

Lecture 2: Salvation History

- I. Myth v. Biblical Language – Creation/Evolution
 - a. Genesis 1-11 is not a myth
 - i. Different than other creation accounts; Genesis is the antidote to pagan myths (pantheism, polytheism...) where there is no separation between creation and the gods
 - ii. Unique in that creation is NOT God
 - iii. Concerned with reality: Genesis uses figurative language in order to highlight the theological meaning of creation and the fall (this does not reduce the story to mere metaphor, but rather shows the full depth of the metaphysical meaning of creation)
 - iv. Answers the question of why God created, not how
 - 1. to give his goodness, glory (CCC 293)
 - 2. “the ultimate end of the whole divine economy is the entry of God’s creatures into the perfect unity of the Blessed Trinity” (CCC 260)
 - 3. creation is in the “state of journeying” toward its ultimate perfection which is attained by divine providence, CCC302
 - b. Creation and Evolution
 - i. The story of Genesis is not about how God created, but the what and why of creation
 - ii. Employs poetic language
 - 1. a poet and a botanist both describe a tree, and both descriptions are true, but very different
 - iii. What we must believe about creation (CCC 302-308)
 - 1. God is the First Cause of everything
 - 2. the human body may have evolved, the human soul did not
 - a. it was directly created and infused by God
 - b. one moment you do not have a person, the next you do – not a gradual process (monkey, monkey, monkey, Man!)
 - 3. all humanity comes from a first set of parents
 - a. the doctrine of original sin requires this
 - iv. “Image and Likeness”
 - 1. Gen 1:26; CCC 705
 - 2. spiritual faculties: intellect and will
- II. Understanding the Old Testament: Main Theme of Historical Books
 - a. The story of the Old Testament is the history of God’s search for man
 - b. The cycle of salvation history:
 - i. God creates us to participate in His life and love
 - ii. We are sinful, and this sin causes suffering
 - iii. God offers us His mercy
 - c. Freedom and happiness is found in obedience to God
 - 1. if we use our freedom according to the will of God then we become more free, more happy, more fulfilled

- 2. if we abuse our freedom we become more enslaved to our passions, suffer from broken relationships
 - d. It is important to know this history
 - i. Without it we can't know ourselves and our story
 - ii. Those who are ignorant of history are doomed to repeat it
 - iii. Happiness is found in trust in God's plan
- III. Adam and Eve
 - a. Seven days of creation
 - i. Seven is the biblical number for covenant, so the seven days signifies God initiating a covenant with creation (Ex. 31:12-17; Jer 33:19-23)
 - ii. The first three days give structure to the formless world, the last three days fill the structure (solves the problem of emptiness)
 - iii. The theme of the land will be central to the OT – the loss of the land will mean exile
 - b. The Fall
 - i. The Garden was filled with goodness
 - ii. Satan tempted Adam and Eve by sowing doubt about God's goodness
 - 1. Satan suggests God limits our freedom (portrays God as a jealous tyrant) – happiness is to be completely autonomous from God
 - 2. loss of trust in God's goodness (CCC 397-398)
 - iii. Original Sin
 - 1. a condition everyone (except Mary and Jesus) are born into
 - 2. concupiscence (inclination to sin); darkened intellect, weakened will, unruly passions (CCC 418)
 - 3. like a river polluted at its origin, all subsequent men and women suffer from the first sin of Adam and Eve
 - c. Cain and Abel
 - i. (Gen 4) Cain, the older brother, is envious of his younger brother's acceptance before God and murders him
 - ii. The theme of good against evil matures in the next generation
 - iii. Evil seeks to destroy the good (different than simply doing something bad)
 - d. Protoevangelion (Gen 3:15)
- IV. Noah
 - a. (Gen 4-5) Seth's descendents (Seth was the righteous descendent of Adam) sinned by marrying Cain's lineage.
 - i. This brought sin back into all of the righteous
 - b. The Flood was God's response to the spread of unrighteousness
 - c. Through Noah (a righteous man) God established a new covenant
 - i. God remained faithful and established a new creation (the new creation, as the first creation, rose from the chaotic waters of "the deep" – Gen 1:2; 7:11);

- ii. The number seven also plays an important part in both stories. Noah was commanded to take seven pairs of clean animals (Gen 7:2); “After seven days the waters of the flood came upon the earth” (7:10); “And in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, the ark came to rest upon the mountain” (8:4); Noah “waited another seven days, and again he sent forth the dove out of the ark...then he waited another seven days, and sent forth the dove” (8:10-12). All of these sevens are meaningful in that they represent a continuing of the original covenant established in creation.
 - d. Theme: man sins and becomes unrighteous, man is punished, God intervenes and re-establishes his covenant
- V. Abraham (Genesis 12-24)
- a. Another round of sin and punishment with the Tower of Babel; ten generations later God again renews his promise/love through Abraham
 - b. God calls Abraham to leave everything behind (to trust God)
 - c. Gen 12:1-3, Three promises given to Abraham (a roadmap for the rest of salvation history)
 - i. God will give him land (this is fulfilled when Moses leads the Nation of Israel into the Promised Land)
 - ii. God will make his name great (this is fulfilled when David establishes the Dynasty and Kingdom of Israel)
 - iii. God will bless all the families of the world through his offspring (this is fulfilled in Jesus)
 - iv. This is the key to understanding salvation history
 - 1. all of God’s people are scattered and shattered, and God’s blessing will come through the line of Abraham
 - d. God promised Abraham a multitude of descendants
 - i. “descendents as many as the stars” (but it was daytime – trust required) Gen 15
 - ii. The problem is that Abraham has no heir, and Sarah is too old to have children
 - iii. Abraham fails in trust and breaks the covenant
 - 1. takes matters into his own hands by having a child, Ishmael, by his female slave, Hagar
 - 2. fails to trust God, turns to immoral means to get what he wants
 - 3. the result is suffering: Ishmael and Hagar must be expelled (Israel v. Islam)
 - 4. circumcision is a sign of Abraham’s sin
 - a. Hagar was Egyptian and the Egyptians circumcised – the penalty fit the crime
 - e. Sarah bears Abraham Isaac
 - f. God puts Abraham to the ultimate test of trust, abandonment, obedience by asking him to sacrifice Isaac
 - i. Isaac prefigures Christ (carrying the wood...)

- g. Relevance of the story to our own lives
 - i. Abraham is chosen to bring about God's family
 - ii. Abraham fails in faith
 - iii. But grows in his faith thanks to God's mercy
- VI. Moses and the Exodus
 - a. The people of Israel live in Egypt and give in to Egyptian idolatry
 - i. The spiritual slavery of idolatry led to physical slavery
 - b. The king increased his persecution by demanding the newly born males to be killed
 - i. Moses saved (like Noah in the flood)
 - c. Plagues
 - i. Indictment on the Israelites worship of Egyptian gods
 - ii. The frogs (the god *hec*) were worshipped as being able to come from the dead – stepping on a frog would have been deicide
 - d. Passover (the most important event of the Old Testament), three elements:
 - i. Sacrifice of the lamb (disavowed worship of this animal)
 - ii. Blood poured over the doorposts (“burn your bridges here”)
 - iii. Eating of the lamb
 - 1. These things were required for their own good, to root out idolatry and cultic sacrifice
 - e. The Exodus
 - i. Needed for the liberation from idolatry and to teach them to worship Yahweh
 - ii. To teach total trust in God
 - iii. To prepare them for the Promised Land
 - iv. Paradigm for the spiritual life
- VII. David and Solomon
 - a. The re-establishment of God's covenant as a kingdom
 - b. David shows faithfulness to God
 - c. Sin with Bathsheba – David's fall from grace leads to suffering
 - d. His son Solomon builds the Temple and is filled with wisdom
 - i. Uses wisdom to acquire wealth, power, women – loses favor with God
 - ii. Overcome by desire for material things
 - iii. Leads to a civil war where the kingdom is split and the Tribes of Israel go into exile – the Temple destroyed
 - 1. the physical exile is a symbol of their spiritual exile
- VIII. Christ
 - a. The Old Testament is unresolved
 - b. The promises to Abraham are fulfilled in Christ
 - c. Grace is need to be faithful to God's plan
 - d. Christ is the model of trust and obedience
 - e. Christ obeys where Adam failed