

CREATION, FALL AND REDEMPTION



ST JOHN'S LENT COURSE 2014

For as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ
(1 Corinthians 15:22)

Welcome

Welcome to the St John's 2014 Lent Course.

Jesus's sacrifice on the cross on Good Friday is seen by some as the reversal of what happened in the Garden of Eden, when Adam and Eve through their disobedience were estranged from God and cast out into the wilderness. On the Cross, it is believed that by his obedience Jesus restored the bond between God and humankind back. It is an understanding beautifully expressed in the hymn Praise to the Holiest in the height.

For this year's course then, we will be exploring the account in Genesis of the events that led to Adam and Eve being banished from the Garden. We will look at the first account of creation, how the world and life was created in six days, how what God created was created good. We will think about what that means to us and in particular what our responsibilities are to that creation. We will look at the second creation story (for there are two) and how this differs from the first, particularly in respect of the relationship of men to women. We will look at the temptation story, and think about what it means to be tempted ourselves. We will consider what was sinful about what Adam and Eve did and whether God's reaction was appropriate. And then in the final week we will think about how Jesus restored the broken relationship between God and humankind on the cross.

Course Outline

Week 1: The First Creation Story

Week 2: The Second Creation Story

Week 3: The Fall

Week 4: Redemption

Course Prayer

O Jesus, Master Carpenter of Nazareth, who on the Cross with wood and nails hast wrought man's full salvation, wield well thy tools in this thy workshop, that we, who come to thee rough-hewn, may be fashioned to a truer beauty by thy hand; for thy name and glory's sake. Amen.

Week 1 - The First Creation Story

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

And God said, 'Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.' So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome. And it was so. God called the dome Sky. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

And God said, 'Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.' And it was so. God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. Then God said, 'Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it.' And it was so. The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed of every kind, and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

And God said, 'Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years, and let them be lights in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth.' And it was so. God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. God set them in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth, to rule

over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

And God said, 'Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky.' So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, of every kind, with which the waters swarm, and every winged bird of every kind. And God saw that it was good. God blessed them, saying, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.' And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.

And God said, 'Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind.' And it was so. God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind, and the cattle of every kind, and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind. And God saw that it was good.

Then God said, 'Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.'

So God created humankind in his image, in the image of

God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.' God said, 'See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.' And it was so. God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their multitude. And on the seventh day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation.

These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created.

Discussion Questions

1. How do you understand this account of creation? Do you think this is literally what happened? Or is it a poetic interpretation? Or something else?

2. Is scientific knowledge incompatible with understanding God as creator of the universe?
3. What was God's intention in creation?
4. Does this account of creation rule out life on other planets?
5. What do you understand by the word "good" in relation to God's creation?
6. What do you understand by God creating humankind "in his own image"?
7. Is it significant that, in this account, both male and female were created at the same time and both were made in God's own image?
8. What do you understand by God giving humankind dominion over the every living thing on the planet? What responsibilities does this bring?
9. Is everything that exists or lives on Earth there purely for the benefit of humankind? If not, where do we stand in relation to God's creation?
10. Is there any significance to God resting on the seventh day? If so, what do you think it might be?

Psalm 8

O Lord, our governor,
how exalted is your name in all the world!

Out of the mouths of infants and children.
Your majesty is praised above the heavens,

you have set up a stronghold against your adversaries,
to quell the enemy and the avenger.

When I consider the heavens, the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars that you have set in their
courses;

what are mortals that you should be mindful of them,
mere human beings, that you should seek them out?

Yet you have made them a little lower than the angels,
you adorn them with glory and honour.

You have given them mastery over the works of your
hands;

and put all things under their feet,
all sheep and oxen,
even the wild beasts of the field,
the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea,
and whatsoever walks in the paths of the seas.

O Lord, our governor,
how exalted is your name in all the world!

Week 2 - The Second Creation Story

In the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens, when no plant of the field was yet in the earth and no herb of the field had yet sprung up—for the LORD God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was no one to till the ground; but a stream would rise from the earth, and water the whole face of the ground—

then the LORD God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being. And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he had formed. Out of the ground the LORD God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

A river flows out of Eden to water the garden, and from there it divides and becomes four branches. The name of the first is Pishon; it is the one that flows around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold; and the gold of that land is good; bdellium and onyx stone are there. The name of the second river is Gihon; it is the one that flows around the whole land of Cush. The name of the third river is Tigris, which flows east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, 'You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.'

Then the LORD God said, 'It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner.' So out of the ground the LORD God formed every animal

of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every animal of the field; but for the man there was not found a helper as his partner. So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said,
`This at last is bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
this one shall be called Woman,
for out of Man this one was taken.'

Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed.

Discussion Questions

1. How does this account of creation differ from the one we looked at last week?
2. Why do you think there might be more than one account of creation in the Bible?
3. Is it significant that the order of creation is different in this version? That man was created before all living creatures?

4. Is it significant that in this story man was created before woman? Does this mean that they are not equals?
5. How do you understand God's reasons for creating woman?
6. Do you agree that "it is not good that man should be alone"?
7. What do you think this account of creation has to say about same-sex relationships, if anything?
8. Why do you think that God did not want Adam and Eve to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil?
9. What does it mean to us to be God's creation? Read through Psalm 139 (below). How do you understand this? Is this your experience?

Psalm 139:1-16

O LORD, you have searched me and known me.
You know when I sit down and when I rise up;
you discern my thoughts from far away.
You search out my path and my lying down,
and are acquainted with all my ways.
Even before a word is on my tongue,
O LORD, you know it completely.
You hem me in, behind and before,
and lay your hand upon me.
Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;
it is so high that I cannot attain it.

Where can I go from your spirit?

Or where can I flee from your presence?

If I ascend to heaven, you are there;

if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there.

If I take the wings of the morning

and settle at the farthest limits of the sea,
even there your hand shall lead me,

and your right hand shall hold me fast.

If I say, 'Surely the darkness shall cover me,

and the light around me become night',

even the darkness is not dark to you;

the night is as bright as the day,

for darkness is as light to you.

For it was you who formed my inward parts;

you knit me together in my mother's womb.

I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.

Wonderful are your works;

that I know very well.

My frame was not hidden from you,

when I was being made in secret,

intricately woven in the depths of the earth.

Your eyes beheld my unformed substance.

In your book were written

all the days that were formed for me,

when none of them as yet existed.

Week 3 - The Fall

Now the serpent was more crafty than any other wild animal that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, 'Did God say, "You shall not eat from any tree in the garden"?' The woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden; but God said, "You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden, nor shall you touch it, or you shall die."' But the serpent said to the woman, 'You will not die; for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.' So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves.

They heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, 'Where are you?' He said, 'I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.' He said, 'Who told you that you were naked? Have you

eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?' The man said, 'The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit from the tree, and I ate.'

Then the LORD God said to the woman, 'What is this that you have done?' The woman said, 'The serpent tricked me, and I ate.' The LORD God said to the serpent,

'Because you have done this,
 cursed are you among all animals
 and among all wild creatures;
upon your belly you shall go,
 and dust you shall eat
 all the days of your life.
I will put enmity between you and the woman,
 and between your offspring and hers;
he will strike your head,
 and you will strike his heel.'

To the woman he said,
'I will greatly increase your pangs in childbearing;
 in pain you shall bring forth children,
yet your desire shall be for your husband,
 and he shall rule over you.'

And to the man he said,
'Because you have listened to the voice of your wife,
 and have eaten of the tree
about which I commanded you,
 "You shall not eat of it",
cursed is the ground because of you;
 in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life;
thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you;

and you shall eat the plants of the field.
By the sweat of your face
you shall eat bread
until you return to the ground,
for out of it you were taken;
you are dust,
and to dust you shall return.'

The man named his wife Eve, because she was the mother of all who live. And the LORD God made garments of skins for the man and for his wife, and clothed them.

Then the LORD God said, 'See, the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil; and now, he might reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever'— therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from which he was taken. He drove out the man; and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim, and a sword flaming and turning to guard the way to the tree of life.

Discussion questions

1. Who do you think was to blame for the eating of the forbidden fruit? The woman, the serpent, the man, or God?
2. Is this the way the Church has interpreted it historically?

3. Who do you think the serpent was and why was he in the garden? Was he not part of God's creation?
4. Was God's reaction proportionate to the offence?
5. How do we cope with temptation in our lives? Can we think of times when being told not to do something sometimes make it seem more attractive?
6. What do you think Adam and Eve's real sin was?
7. What does sin do to our relationship with God?
8. Adam's sin is sometimes referred to as "original sin". What do we mean by this and do you agree with the idea?
9. Does "original sin" let us off the hook for our own sins?

Adam lay ybounden (Anon)

Adam lay ybounden,
 Bounden in a bond;
 Four thousand winter
 Thought he not too long.
 And all was for an apple,
 An apple that he took,
 As clerkës finden written
 In their book.
 Nor had one apple taken been,
 The apple taken been,
 Then had never Our Lady
 A-been heaven's queen.
 Blessed be the time
 That apple taken was.

Therefore we may singen
Deo gratias!

Week 4 - Redemption

Romans 5:12-21

Therefore just as one man's trespass led to condemnation for all, so one man's act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all. For just as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous

Philippians 2:6-11

Though he was in the form of God, he did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross. Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Colossians 1:15-20

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.

Discussion questions:

1. Do you find the analogy of Jesus as a second Adam a helpful one?
2. What do you think was the key thing that Jesus did do restore the broken link between God and humankind?
3. What does that mean for us – does it still matter if we sin? If so, why?
4. What does it mean to be obedient to God? Why is this important?
5. Do you have a rule of life that you try to keep to? If so what is it?

6. Are there times when you have felt abandoned by God? How did it make you feel?
7. What would you say to someone in the same position?
8. Are there times when you have abandoned God? What made you do that? And what helped you recover your faith?

“Praise to the Holiest in the height” by J H Newman

Praise to the Holiest in the height,
and in the depth be praise;
in all his words most wonderful,
most sure in all his ways!

O loving wisdom of our God!
When all was sin and shame,
a second Adam to the fight
and to the rescue came.

O wisest love! that flesh and blood,
which did in Adam fail,
should strive afresh against the foe,
should strive, and should prevail;

and that the highest gift of grace
should flesh and blood refine:
God's presence and his very self,

and essence all-divine.

O generous love! that he who smote
in man for man the foe,
the double agony in Man
for man should undergo.

And in the garden secretly,
and on the cross on high,
should teach his brethren, and inspire
to suffer and to die.

Praise to the Holiest in the height,
and in the depth be praise;
in all his words most wonderful,
most sure in all his ways!