Genesis 3:2-3?

How is Eve’s reaction to God’s law much like our own today?

In light of all you have read in Genesis 1-3, do you think the devil is lying in Genesis 3:4-5? Explain.

The Effects of Sin on Humankind

Read Genesis 3:8-19

Can you name some of the negative consequences of Adam and Eve's decision to eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil?

Application to Jesus Christ

Both the curses and the prophecy in Genesis 3:15 shed light on the climax of Christ's mission in His passion and death. As the New Adam, Jesus enters the curses of Adam that have plagued the human family ever since the fall. Like Adam, Jesus, on the night before He died, enters a garden - the Garden of Gethsemane - where He is tested (Matthew 26:36-46). There, He takes on Adam's sweat as He experiences "sweat like drops of blood" falling from His face. On Good Friday, He symbolically takes on the curse of Adam's thorns as He is handed over to the Roman soldiers who place a crown of thorns on His head (Matthew 27:29). Finally, Jesus even takes on the curse of Adam's death as He goes to a tree - the wood of the cross - and dies on Calvary. And, like Adam, Jesus is placed in the ground where He is buried in a tomb. And it is precisely from the darkness of that tomb that He rises from the dead victoriously on Easter Sunday.

Reading for next time: Genesis 6:5-8; 9:1-17

Chapter Two Noah (Genesis 4-9)

Covenants

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Adam Noah
<i>Couple</i> <i>Family</i>

I. Summary

In the previous chapter, we saw how after Adam and Eve sinned in the garden, God told of His future triumph over the devil and His plan to restore the broken human family. Eventually, the woman would have a descendent who would crush the head of the serpent (Genesis 3:15). However, the battle between good and evil is not one that will be resolved overnight.

In the first generation after Adam and Eve, we see the tragic consequences of original sin as Cain murders his brother, Abel (Genesis 4:1-16). After Cain is killed, Adam and Eve bear a new son, Seth. These two lines of genealogies are compared in Scripture to show how sin ripples through generations.

In contrast to the beginning of creation where "God saw everything that he had made, and behold it was very good" (Genesis 1:31), the story of Noah begins with how "God saw the earth, and behold it was corrupt" (Genesis 6:12). God's creation is blemished and He chooses Noah to survive the oncoming flood.

When the flood arrives it not only brings punishment upon the earth, but also bringing about new life, a new hope, and a new creation. Noah is portrayed as a new Adam, the new head of the human family.

But just as the beginning of the human family was marred by Adam's sin in the Garden of Eden, so too the beginning of this new human family is tainted by Noah's sin in the vineyard.

The destruction, recreation, and fall of Noah's family set the stage for the rest of human history. Noah's children and their descendants will become great nations and populate the earth. God's desire, however, will continue to be to reunite His scattered children into a covenant that will endure forever.

II. Discussion Guide

Two Offerings

Read Genesis 4:1-7

Why do you think that the Lord had regard for Abel's offering and not for Cain's offering?

Can you think of a time in your life when you held back from giving God your best?

Two Lines

Cain's Line

- Lives in God's curse (4:11)
- Cain breaks fellowship with his family (4:16)
- Acts of polygamy (4:19), vengeance (4:24), violence, murder (4:23) and pride as they name a city after themselves (4:17)

Seth's Line

- Lives in God's blessing (5:2)
- His family "calls upon the name of the Lord" (4:26) - a Biblical phrase describing covenantal worship (1 Kings 18:24, Ps 116:4)
- Worships the one true God (4:26)

The State of the World

Read Genesis 6:5-13

Noah as a New Adam

Mark Twain once said, "History doesn't repeat itself, but it does rhyme." Throughout the Bible, people, places and events will seemingly rhyme. The more technical word for this occurrence is called typology. When something seems to mirror another in the Bible, it is called a type. For instance, in the last chapter, we saw how Jesus is a type of Adam as He mirrored many of the characteristics of Adam in the Garden. We will see this happen throughout the Bible. Below is an example as Noah is seen as a type of Adam. The flood not only brought punishment upon the earth, but also brought about new life, a new hope, and a new creation similar to the first creation accounts. This is especially seen in the character of Noah.

Read Genesis 9:1-2, 8-14, 18-29

Genesis 6-9 presents Noah as a "new Adam". In the passage just read, what are the aspects of Noah's life that are repeated from Adam's life (listed below)?

ADAM

1. Adam is blessed by God (Genesis 1:28)
2. Adam is the father of the entire human family and is called to be fruitful and multiply (Genesis 1:28)
3. Adam had dominion over all creation (Genesis 2:28)
4. Adam is called to till the soil (Genesis 2:15)
5. Adam sins by eating the fruit of the tree in a garden (Genesis 3:6)

NOAH

Covenant: After the flood, God renews His covenant with Noah, “Behold, I establish my covenant with you and your descendents after you.” Then, God gives Noah the rainbow as a sign of His covenant (Genesis 9:12-13). God makes His covenant, not only with Noah, but also with his entire family. We see that God’s covenant expands from one couple, Adam and Eve, to one family, Noah’s.

The Sins of Noah and Ham

Looking back to the text in Genesis, what appears to happen on the surface in Genesis 9:20-24?

Read Leviticus 20:11

So, what sin did Ham commit?

For more, including why Ham did this, please see Appendix.

Readings for next time: Genesis 12:1-20

Chapter Three Abraham I (Genesis 10-14)

Covenants

Covenants		
+		
Adam	Noah	Abram
<i>Couple</i>	<i>Family</i>	<i>Tribe</i>

I. Summary

In the tenth chapter of the Book of Genesis, we encounter the longest genealogy in the Bible so far: a long list of 70 names. Genesis 10 shows how the original family of Noah and his three sons gives rise to 70 descendents - who themselves eventually give rise to 70 different nations who populate the earth. Many of these nations, in fact, will play an important role in the drama that unfolds in the rest of the Bible.

The godly line of Shem, Noah’s son who was blessed, continues to follow the Lord all the way down to the 10th generation where we meet a man named Abram, later known as Abraham, who is dwelling in “Ur of the Chaldeans.” Here, salvation history takes a dramatic step forward as God calls this man to follow Him in faith. God makes three promises to Abram that provide an outline and table of contents for the rest of human history.

The rest of this section is an in-depth look at some of the events in Abram’s life. When a famine hits, Abram goes down to Egypt and has an encounter with Pharaoh. On returning to the Promised Land, Abram and his nephew, Lot, see great prosperity. So much so, that the land is not big enough for the both of them, and they go their separate ways. Yet, Abram sees Lot again when he has to rescue his nephew from four kings and their armies. Through these battles, Abram receives a blessing from the priest-king, Melchizedek. All of these events provide the foundation for Abram’s essential role in the story of God’s salvation to His people.

II. Discussion Guide

70 Nations

Genesis 10 opens up with a long list of descendents of Noah and his three sons. These descendents are responsible for the creation of 70 different nations, many of whom would become bitter enemies of the Jewish people. This genealogy of the family of Noah challenges the Jewish people to view these nations not with vengeance and violence, but ultimately with love and mercy and a desire for healing and restoration in the divided family of man.

Promises to Abram

Read Genesis 12:1-5a (skip the last sentence in v. 5)

What are the three promises that God makes to Abram?

These three promises set the foundation for the Old Testament, as they are fulfilled throughout the course of history. Let's take a closer look at these promises and examine their significance.

The first promise about Abram becoming a great nation points forward to the Exodus story when his descendants, the Israelites, will be delivered out of slavery in Egypt. By that time, they will have become a great people, but with no land of their own, they will not yet be a nation. It's only when Moses leads the Israelites to freedom and to the Promised Land that they finally can rule over themselves and become a great nation, thus fulfilling this first promise made to Abram.

The second promise about God giving Abram a great name will be fulfilled in the dynasty of King David. In the Scriptures, a "great name" refers not simply to personal fame, but to possessing a name that endures through the centuries

because it is associated with a lasting dynasty. For example, to reign as king in the Davidic kingdom, one had to be a descendant of David and possess David's royal family name. That's why when God first establishes the Davidic dynasty with David, He says to him, "I will make for you a great name" (2 Samuel 7:9) - thus showing how David's dynasty is the fulfillment of God's promise to Abram to make his family's "name great" (Genesis 12:2).

The third and final promise is that of a worldwide blessing, in which "all the families of the earth" will be blessed through Abram's descendants. In other words, God will use Abram's family as His instrument for bringing blessing to all the many nations on earth. This promise will be fulfilled in Jesus Christ, who, while living in the Promised Land as a descendant of David, will become the savior of the world, reuniting the divided families of the earth back into the one universal covenant family of God.

Life of Abram

After these promises, Abram goes to the land that God had promised him. But, when he arrives there, a famine immediately occurs and Abram is forced to go down to Egypt because of its severity.

Notes

Placing Ourselves in the Story

“For the word of God is *living* and *active*, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12).

How can we live out Scripture in our daily lives?

For sources on praying with Scripture, see the Appendix.

Read Genesis 12:10-16

What does Abram do in Egypt? Why does he do this?

Even though God just promised him great blessing, Abram is afraid that he will be killed when he goes to Egypt.

Read Genesis 13: 5, 8-13

What is peculiar about Lot’s decision to take the best land?

Saving Lot and a Blessing from Melchizedek

In Genesis 14, a war breaks out in the region when four kings and their armies overtake five kings and their armies. In the process, Lot is captured. The fact that Abram is willing to rescue him is impressive because Lot had just taken advantage of him by taking the best part of the land. This shows the depth of the covenant family bonds and Abram’s commitment to them. In his efforts to rescue Lot, Abram surprisingly ends up defeating the four kings, who defeated the five kings, who took over the three overlords, and thus, unwittingly emerges as the “king of kings” in the land, and becomes greatly enriched. After this, he visits Melchizedek.

Read Genesis 14:17-20

Melchizedek is a throne name, meaning “King of Righteousness,” which suggests that he was a king known for his covenant faithfulness. The last man in the Bible portrayed as receiving the blessing and exercising a royal and priestly authority was Noah, who would have been the father of all humanity after the flood. This blessing and royal priestly office would have been passed on to Noah’s first-born son, Shem, and down the generations through the subsequent first-born sons.

Therefore, when we read about Melchizedek reigning as a priest and king giving a blessing to Abram, this would seem to indicate that he would be one of the most important men in the world. He would have been a great faithful descendant of Noah through the line of Noah’s first-born son, Shem - the one through whom the blessing, the priesthood, and the kingship would have been passed on. In fact, it is the great blessing God gave to Adam, Noah, and Melchizedek that Abram receives as his family is about to become God’s instrument from bringing this blessing to the entire human race.

Readings for next time: Genesis 15:1-21; 22:1-19

Chapter Four Abraham II (Genesis 15-22)

Covenants

		+
Adam	Noah	Abram
<i>Couple</i>	<i>Family</i>	<i>Tribe</i>

I. Summary

In Genesis 12:1-3, we saw how God made three promises to Abram, later known as Abraham, that present a type of blueprint for the remainder of salvation history. Now, in Genesis 15-22, God will make His covenant with Abram in three different stages as each of the promises are described in greater detail and elevated to the level of a covenant.

In Genesis 15, Abram is wondering if God's promises will ever be fulfilled. How will his family become a great nation if he doesn't even have a single descendant to become his heir? God tests Abram and reassures him that he will have descendants and will possess the land that He promised him.

Abram's faith, while great, still needed to be perfected. In a moment of weakness, he heeds Sarai's advice and goes into her maid, an Egyptian woman named Hagar. She conceives a son who will be named Ishmael.

At the start of Genesis chapter 17, the Bible makes it clear that Abram fell, but we will also see that God's faithfulness does not waver. While the Lord will discipline Abram for his sinfulness, He renews His covenant with Abram.

Despite his faithfulness, Abraham still has one more important lesson of faith to learn. In Genesis 22, God will test Abraham's fatherhood in a way that actually reveals His own fatherly heart. Because of Abraham's faithfulness, God swears that He will bring blessing to the world through Abraham's descendants.

II. Discussion Guide

An Outline

The promises made to Abram in Genesis 12:1-3 are not only a great outline for the rest of the Old Testament, but also for Genesis 15-22, as each promise is raised to a covenant through the course of Abram's life.

Genesis 12:1-3	Promise of Land, Kingdom, and World Wide Blessing
Genesis 15	Land Covenant
Genesis 17	Kingdom Covenant
Genesis 22	World Wide Blessing Covenant

Seeing Stars

Read Genesis 15:1-6, 12-14

In this passage, what is Abram worried about?

What does God ask Abram to do?

In v. 12, the passage reads that, "the sun was going down." According to the story, this is the same day as when God asked Abram to look at the stars, what does this tell us about God's request to Abram? Why does He do this?

Covenant: In Genesis 15:17-18, God makes His covenant with Abraham and reassures him that his descendants will receive the Promised Land.

The Fall of Abram and the Renewal of the Covenant

In Genesis 16, Abram doubts God's promise to him about having descendants. With the encouragement of his wife Sarai, Abram commits adultery with his maidservant Hagar in order to bear a son. She has a son named Ishmael. God is not pleased with Abram's actions and distances himself from Abram for 13 years. In Genesis 17, we see how God reacts to this disobedience.

Read Genesis 17:1-11

What line stands out in 17:1, in light of Abram's sin in chapter 16?

Covenant: In Genesis 17:4-5, God renews His covenant with Abram and reassures and expands the promises He made in chapter 15 about his name, his descendants, and the land. In doing so, Abram's name changes to Abraham to signify that he will be a father of many nations and Sarai's name changes to Sarah to emphasize that she will be the mother of Abraham's children (17:15-16). God declares an everlasting covenant to Abraham as well.

As a sign of the covenant, what does God ask Abraham to do?

Why do you think he asks for this particular sign?

The Ultimate Test

Throughout our time with Abraham, we have seen him make huge leaps of faith and significant acts of doubt as well. In Genesis 21, Abraham finally has a descendant, his son, Isaac. But, God will test Abraham one more time in this dramatic passage.

Read Genesis 22:1-19

What does God tell Abraham after he is faithful?

Covenant: When God swears by Himself, He is making a covenant with Abraham about the worldwide blessing. Since, God does not have a higher being to swear to, He swears by Himself.

God continually challenges Abraham to trust His promises more and more throughout the story until his faith hits a breaking point with God's request to sacrifice his son Isaac. Is there anything in your life right now that God is bringing to a breaking point?

Application to Jesus Christ

To understand how Jesus fulfills this passage, it is important to look over the details of Genesis 22. In Genesis 22, God tells Abraham to take his only beloved son and offer him as a sacrifice on a mountain in Moriah in the city of Salem. This sacrifice is a burnt offering with the purpose of taking away sins. Abraham, Isaac and their servants travel to Moriah with a donkey. When they arrive at Moriah, Abraham and Isaac leave the servants and donkey behind, and they ascend the mountain with Isaac carrying the wood for the sacrifice on his shoulders. At the top of the mountain, Isaac asks his father, "Where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" Abraham replies, "God will provide Himself the lamb for a burnt offering." This last statement is significant because Abraham will name this place "The Lord will provide." Abraham then binds his son Isaac and lays his beloved son on the altar of wood preparing to offer him as a sacrifice. Isaac would have most likely done this voluntarily because of his age. He was old enough to carry wood up a mountain and knows the different types of sacrifices. After the angel called to him from heaven and intervened, Abraham looks up and sees a lamb - a male lamb (a ram) - caught with a thicket of thorns around his head. He takes that lamb and offers it as a sacrifice in the place of his son. Seeing God's provision in rescuing his son from death and providing a substitute sacrifice, Abraham names the place "The Lord will provide." Then God swears that He will bring blessing to the world through Abraham's descendants.

We see that God does, in fact, provide in the fullness of time on Mount Moriah, now known as Jerusalem. There is an old rabbinic tradition that it is called Jerusalem from the Hebrew word for provide “jira” and the city of Salem. Salem originally meant “peace,” so Jerusalem means “provide peace.” How does God provide peace? Well, God sends His only beloved son, Jesus Christ, to this very same place for His Passion and Death that provides peace for the world.

Like the son of Abraham, the Son of God goes up to this city riding on a donkey on Palm Sunday and then, on Good Friday, ascends the mountain carrying the wood of sacrifice on His shoulders just like Isaac carried the wood up the mountain. He is then laid on the wood of the sacrifice, as the true Lamb of God, with His sacred head surrounded with thorns just as the ancient ram of promise was caught in a thicket on Moriah. Indeed, we see that Jesus Christ is the lamb that God promised to provide in order to bring about the world-wide blessing sworn to Abraham on this very mountain many centuries before. A chart below helps outline the comparisons.

Sacrifice of Isaac	Sacrifice of Jesus
Sacrifice to take away sins	Sacrifice to take away sins
Abraham’s only son	God’s only son
Rides donkey to the sacrifice	Rides donkey into Jerusalem to die
Isaac carries wood to the top	Jesus carries the cross made of wood
Sacrificed ram caught in thorns	Jesus crowned with thorns
Agrees to be sacrificed	Agrees to be sacrificed
Mt. Moriah in the city of Salem	In Jerusalem (“Jira” Salem)
God will provide lamb in the future	Jesus called “The Lamb of God”

Readings for next time: Genesis 37:1-36; 39:1-23

Chapter Five Jacob and Joseph (Genesis 23-50)

I. Summary

On Mount Moriah, Abraham receives Isaac back with the promise that through his descendents, the world will be reunited to God. As we watch Isaac’s descendents, we see God continue to father His children through their faithfulness and even through their failings.

Isaac marries a woman named Rebekah, who gives birth to twin sons named Jacob and Esau. Strife between these brothers marks their relationship from the beginning. Some years later, the brothers’ rivalry reaches its climax. As Isaac nears his death, he is now prepared to bestow his fatherly blessing upon his first-born, Esau. But, Jacob tricks his father into giving him the blessing instead.

Because of Esau’s hatred for his brother, Jacob flees from the land of Canaan to the home of his uncle, Laban, in Haran. There, he meets Laban’s two daughters, Leah and Rachel. Jacob immediately falls in love with Rachel and agrees to serve Laban for seven years in return for her hand in marriage. But after seven years, rather than receiving Rachel, Laban gives him Leah. He then serves another seven years to marry Rachel.

Between Leah and Rachel and both of their maidservants, Jacob has 12 sons. These twelve sons of their father Jacob are destined to become the 12 patriarchs of the nation Israel. However, the Bible will show that these 12 sons, while brothers, are also rivals, and competition will arise in their lives and in the history of their descendants.

The youngest son is Joseph, and his father Jacob favors him the most. The brothers' envy leads them to sell Joseph into slavery. Joseph eventually winds up in an Egyptian prison.

Through interpreting the dream of the Pharaoh about an oncoming famine, Joseph is not only released from prison, but is also placed as second in command over all of Egypt. Just as Joseph predicted, a famine strikes the land, and the people from all the earth come to Joseph in Egypt to buy grain, including Joseph's own family.

To purchase the grain, they have to go through Joseph, but they don't recognize him. After a series of tricks and tests, Joseph's brothers demonstrate self-sacrifice, and Joseph finally reveals his identity. Reunited, they send for their father and the rest of the family to rejoin them in Egypt.

II. Discussion Guide

The Favored Son

Read Genesis 37:1-11

If you were one of Joseph's brothers, how do you think you would have reacted?

Blessing among Strife

Read Genesis 39:1-2; 7-15; 19-23

Fraternal Correction

In an amazing turn of event, Joseph is able to interpret a dream of Pharaoh about an impending famine. Because of Joseph's knowledge and wisdom, Pharaoh makes Joseph second in command over the land of Egypt at the age of 30.

Read Genesis 42:1-9

Why does Jacob keep Benjamin at home? What does this say about Jacob's opinion about what happened to Joseph?

Now, read Genesis 42:29-36

Why does Joseph put money in their sacks? Because of Simeon's absence, their request for Benjamin and money in their sacks, what does Jacob think they are doing?

Read Genesis 44:4-13

How does Joseph trick his brothers? Why are they so dismayed that the cup is in Benjamin's bag?

Read Genesis 44:30-45:3

What is so moving about the fact that Judah is willing to become a slave in Benjamin's place?

Application to Jesus Christ

In the story of Joseph, the Bible addresses one of the most perplexing problems that confronts human persons: the problem of suffering. How can an all-powerful, loving God allow bad things to happen to good people? The story of Joseph reveals that God is so powerful that he can use the evils of this world to bring about even greater good. As Joseph explains to his own brothers, "You meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive." (Genesis 50:21). God took the many evils inflicted upon Joseph and used it to bring about a greater good - to bring Joseph to power in Egypt so that he could save his family and indeed all the earth from starvation.

In this sense, Joseph prefigures Jesus Christ. God took the greatest evil in history - the crucifixion of Christ - and used it to bring about the greatest good, the salvation of the human family.

Readings for next time: Exodus 3:1-22; 12:3-13

Chapter Six Exodus I (Exodus 1-23)

Covenants

			+
Adam	Noah	Abram	Moses
<i>Couple</i>	<i>Family</i>	<i>Tribe</i>	<i>Nation</i>

I. Summary

The Book of Exodus is meant to be read not as a separate work, but as a continuation of the Book of Genesis. God's covenant people continue to abide in God's presence and His blessing. Though removed from their homeland, the family of Jacob-Israel have become numerous and influential and seem to prosper exceedingly in the land of Egypt.

Things dramatically change for the Israelites when a new king takes the throne in Egypt "who did not know Joseph" (Exodus 1:8). This lack of "knowing" represents a fundamental shift in Israel's history. The term "to know" (*yadah*), in Hebrew, does not mean to simply be acquainted with someone, but to be in covenant relationship with that person. That this new Pharaoh does not "know" Joseph means he is not in covenant with Joseph's family.

This serves as the immediate context of the Exodus and leads us to the introduction of Moses - the next major leader God raises up in salvation history.

While Moses is tending his flock in the wilderness, he notices a miraculous burning bush. As he approaches, God speaks to him and calls him to lead the people out of Egypt.

After some initial reluctance, Moses goes with the power of God to confront Pharaoh asking him to let the Israelites go. Pharaoh refuses, thus initiating the first

of the 10 plagues that will fall upon Egypt. The plagues serve as a punishment, making life for the Egyptians miserable. And, upon closer examination, they also reveal the God of Israel as the one true God over all the earth, as Yahweh exercises divine judgment over the many false gods of the Egyptians.

During the plagues, Moses is fighting a battle on two fronts. He is trying to get Pharaoh to release the people, but he also is trying to get the people to want to leave Egypt. The people do not trust Moses and they have grown to love the culture and religion of Egypt as well. God is not only trying to get Israel out of Egypt, but is also trying to get Egypt out of Israel.

Through the Passover, God makes the Israelites decide between Him and Egypt. For those who choose Him, they are miraculously delivered out of Egypt. But, the struggle to trust in God will continue in the wilderness outside of Egypt.

II. Discussion Guide

The Call of Moses

Read Exodus 3:1-12, 18

What is Moses' reaction to God's call?

God tells Moses that He will bring the Israelites out of Egypt, but what does he ask Moses to do?

The Plagues of Egypt

Read Exodus 5:1-4

What is Pharaoh's response to Moses and Moses' brother Aaron? How does this relate to the theme of knowing in the summary?

Read Exodus 8:25-27

Passover

Read Exodus 12:3-13

What does God ask the Israelites to do?

What happens to those who do this?

In light of what we read in the last section and with the knowledge that the Egyptians considered the lamb to be a god, why do you think God asks the Israelites to sacrifice a lamb? What purpose does this service?

Application to Jesus Christ

Many elements of the Passover meal found here in Exodus are fulfilled during Jesus' last Passover meal, often called *The Last Supper*. In Exodus, the Passover Lamb was slain and its blood was shed and placed on their doorpost so that the first-born of every house would live. This meal took place just before their Exodus and would lead to their covenant with God on Mt. Sinai (see next chapter). Finally, the Passover meal was to be remembered throughout Israel's history as "a perpetual ordinance for yourselves and your descendants" (Exodus 12:24). Similarly, during the Last Supper, a celebration of the Passover meal, Jesus takes the place of the Lamb. John the Baptist foreshadowed this as he announced Jesus as "The Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world" (John 1:29). Just as the blood of the lamb spares the Israelites, Jesus' sacrifice saves the people of God through "the blood of the lamb" (Revelation 7:14). Jesus' Passover meal takes place before His "exodus," and he instructs his disciples to do this Passover meal in remembrance of Him.

Leaving Egypt

Read Exodus 14:1-5, 10-12, 21-25

What is the Israelites' reaction to the oncoming Egyptians?

Why do you think God took them on this route to the Red Sea, when they could have easily gone another way to the Promised Land?

Even though the people are surrounded day and night by miraculous manifestations, life on pilgrimage with God is no picnic. In their hurried escape, the people have fled Egypt without adequate provisions for food or water - a significant concern for a group of a million people traveling in the desert. Nevertheless, God continues to care for their daily needs, miraculously providing them with daily bread (manna) for food and water from the rock (Exodus 16-17). He finally leads them to Mount Sinai, where He will give them the 10 Commandments and establish them as His covenant people, and promises to make them a great kingdom - "a holy nation, a kingdom of priests" (Exodus 19:6).

Readings for next time: Exodus 32:1-6; Numbers 13:25-14:4

Chapter Seven Exodus II (Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy)

Covenants

			+
Adam	Noah	Abram	Moses
<i>Couple</i>	<i>Family</i>	<i>Tribe</i>	<i>Nation</i>

I. Summary

In Exodus 24, God re-establishes his covenant with Israelites by having a meal with Moses and the leaders of Israel. At the end of the meal, God's glory-cloud descends on Mount Sinai, and Moses enters its midst, where he remains for 40 days and 40 nights, unseen by the Israelites at the base of the mountain (Exodus 24:18). The Israelites, newly affirmed faithfulness is tested by the absence of their anointed leader.

How well do they pass this test? In their fear and uncertainty, their hearts return to Egypt as they fall back into idolatry and build a Golden Calf, reminiscent of the Egyptian god, Apis.

This causes a radical rupture in Israel's relationship with God. The remainder of the Pentateuch (first five books of the Bible) is primarily about of the fundamental reorganization of the Israelite people and their worship, as a result of this act of covenant treachery.

After this, the Israelites find themselves on the verge of entering the Promised Land within just a little more than one year after they left Egypt. However, Israel is not prepared to enter it.

Twelve representatives scout out the land of Canaan for 40 days to see if the inhabitants are strong or weak and to see whether the land is good or bad. The land is good, flowing with milk and honey, but because of the people in the land

and their fortified cities, 10 of the spies and the people of Israel despair and ask not to go into the land.

In a severe example of God's justice, He grants the people what they desire. Only the two faithful spies who trusted in God's plan will be permitted to receive God's promise (Numbers 14:30). The rest of this unfaithful generation of Israelites will be disinherited from the land and will have to wander in the desert for 40 years until they die.

Coming to the edge of the Promised Land once again, Israel now dwells in the plains of Moab and begins a lethal association with the Moabite pagans that will lead to sexual immorality and the worship of a pagan god.

Because of this downfall, the Israelites are given a second law that is recorded in the book of Deuteronomy. This second law serves as a protective wall around Israel, separating them from the influence of the pagan nations. Also, Deuteronomy serves as a tutor to instruct this wayward people to recognize their weakness and cry out for God's mercy. The ongoing drama of the rest of the Old Testament will be to see if they can follow this law and trust in God.

II. Discussion Guide

God's Covenant with Moses

Read Exodus 24:3-18

Covenant: Chapter 24 describes God's covenant with his people. Specifically, God makes a covenant with the Israelites concerning the Promised Land that was promised to Abraham with the stipulation that Israel cannot make any covenants with other nations or gods (Exodus 23:31-33).

Overall, the covenant ritual in chapter 24 has some interesting aspects. What aspects are especially of note?

The Golden Calf

Read Exodus 32:1-6

Why do you think the people do this?

The Promised Land Is Near

Read Numbers 13:25-14:4

Because of their disobedience, no one in this generation over the age of 20 will see the Promised Land besides Joshua and Caleb. The people will wander for 40 years as a punishment for what they did.

The Promised Land as Promised

In the book of Deuteronomy, the Israelites find themselves on the cusp of the Promised Land again. Because of their past failings, God gives them a second law (in addition to the first law - the 10 commandments). Deuteronomy, which means "second law", lays out in very specific terms what God expects of Israel.

If the Israelites obey, they will receive God's blessing in the Promised Land (Deuteronomy 28:1-14). But, if they fail to keep the law, they will be cursed, and the culmination of these curses involves Israel being driven from the land in exile (Deuteronomy 28:15-68).

He foretells how Israel will experience many of the blessings, but inevitably, they will break the covenant, the curses will fall upon them, they will lose the land, and be scattered among the nations. Yet, it is precisely in this condition of suffering while in exile that they will turn their hearts to God, and God will rescue them, bringing them back to the land.

Read Deuteronomy 30:1-6

While Moses foretells how the Israelites will have to go through exile because of their disobedience, what will the final result be? Will this be better or worse than before the disobedience?

Readings for next time: Read Joshua 6:1-5; 15-20; Judges 2:8-12; 2 Samuel 7:8-17

Chapter Eight Joshua-David (Joshua, Judges, 1 Samuel, and 2 Samuel 1-7)

Covenants

Covenants				
Adam	Noah	Abram	Moses	David
<i>Couple</i>	<i>Family</i>	<i>Tribe</i>	<i>Nation</i>	<i>Kingdom</i>

I. Summary

At the end of Israel's 40-year journey in the wilderness, Moses dies, and the leadership of Israel passes on to Joshua, who had been his faithful servant throughout the desert wanderings.

By means of a miracle reminiscent of the parting of the Red Sea, Joshua parts the Jordan River and the Israelites pass over into the Promised Land on dry ground. Their first move is to head to the city of Jericho. This heavily fortified city ends up falling not through weapons, but through worship, as the Levites lead the nation in a procession around Jericho.

Israel's conquest of the Promised Land continues in the Book of Judges. The book opens up with a dramatic shift in Israel's history. For two generations, the people have flourished under the godly leadership of Moses and Joshua. But after Joshua's death, Israel languishes without strong leaders who will challenge them to walk in the Lord's ways. This is the beginning of a catastrophic cycle that will enslave Israel for more than 300 years. Seven times in the Book of Judges Israel falls into the pattern of sin, slavery, supplication, and salvation.

Beaten down and exhausted by this futile cycle, the people turn to the last of the judges, Samuel, and ask him for a king. However, they don't ask for a king who would be a spiritual leader like Moses and Joshua. Rather, they want a king like the other pagan nations. God concedes and gives them King Saul. In the end,

he disobeys God's commands and eventually the Lord rejects him as the King of Israel (1 Samuel 15).

While Saul still reigns as king, the Lord has Samuel anoint a new king, David, who is nothing like his predecessor. When he is a mere child he brings food and supplies to his brothers. He is surprised to find the Israelites in a standoff with the Philistines and discovers the champion of the Philistines, Goliath, challenged any Israelite to engage him in battle. But for 40 days, no Israelite stepped forward. David confidently trusts that the Lord will overcome this enemy and goes out and defeats Goliath.

Under King David, Israel captures the city of Jerusalem, and the nation experiences rest from their enemies about them. God makes a covenant with David and promises him that he will have an everlasting dynasty - a kingdom that will always be ruled by someone in his line of descendants. As king of this new dynasty, David realizes that Israel is positioned to fulfill its ultimate calling: to be a source of blessing for every family on earth - the third and final promise given to Abraham.

II. Discussion Guide

Joshua and Jericho

Read Joshua 6:1-5; 15-20

Judges

Read Judges 2:8-12

What problem continues to plague Israel?

Read Judges 2:16-19

The Pattern

1. Sin: First, the people forget the Lord and fall into sin by serving foreign gods.
2. Slavery: Second, their punishment is to be enslaved by foreign nations who oppress them.
3. Supplication: In their distress, they cry out to God in supplication.
4. Salvation: God sends them a judge to save them from their enemies.

Saul and David

Read 1 Samuel 17:1-12, 32-38

What makes David different than Saul?

David and the Kingdom

Read 2 Samuel 7:8-17

What does God promise to David about his enemies?

What does He promise him about David's heir?

Covenant: Through this promise, God is showing David that He is fulfilling the promises of Abraham that He made long ago.

First, God promised that He would make Abraham into a great nation (2 Samuel 12:2) and give them the whole land of Canaan as their permanent possession (17:7-8).

Second, God promised to make Abraham's "name great" (12:2). As noted in chapter 3 of this study, the significance of this promise was that a great name would be a dynasty as the name would continue on down throughout history and become great. This is fulfilled here in God's covenant to David and specifically referred to in v. 9: "And I will make you famous like the great ones of the earth."

Read 2 Samuel 7:18-20

The significance of this passage is often missed because of awkward translations. The last clause in verse 19 should be translated: "Thou hast shown me law for humanity" (2 Samuel 7:19). The Hebrew here literally is torah adam - which means, law for man. Yet, why would David say he was given law for all mankind? This is in contrast to Moses who was given a law for Israel. As king of this new dynasty, David realizes that Israel is positioned to fulfill its ultimate calling: to be a source of blessing for every family on earth - the third and final promise given to Abraham. That's why David speaks of a law not just for Israel. He doesn't say torah Israel. But as the shepherd of the dynasty that is meant to evangelize the nations, David realizes that the law entrusted to him is meant to be shared with all the humanity. Hence, he speaks of torah adam - law for man.

In 2 Samuel 7, God begins the fulfillment of Abraham's last promise as David realizes that the law entrusted to him is supposed to be a blessing to all nations. Eventually, this will be fulfilled with the Church when Jesus tells his disciples to make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:18-20).

This proposition causes great controversy. If you say that Christianity is a great religion for some people, few people get upset. But, as soon as you assert that Christianity is meant for all people, people begin to get upset. Why do you think this is?

Readings for next time: 1 Kings 12:1-11; Daniel 2:1, 25-45

Chapter Nine David-Daniel (2 Samuel, 1 Kings and Daniel)

I. Summary

“It was the best of times. It was the worst of times.” This line from Charles Dickens’ *The Tale of Two Cities* appropriately describes the rise and fall of the Davidic monarchy. On one hand, the combined reigns of David and Solomon represent a high point in Israel’s history. On the other hand, the cancerous effects of sin still lurk in the background of these men’s lives and end up undermining God’s covenantal kingdom.

After David, Solomon carried out his father’s desires to build the Lord a house. However, while Solomon appeared to love and serve God, he began to use his wisdom and authority to serve his own interests rather than serving God and his people.

In the next generation, the kingdom becomes divided. In the north, 10 tribes gather to form the newly aligned Kingdom called Israel. In the south, the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, along with the priestly Levites form the Kingdom of Judah.

The northern kingdom, Israel, begins a downward spiral of sin and rebellion against God that will culminate in the nation’s destruction. In 722 B.C., the Assyrians invade the region and drive the northern tribes even further away from their Davidic king and the covenant with God.

The southern kingdom of Judah does not fare much better. Because of their failure to uphold the covenant, the Babylonians attack Jerusalem and take the tribes into exile.

In Babylon, the Jewish people receive some consolation from the prophets who remind them that God has not abandoned them and that one day, God will rescue them from their enemies and provide a definitive restoration of the Davidic kingdom. One such prophecy comes from a Jewish man who grew up in the Babylonian exile: the prophet Daniel. It is the prophesy of Daniel and the exile of Judah that will set the stage for Jesus to restore the kingdom of God on Earth.

II. Discussion Guide

King Solomon

King Solomon starts off as a noble and faithful king who takes Israel to the highest point in its history. When God offers to bless him in any way he can choose, Solomon asks for the gift of wisdom. At first, Solomon uses his wisdom and authority for good, but then he uses it for his own selfish desires.

Read 1 Kings 11:1-8; 10:14-15; 10:26

Compare the passages below:

Deuteronomy 17	King Solomon in 1 Kings
"And he shall not multiply wives for himself, lest his heart turn away" (v. 17).	"Now King Solomon loved many foreign women...his wives turned away his heart after other gods (11:1).
"Only he must not multiply horses for himself" (v.16).	"And Solomon gathered together chariots and horsemen; he had fourteen hundred chariots and twelve thousand horsemen (10:26).
"Nor shall he greatly multiply for himself silver and gold" (v. 17).	"Now the weight of gold that came to Solomon in one year was 666 talents of gold" (10:14). "And the king made silver as common in Jerusalem as stone" (10:27).

Why is power and wisdom such a gift and such a temptation? What can we do to prevent misusing them?

Application to Jesus Christ

In looking at Solomon, we can see several comparisons to Jesus Christ. He is the son of David and king of Israel. He is known for his divine wisdom and for being the temple builder. His kingdom has international influence. All this foreshadows Jesus, who is the ultimate son of David and the King who fulfills all the promises made to David's dynasty. Like Solomon, Jesus is known for his great wisdom and is the one who builds the new temple in His body (John 2). And it is Christ's kingdom that ultimately fulfills Israel's worldwide mission, extending God's reign over all the Earth.

Queen Mother

Read 1 Kings 2: 13-21

How does Solomon treat his mother?

Read Luke 1:39-45

What are the connections between Mary in the New Testament and the Queen Mother in the Old Testament?

The Great Divide**Read 1 Kings 12:1-11**

	Northern Kingdom	Southern Kingdom
Name	Israel, Israelites	Judah, Jews
Tribes	10 tribes of the North	Judah and Benjamin
Priesthood	New pagan priesthood	Levites
Exiled	722 BC by Assyrians	586 BC by Babylonians

Exile and Prophets**Read Daniel 2:31-40**

Daniel explains that the four parts of the statue represent a series of four pagan kingdoms that will dominate the region and oppress the Jews. The head of gold represents the current world power, Babylon (Daniel 2:38). The next three parts of the statue represent three future kingdoms. Historically, the region was ruled by three other powers: the Persians who ruled from 527 to 330 B.C.; the Greeks, who ruled over the land from 300 to 63 B.C.; and the Roman empire, who ruled the Jews from 63 B.C. to the time of Christ and beyond. Daniel foresees a new kingdom coming after these four kingdoms: "And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed - It shall break to pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever" (Daniel 2:44).

In this way, Daniel lays out the course of Judah from the time of Babylonian captivity to the time of Jesus Christ. He prophesies that 490 years will pass before this new kingdom will come about (Daniel 9:20-24) and prepares the people to receive a new king who will bring about a new kingdom.

God prepares the Jewish people to receive their king and start a new kingdom, although they must wait quite some time. What is something that you believe God is preparing you for and how can you prepare for it while you wait?

Readings for next time: Read Matthew 16: 13-20; 1 Corinthians 15:17-22; Luke 22:14-22

Chapter Ten

Jesus

(The Gospels and Acts of the Apostles)

Covenants

Adam	Noah	Abram	Moses	David	+ Jesus
<i>Couple</i>	<i>Family</i>	<i>Tribe</i>	<i>Nation</i>	<i>Kingdom</i>	<i>Church</i>

I. Summary

It's difficult to imagine the sense of despair and hope experienced by many Jews in the first century. For nearly 500 years, God's people had been without a Davidic king, oppressed by a succession of foreign powers, and exiles in their own land. Now, the Roman Empire represents the latest and fiercest of the totalitarian regimes exploiting the Jews. Persecuted by the unprecedented force of Roman violence, taxation, and idolatry, the Jewish people were on many levels suffering like never before.

Nevertheless, against the backdrop of this pain and misery, their expectation and desire for a restored kingdom and a messianic savior were reaching a fevered pitch. It is in the midst of this drama that Jesus begins His ministry to restore the kingdom of God on earth.

At the heart of Jesus' public ministry, we do not find merely abstract principles about ethics or salvation. As King, Jesus' mission is to restore the kingdom of David. As Jesus begins to gather the lost sheep of Israel, we are reminded that the promises given to Abraham and David were not just for one tribe or nation, but for all peoples.

While many Jews expected the Messiah to restore the kingdom through a violent takeover of their pagan occupiers, Jesus does something remarkably different. He chooses not to overthrow the kingdom through force, but through His death

on the cross. Through the Last Supper and His death on the cross, Jesus not only establishes a New Covenant, but fulfills the covenants made in the Old Testament.

Before Jesus ascends into heaven, He tells His disciples to continue His mission. Through the book of Acts we witness what Jesus continues to do and teach through His Church. What Jesus did in history in His physical body, He continues to do this through history in His mystical body, the Church, as we wait for the coming of the heavenly kingdom.

II. Discussion Guide

The Kingdom in the Gospel of Matthew

Jesus' mission to restore the kingdom of David is apparent throughout the Gospels, especially in the Gospel of Matthew. Everywhere He goes, He preaches "the gospel of the kingdom" (Matthew 4:23), which attracts people from all around the land (4:25). His famous sermon on the mount begins and ends with a message about the kingdom (5-7). Through His powerful healings, He is recognized as "the son of David," the true king of the Jews. Much of His preaching describes this kingdom as a field (13:1-30), a mustard seed (13: 31-32), a treasure (13:44), and a pearl of great price (13:45-46). Clearly, Jesus is rebuilding the kingdom of David.

At the turning point of His public ministry, Jesus calls His disciples to recognize that the central issue of this kingdom is His very identity.

Read Matthew 16:13-20

What do you think is the most important aspect of this passage?

In light of the entire story we have been looking at in the Old Testament, why is this so important?

Covenants Old and New

Read Luke 22:14-22

How was the first Passover fulfilled at the Last Supper?

Note: If you are interested in how Jesus fulfills all of the covenants of the Old Testament, see a summary in the Appendix.

The Cross

We all know that Jesus died on the cross for our sins, but have you ever wondered how His sacrifice gives us salvation? The answer to this question can be found through our understanding of covenants. Jesus fulfills all of the covenants through the cross, but He also ends these covenants through His death. This is a key to our salvation.

In the covenants, God establishes His relationship with man. But, through sin, man does not keep his end of the covenant. The penalty for Israel breaking its covenant with God was exile and then eventually death (Deuteronomy 27-30). The only thing that can annul a covenant is death (see Romans 3:23-26 and Romans 7:1-6). Jesus takes on the consequence of the broken covenants, death, and then, by dying on the cross, also ends the old covenants. But, Jesus' death is not the end of this explanation.

The Resurrection

Read 1 Corinthians 15:17-22

How are we made alive?

Read Romans 6:3-4, 11

How do we become like Christ?

The Acts of the Apostles

Just as Jesus had proclaimed His kingdom in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the gentiles, so now He commands his disciples to do the same. He tells them, "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8). This single verse serves as a table of contents for the evangelical mission of the early Church, as outlined in Acts of the Apostles, as the Apostles follow this outline in their evangelization.

By the end of the Book of Acts, this universal kingdom, which began with the mustard seed of life of Jesus, is now firmly rooted in Rome under the leadership of Peter and Paul and extends its branches throughout the known world, through the apostles and those men they appointed to succeed them to gather all nations into the one, holy, Catholic, and apostolic Church.

Not the End of the Story

Read Revelation 21:1-4

Our Part to Play

What are some ways that you have been able to live out the story of Salvation History in your life? In other words, what are some key ways that you were able to apply this study to your own life?

What are some concrete ways we can share the story of Salvation History with others?

Appendix

Chapter 1

Corresponds to “Summary”

As mentioned in the chapter, the Catholic Church allows numerous interpretations of the creation story in Genesis as long as they uphold certain truths of the faith. For example, if one believes in evolution, it must be recognized that God is the initiator of this process, having originally created the entire universe “out of nothing” (CCC, 296). Furthermore, it must be held that the human person - body and soul - is not the result of a random evolutionary process. As the Catechism explains, every human soul is “created immediately by God - it is not ‘produced’ by the parents” (CCC, 363; *Humani Generis*, D 3896). Also, it must be held that all human persons descend “from one ancestor,” thus establishing a common dignity shared by all human persons (CCC, 360).

Other questions about Genesis 1-3

How come humans live to such old ages in the Bible?

One could look at this from multiple angles. First, from science, we know that the idea of aging and dying at a particular age is due to corrupt DNA. In other words, there are signs that humans were made to live longer. With this view in mind, it is possible that originally humans were made to live and did live longer. However, one could also argue that the writer is using a method used in many other ancient writings that exaggerate the age of people in the past to denote their importance.

Who is the Author of Genesis?

Traditionally, Moses is seen as the author of the Torah (the first five books of the Bible that include Genesis), with the possibility that he could have employed other authors to help write parts of the Torah.

Corresponds to Genesis 3:2-3

Therefore, the first temptation - and every one since - ultimately is an attack on God's loving Fatherhood. We don't trust that His law is there for our good. And our modern culture has fallen into this temptation perhaps more than any other. When religion is perceived as "just a bunch of rules," and morality is viewed as the Church "trying to tell others what to do with their lives," it is a sign that we no longer see God's law as coming from the heart of a loving Father who wants what is best for us. Like Adam and Eve, we have bought into the serpent's lie about God.

Rules without relationship lead to rebellion.

Morality is not just rules for right and wrong, but precepts and wisdom for navigating the challenges of life. This is the tragedy of the moral relativism that has permeated our society. Instead of being seen as something that helps us, the moral law is perceived as an obstacle standing in the way of what we want to do. In a relativistic culture that says each person should decide for himself what is right or wrong, we doubt that God's law is really a trustworthy pathway to happiness. Like Adam and Eve, we think we might know a better way. Thus, when we reject God's moral law for our own preferences, we are ultimately rejecting the Father's loving care for us. In a culture like ours, a rediscovery of God's fatherly goodness is needed now more than ever.

Quotes about Genesis 3:4-5

"Man, tempted by the devil, let his trust in his Creator die in his heart and, abusing his freedom, disobeyed God's command. This is what man's first sin consisted of. All subsequent sin would be disobedience toward God and lack of trust in His goodness" (CCC, 397).

"The father-son paradigm is ageless. It is older than human history. The 'rays of fatherhood' meet a first resistance in the obscure but real fact of original sin. This is truly the key for interpreting reality - Original sin attempts, then, to abolish fatherhood, destroying its rays which permeate the created world, placing in doubt the truth about God who is Love and leaving man only with a sense of a master-slave relationship." (John Paul II, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, pp. 227-8).

Chapter 2

Regarding Genesis 6:1-4

The flood narrative begins with the mentioning of how "the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were fair; and they took to wife such of them as they chose" (Genesis 6:1). Immediately after this, God plans to punish humanity by sending a flood and says "My spirit shall not abide in man forever, for he is flesh, but his days shall be a hundred and twenty years" (6:3). What led God to this conclusion? In order to answer this question we must take a deeper look at the context and ask, "Who were the sons of God? Who were the daughters of men? And why would God be opposed to their marrying?"

As we try to answer this, the first place to look is in the passages that immediately precede. In the two genealogies, we saw two families with radically different values and beliefs. Cain's family, centered on man, has turned its back on God and lives outside of covenant. Seth's family, however, is a godly family, still in covenant with the Lord and described as God's sons (cf. Genesis 5:3). So, in light of these two genealogies, Genesis 6:1 begins to make more sense. The "sons of God" would refer to the godly family of Seth and the "daughters of men" would refer to the disgraced descendants of Cain. The text thus seems to indicate that these sons who were raised in covenant with God were attracted to women who were not in covenant with God and married them. As the faithful line of Seth is weakened by the introduction of godless spouses, the covenant family is weakened, and God is grieved. This is the context for understanding the flood.

St. Augustine (*City of God*), St. John Chrysostom (*Homilies on Genesis*), St. Cyril of Alexandria, and other Church Fathers also interpret the passage in this way.

Regarding Genesis 9:20-27

After reading this conclusion, one might wonder: But why would Ham want to have incest with his mother? And why would he choose the moment of his father's vulnerability while he was intoxicated?

This may have been a sin of passion, but it almost certainly was also an act of rebellion against the authority of his father, Noah, and his older brother, Shem.

Let's consider the historical context. We've already seen how after the flood, God gave Noah the mission of ruling over the entire world. In ancient Judaism, this authority would

be destined to be passed on to his eldest son, Shem. Ham, however is the youngest son and will not be the successor of Noah - unless he were to usurp the power through deceit and violence. That appears to be what is happening in this scene. As strange as it may seem to the modern reader, this idea of usurping authority by having sexual relations with the rulers' wife is not unprecedented in the ancient world. When foreign invaders toppled other kingdoms, they typically took the previous king's wives for their own, showing that they had authority over everything the king had once possessed, even the king's own wives. We see this even in the history of Israel when King David's son, Absalom, tries to usurp the throne from his father. After Absalom takes over the capital city of Jerusalem, one of his first acts is to take David's concubines and have sexual relations with them in public - demonstrating the principle "he who has the queen is the true king" (2 Samuel 16:22).

The explanation of incest also makes sense of Noah's response. Ham's son is cursed by Noah, not for anything he had done, but for his father's action. The context would indicate that Canaan was the fruit of this incestuous rebellious union, and he will suffer the consequences of his father's sin just as Cain's children bore the effects of a curse when he repudiated the covenant.

Chapter 3

Books for Praying with Scripture

- *Praying Scripture for a Change: An Introduction to Lectio Divina* by Dr. Tim Gray
- *The New Rosary in Scripture: Biblical Insights for Praying the 20 Mysteries* by Dr. Edward Sri

Chapter 5

Why God allows evil to exist in the world is a very difficult question and one that many people struggle with. Some of it has to do with the free will that God allows humans to have and the effect this has on other people. Some of it has to do with the Fall and how not only are humans fallen, but all of creation is and is longing for renewal (Romans 8:20). St. Thomas Aquinas says that God is so great that although He allows evil to happen, He can bring forth good even from evil. In the end, these answers help, but the existence of evil in the world will always be difficult for us to swallow. Our attitude must be a confident trust in God that He has a plan through it all despite our lack of understanding. For more, see CCC 309-314.

Chapter 6

On Egyptian Gods

"Historians and archaeologists have pointed out how the Egyptians were known for their many and varied religious practices. It was common for them to worship what they believed to be gods under the form of many creatures, including animals such as cattle, sheep, and goats (cf. J.J. Davis, "Moses and the gods of Egypt," p. 121-123). The Book of Exodus tells us later in the narrative that these are the very animals that Israel is called to sacrifice to Yahweh. By killing these animals that the Egyptians perceived to be sacred, the Israelites would incite a riot and put their own lives at risk. For this reason, they needed to go a three days' journey away from the Egyptians to offer these animals in sacrifice in the solitude of the desert.

This explains why God wanted the Israelites to sacrifice in the wilderness, but why did God want them to sacrifice these animals in the first place? After 400 years of living in the land of Egypt, the Israelites had not only been living with the Egyptians, but also living like them. By sacrificing these animals to Yahweh, Israel was not only acknowledging Him as the one true God, but they were also renouncing any possible belief that these animals were in fact deities. The Biblical narrative gives evidence that Egyptian idolatry had crept into the lives of Israelites. This religious ceremony will provide the opportunity for Israel to repent and realign itself to the covenant Yahweh established with their forefathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob."

Chapter 7

On the Covenant

Let's take a closer look at the structure of this covenant ceremony, for we will discover that each of the ritual words and actions are rich in meaning, telling us about the kind of relationship God wants with Israel and also telling us about the kind of relationship He wants to have with us.

First, Moses proclaims "all the words of the Lord and all the ordinances" to the people, and the people give a response of faith and commitment, "All the words which the Lord has spoken we will do" (Exodus 24:3).

Second, Moses leads the people in a sacrificial rite that takes on three parts: sacrificial offering of animals, a blood ritual, and a communion meal.

Sacrificial Offering: As we saw in the last chapter, sacrificing animals like oxen, which were worshipped as gods in Egypt, would symbolize renunciation of those pagan deities and a renewal of their loyalty to Yahweh as the one true God. Thus, this sacrifice would be a ritual enactment of the first commandment: "I am the Lord your God...You shall not have any other strange gods before me."

Blood Ritual: Next, the blood from the animals was gathered into basins, with half of it sprinkled on the altar as an offering to God, and the other half sprinkled on the people. This blood ritual also had great significance. For the ancient Jews, blood symbolized life, and the sharing of blood symbolized the sharing of life. Therefore, with half the blood being offered to God on the altar and half the blood being poured on the people, it would symbolize a shared life between God and Israel, becoming one in covenant family.

Communion Meal: Finally, the consummation of the ceremony is a communion meal ritually shared between the leaders of Israel and Yahweh Himself. "Then Moses and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the leaders of Israel went up, and they saw the God of Israel...they beheld God, and ate and drank" (Exodus 24:9, 11). To share a meal with someone in ancient Israel signifies covenant solidarity and family bonds being formed and deepened. The fact that Israelite leaders eat this covenant meal in God's presence symbolizes the profound relationship God forges with His people. Through this ritual, they have become God's children.

Chapter 10

Jesus' kingdom will be established in a paradoxical manner. Despite His many Jewish followers, the rulers of the Jews reject Him, handing Him over to the Romans to be crucified. However, it is through His death on that cross and His resurrection on the third day that Jesus saves His people and establishes the never-ending kingdom. How does this occur? Consider how all the covenants we have been studying - from Adam, Noah and Abraham to Moses and David - converge on the cross and find their fulfillment in Christ's atoning sacrifice.

Jesus, as a **new Adam**, finds Himself in a garden (the Garden of Gethsemane) tested by the devil. And He proves to be a faithful Son, whereas Adam was unfaithful. He bore Adam's curses - sweat, thorns, and death (Genesis 3:18-19) - by sweating blood, being crowned with thorns, and dying on the cross (see chapter one).

Like **Noah**, Jesus is a faithful son of Adam in the midst of a corrupt world. Like Noah, He offers salvation to His household, the family of God. Noah's salvation came through the Ark, which the Church Fathers saw as prefiguring the Church. Just as God used the Ark to save Noah's family from the flood, so does Christ save all humanity from sin through His Church (see CCC, 845) (see chapter two).

Like **Abraham's faithful son Isaac**, Jesus ascends the ancient Mount Moriah, now in the city of Jerusalem, on a donkey and bears the wood of sacrifice to Mount Calvary. Yet, in the end, Abraham was not required to sacrifice his son that day. The Lord provided another victim: a male lamb caught with its head in a thicket of thorns. Now Jesus Christ shows Himself to be the true Lamb of God, caught with His head in a thicket of thorns and offers Himself on the wood of sacrifice for the salvation of the world (see chapter four).

Like **Moses**, who began the exodus from Egypt with the Passover, Jesus begins His passion - the work of the new exodus - with the Passover meal at the Last Supper. And just as the first Passover lambs were slain to spare the first born Israelites in Egypt, so Jesus is sacrificed on the cross as the new Passover lamb, offering redemption to all humanity. And as the Passover was not just a sacrifice, but a meal, all who participate in this new Passover are called to consume the flesh of the sacrificial lamb, Jesus Christ, in the Eucharist (John 6; 1 Corinthians 5:6-7) (see chapter six).

And most of all, in a paradoxical way, Jesus' passion and death reveals His royal status as the true **Davidic king** (see chapter eight). In his scourging, He is crowned, but with thorns. He is vested with a royal robe, but in mockery. He is hailed as a king by the soldiers, but in jest. His royal elevation is not to a throne, but to a cross with a simple sign above His head saying, "Jesus the Nazorean, King of the Jews." Though the Romans intended all this to mock Jesus' royal claims, the Gospel writers highlight how they unwittingly reveal the truth: Jesus is, in fact, the true king of Kings. And while His crucifixion is seen by the world to be His moment of defeat, it is actually His moment of triumph over sin and death. His execution is actually His enthronement as He establishes His kingdom, the Church.

