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THE OLD TESTAMENT

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THE NEW TESTAMENT

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The Books of the Bible

in Alphabetical Order with Abbreviations

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Baruch Bar	1108	Leviticus Lev	142
1 Chronicles 1 Chron	491	Luke Lk	1333
2 Chronicles 2 Chron	522	1 Maccabees 1 Mac	640
Colossians Col	1514	2 Maccabees 2 Mac	674
1 Corinthians 1 Cor	1474	Malachi Mal	1254
2 Corinthians 2 Cor	1490	Mark Mk	1309
Daniel Dan	1171	Matthew Mt	1269
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Genesis Gen	17	Philippians Phil	1510
Habakkuk Hab	1235	Proverbs Prov	832
Haggai Hag	1242	Psalms Ps	735
Hebrews Heb	1535	Revelation Rev	1566
Hosea Hos	1195	Romans Rom	1457
Isaiah Is	960	Ruth Ruth	328
James Jas	1547	1 Samuel 1 Sam	332
Jeremiah Jer	1031	2 Samuel 2 Sam	375
Job Job	699	Sirach Sir	900
Joel Joel	1206	Song of Solomon Song	872
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2 John 2 Jn	1562	1 Timothy 1 Tim	1524
3 John 3 Jn	1563	2 Timothy 2 Tim	1529
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Jude Jude	1564	Wisdom Wis	878
Judges Judg	301	Zechariah Zech	1244
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**The books of the Apocrypha and the Deuterocanonical Books
of the Catholic Old Testament are related as follows:**

APOCRYPHA

**DEUTEROCANONICAL
BOOKS**

1 (3) Esdras	Not included
2 (4) Esdras	Not included
Tobit	Tobit
Judith	Judith
Additions to Esther	Esther (part of)
The Wisdom of Solomon	The Wisdom of Solomon
Sirach	Sirach
Baruch	Baruch 1–5
The Letter of Jeremiah	Baruch 6
The Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the Three Young men	Daniel 3 (part of)
Susanna	Daniel 13
Bel and the Dragon	Daniel 14
The Prayer of Manasseh	Not included
1 Maccabees	1 Maccabees
2 Maccabees	2 Maccabees

Abbreviations in the Notes

In the notes to the books of the Old Testament, the following abbreviations are used: Ms for manuscript; Mss for manuscripts. Heb denotes the Hebrew of the consonantal Masoretic Text of the Old Testament; and MT denotes the Hebrew of the pointed Masoretic Text of the Old Testament. The ancient versions of the Old Testament are indicated by:

Gk	Septuagint Greek Version of the Old Testament
Lat	Latin Version of Tobit, Judith, and 2 Maccabees
Sam	Samaritan Hebrew text of the Old Testament
Syr	Syriac Version of the Old Testament
Tg	Targum
Vg	Vulgate, Latin Version of the Old Testament

Cn indicates a correction made where the text has suffered in transmission and the versions provide no satisfactory restoration but the Committee agrees with the judgment of competent scholars as to the most probable reconstruction of the original text.

References to quoted and parallel passages are given following the textual notes on pages where these are relevant.

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Foreword to *The Great Adventure Catholic Bible*

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name (John 20:30-31).

While the Evangelist was speaking primarily about the Gospel he had written, his words describe the purpose of the whole of the Scripture. In other words, all that is written in the Bible aims to present to us Jesus, the Messiah and Son of God, who by his teaching, his miracles, his Passion, death, and Resurrection, has opened to you and me the gift of eternal life through faith in Jesus. The Bible tells one story.

Our main difficulty with the Bible, however, is that it is a collection of books written in a multitude of literary forms: stories of origins, tales of the ancestors, histories, collections of laws and statutes, prophecies, songs, etc. It is sometimes difficult to discern how a particular book fits in with the others. Nonetheless, the Bible tells just one story held together by a variety of themes and threads that revolve around a central plot. It is the story of our salvation.

The Great Adventure Catholic Bible elucidates for us the strongest of the threads, that is to say, the series of covenants by which God has established a relationship with the human race in his mission to draw back to himself all of us who are wounded by original sin. Drawing from the wildly popular and effective *Great Adventure Catholic Bible Study* by Jeff Cavins, *The Great Adventure Catholic Bible* includes helpful tools such as a *Bible Timeline* Chart and several articles identifying the key persons, events, and transitions that drive the plot of salvation history from beginning to end.

In the “Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation” from the Second Vatican Council, the Council Fathers acknowledged:

God, the inspirer and author of both Testaments, wisely arranged that the New Testament be hidden in the Old and the Old be made manifest in the New. For, though Christ established the new covenant in His blood (see Luke 22:20; 1 Cor. 11:25), still the books of the Old Testament with all their parts, caught up into the proclamation of the Gospel, acquire and show forth their full meaning in the New Testament (see Matt. 5:17; Luke 24:27; Rom. 16:25-26; 2 Cor. 3:14-16) and in turn shed light on it and explain it.¹

As in any adventure, in order to reach your destination, you need a map. *The Great Adventure Catholic Bible* provides that for you. Enjoy the journey!

Archbishop Michael J. Byrnes

¹ *Dei Verbum* (DV) 16.

Introduction to *The Great Adventure Catholic Bible*

by Jeff Cavins

By picking up this Bible, you have taken the first step in discovering the greatest literary treasure known to humanity. Those who open the pages of the Bible do so for a variety of reasons. Some are merely curious, others are looking for wisdom in their daily lives, and still others are consciously responding to a restless call deep within their hearts, a call to a meaningful relationship with God.

The Bible is truly an amazing book, but many people admit that they have a difficult time reading it. While it contains all the elements of a great novel—a riveting plot, dynamic characters, fantastic settings, and a climactic conflict and resolution—the overarching “story” is not immediately apparent.

Beginning with Genesis, then moving on to Exodus, the reader has a sense of movement, an apparent narrative continuity, but the story is often interrupted by tangential anecdotes, lengthy genealogies, and mysterious characters and events that are difficult to understand. For many, the adventure of reading the Bible comes to an abrupt halt when they begin its third book, Leviticus. Suddenly, the narrative has disappeared. In its place, the reader encounters a complex system of laws pertaining to the human body, relationships, and ritual sacrifice that seem to have very little to do with anything he or she can relate to.

Herein lies the problem—the Bible was not written as a novel. We cannot read through it from cover to cover and expect to come away with a sense of satisfaction of having read and understood an amazing story. It is more complex than that. If we want to understand Scripture (and enjoy reading it!), then we need to understand *how* to read it.

First, we need to know that the Bible is not really a single “book” but a library of seventy-three different books, forty-six in the Old Testament and twenty-seven in the New Testament. Take a look at “The Books of the Bible” on page xv. It is important to note that these books are not listed chronologically; they are primarily arranged by their literary type—law, history, wisdom, and prophecy, among others.

While the Bible contains books of several different literary genres, there is one overarching story that ties it all together—the story of how God has revealed himself to his people and carried out his plan of salvation. This is known as “salvation history.” If we can get a grasp of the story of salvation history, then we will be able to see the “big picture” of the Bible.

But reading the Bible straight through from beginning to end is not the best way to make sense of this overall “story.” If we want to make sense of the Bible, we need to understand how it all fits together. This is why we created *The Great Adventure Catholic Bible*.

What makes *The Great Adventure Catholic Bible* different from any other Bible is that it incorporates a road map that helps readers navigate its pages so that they can easily grasp the “big picture,” the story of salvation. This road map is *The Bible Timeline*.

The Bible Timeline divides salvation history into twelve color-coded time periods. Each period is like a chapter in salvation history, and each color helps you to remember the periods and keep them in order. These twelve color-coded periods are:

1. Early World (*Turquoise* – the color of the earth viewed from space) page 2
2. Patriarchs (*Burgundy* – God’s blood covenant with Abraham) page 30
3. Egypt and Exodus (*Red* – the Red Sea) page 84
4. Desert Wanderings (*Tan* – the color of the desert) page 174
5. Conquest and Judges (*Green* – the green hills of Canaan) page 268
6. Royal Kingdom (*Purple* – the color of royalty) page 340
7. Divided Kingdom (*Black* – Israel’s darkest period) page 426
8. Exile (*Baby Blue* – Judah “singing the blues” in Babylon) page 471
9. Return (*Yellow* – Judah returning home to brighter days) page 561
10. Maccabean Revolt (*Orange* – fire in the oil lamps in the purified Temple) page 634
11. Messianic Fulfillment (*Gold* – the gifts of the Magi) page 1260
12. The Church (*White* – the spotless Bride of Christ) page 1412

For each of these periods (at the page numbers listed above), we have provided a *Timeline* chart, that provides a visual overview of the period, including: important characters, key events, geography, major covenants, world rulers, and contemporary events in secular history. Following the chart for each period you will find a written summary of it, which highlights its significance in salvation history. Throughout the biblical text, we have also indicated and explained seventy key events that tie the story together. In addition, every book of this Bible is color-coded to indicate where that book belongs in *The Bible Timeline* system, which helps you to understand where it fits within the overall story.

The Bible Timeline also helps to make the complex simple. While all seventy-three books of the Bible fit within the history of salvation, not every book recounts that history in a narrative way; other books contain laws, teaching, prophecy, prayers, or the stories of particular people. To get the big picture of the Bible, it helps to focus on

fourteen narrative books that tell the story from beginning to end. These fourteen narrative books are:

Genesis	Joshua	2 Samuel	Ezra	Luke
Exodus	Judges	1 Kings	Nehemiah	Acts
Numbers	1 Samuel	2 Kings	1 Maccabees	

These books tell the overarching story that ties all of Scripture together. We recommend reading these fourteen books in order. To help you do this, a *Bible Timeline* reading plan can be found on page xxix. Using this plan, if you read four or five chapters a day, you can read all fourteen narrative books in just ninety days. (To help you make sense of what you are reading, we have also included an explanation of how to interpret the Bible on page xxx.)

Once you have a good understanding of the overarching story of salvation—the “big picture”—you can then see how the remaining fifty-nine books of the Bible fit into this story. As you become more comfortable navigating the Bible, you will be able to build a biblical foundation for yourself that will yield tremendous fruit. The knowledge and insight you gain will serve you well in every area of your life.

Knowing salvation history will give you a better understanding of the entire Catholic Faith. The four parts (or “pillars”) of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC) are based on this story. Its first pillar is the Creed, which is a summary of salvation history. Its second pillar, on the sacraments, explains how we *enter into* this amazing story. The third pillar tells us how to live the Christian life, and the fourth pillar discusses prayer. The Bible is an indispensable part of a healthy prayer life. We explain how you can pray with Scripture using *lectio divina* on page xxxvi.

The Church teaches us that, “in the sacred books, the Father who is in heaven meets his children with great love and speaks with them” (*Dei Verbum* 1). Your heavenly Father loves you and wants to speak to you today. This makes the Bible you are holding the most treasured book on earth.

If you cherish Sacred Scripture and allow it to take root in your heart, the Holy Spirit will work through it to guide, instruct, correct, and encourage you every day in your walk with the Lord.

It is our sincere hope that in the Bible you will discover the story that makes sense out of life, the story that reveals God’s heart and loving plan for us. In addition, we pray that you will discover your place in this wonderful plan and that this will give you a profound sense of purpose and peace—and a strategy for daily life.

Blessings!

Jeff Cavins

THE OLD TESTAMENT

Revised Standard Version | Second Catholic Edition

TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL TONGUES
BEING THE VERSION SET FORTH A.D. 1611
REVISED A.D. 1881 AND A.D. 1901

COMPARED WITH THE MOST ANCIENT AUTHORITIES
AND REVISED A.D. 1946, 1952, AND 1965
(APOCRYPHA REVISED A.D. 1957 AND 1966)

THE ORIGINAL CATHOLIC EDITION OF THE RSV TRANSLATION
WAS PREPARED BY THE
CATHOLIC BIBLICAL ASSOCIATION OF GREAT BRITAIN
THIS SECOND EDITION WAS REVISED ACCORDING TO
LITURGIAM AUTHENTICAM, 2001

EARLY WORLD

(Creation to 2200 BC)

Turquoise: the color of the earth viewed from space

Narrative Books

Genesis 1-11

Supplemental Books

* For the period of the Early World, there are no supplemental books. For more information on the supplemental books, see page xxviii.

God's Family Plan



One Holy Couple
(Adam, Genesis 1-3)



One Holy Family
(Noah, Genesis 9)



NORTHERN COUNTRIES

ADAM

Cain, Abel

SETH

NOAH

Japheth, Ham

SHEM

EVE

2. Fall

1. Creation

3. Curse and Promise

4. Flood

5. People Scattered at Babel

Jesus' Genealogy
Matthew 1:1-17
Luke 3:23-38

THE LAND OF CANAAN

SOUTH & EGYPT

World Power



EGYPT



Secular History

Great Pyramids begun, c. 2685 BC

Stonehenge begun, c. 3000 BC - c. 2000 BC

EARLY WORLD



The Creation of Adam, Michelangelo

Summary

The Bible opens with a grand overture that prepares for all that is to follow (Gen 1–11). God creates the world, including human beings as the crown of creation. But their disobedience leads to a series of tragic consequences, including the first murder, a primeval flood, and the scattering of peoples at Babel. Genesis does not aim to give a scientific explanation of the origins of the universe. However, it often uses figurative language to describe real events (see CCC 390) that have profoundly influenced the history of the human race.

Narrative

In Genesis 1, God speaks and brings all things into being. He creates an ordered and good world and makes human beings in his own “image” and “likeness” (Gen 1:27). In Genesis 2, we get a glimpse of creation from a different vantage point: While Genesis 1 accentuates God’s majesty as Creator of all, Genesis 2 focuses on God’s relation to humanity. In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve dwell in harmony with one another and in communion with God. But the serpent, later identified as Satan (see Rev 12:9), enters the scene to sow discord and destruction (Gen 3:1). The

serpent seeks to cast doubt on God's goodness, suggesting that God wants to deprive Adam and Eve of what they need for life and happiness: "Did God say, 'You shall not eat of any tree of the garden?'" Moreover, the serpent directly contradicts God's warning that the consequence of eating the fruit will be death: "You will not die. For God knows that when you eat of it, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God" (Gen 3:4-5). Ironically, the serpent accuses God of denying to human beings what God has already given them: They were made in his likeness (Gen 1:27). As the *Catechism* explains, in the Fall, humanity sought "to be like God but without God" (CCC 398).¹

Beginning with Genesis 4, the story expands beyond Adam and Eve to their children—including Cain, Abel, and Seth—and subsequent descendants. Cain commits the first murder, illustrating the tendency of sin to lead to further sin. Cain's descendant Lamech is the first polygamist in the Bible (Gen 4:19); he also shows a vindictive and violent streak (Gen 4:23-24). While Cain's line falls into moral decline, the descendants of Seth, in contrast, are those who "call upon the name of the LORD" (Gen 4:26).

Genesis 5 provides a genealogy that shows ten generations from Adam to Noah, with the text repeatedly telling us that each descendant had "other sons and daughters." The

text also rhythmically states of each, "and he died." The point is that the Fall has taken its effect: Despite the venerable ages of these figures, death now comes to all. But one person stands out—Enoch, of whom it does not say he died: "Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him" (Gen 5:24).

Genesis 6–9 describes the flood that God brings about in response to the violence and wickedness of mankind (Gen 6:5). The waters of the flood bring destruction, but also a new beginning through Noah and his family (see Gen 9:1).

The flood narrative is in the form of a chiasm—a literary pattern in which elements appear in a sequence, followed by the same sequence in reverse:

reference to Noah's age (7:11)
forty days (7:17)
mountains being covered (7:19)
waters prevail for 150 days (7:24)
"God remembered Noah" (8:1)
waters prevail for 150 days (8:3)
mountains being seen (8:5)
forty days (8:6)
reference to Noah's age (8:13)

The effect of the chiasm is to focus attention on what falls in the middle. In this case, it is the statement, "God remembered Noah" (Gen 8:1), which means God turned his attention to Noah's situation, and he will act to save him (see also Ex 2:24).

¹ St. Maximus the Confessor, *Ambigua*: PG 91, 1156C; cf. Gen 3:5.

The flood is depicted as a kind of de-creation and new creation, and Noah is presented as a new Adam: “God blessed Noah,” and he said to him, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth” (Gen 9:1)—just as was said earlier of Adam and Eve (Gen 1:28). Like Adam, Noah also undergoes a fall of sorts, becoming drunk with wine in a vineyard (Gen 9:20-21)—reminiscent of Adam’s eating of the forbidden fruit in the garden. As the story unfolds, it becomes apparent that human beings are prone to continually fall into sin; indeed, one of the overarching lessons of the Old Testament is our need for grace.

Genesis 10 provides a “table of nations,” listing the various nations that stem from Noah’s three sons—Shem, Ham, and Japheth. One implication of these early chapters is that the unity of the human family has been torn apart by sin. Even the nations that later become Israel’s historic enemies (e.g., Egypt, Babylon, Assyria, Philistia, Canaan) are their cousins—descendants of Noah’s son Ham (see Gen 10:6, 10-11, 13, 14-15). Underlying this great story is the fact that the real enemies are sin, death, and the devil—but it will take some time before that lesson is clear.

The culmination of these early chapters is the story of the tower of Babel (Gen 11:1-9), again showing the seemingly uncontrollable spread of sin. In contrast to Seth’s family who “call upon the name of the LORD” (Gen 4:26), the people of Shinar

(which later becomes Babylon; see Gen 10:10) seek to make a “name” for themselves (Gen 11:4). That is, they pursue worldly power and security, organizing human society without any reference to God. In response to this human arrogance, God scatters humanity by confusing their languages (Gen 11:8-9)—a tragedy that will only be reversed by the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2:1-11).

Significance

Human Dignity and Purpose

Humanity is uniquely created in God’s “image” and “likeness” (Gen 1:26). This is the basis for the inviolable sacredness of human life (see CCC 2258). The very next occurrence of this phrase describes a father-son relationship (Gen 5:3), suggesting that humanity stands in a filial relation to God. Mankind is made on the sixth day with the beasts, but for the seventh day—for communion with God (see CCC 367).

After creation is described repeatedly as “good” in Genesis 1, the next chapter tells us that something is “not good” (Gen 2:18)—it is not good that man should be alone. This leads to the creation of Eve and their original union as husband and wife (Gen 2:24-25). Genesis gives us a glimpse of what is only fully revealed in the coming of Christ: Humanity is made for communion because we are made in the image of the Triune God, who is an eternal communion of Persons—the Father, Son, and Holy

Spirit (see CCC 221; Gen 1:26-28). As St. John Paul II taught, we find our true purpose and fulfillment in communion with God and others by making a gift of ourselves in love.

Creation as Cosmic Temple

The creation narrative exhibits parallels with the construction of Israel's later sanctuaries—the tabernacle and the Temple (see, for example, Genesis 1:31–2:3 and Exodus 39:32, 42-43). The implication is that creation is a kind of cosmic temple, and the Temple is a microcosm of creation. The Garden of Eden, then, is like the Holy of Holies, and humanity is presented as a royal priesthood whose role it is to lead all creation in worship of God.

Genesis hints at a pattern that will emerge later—namely, the connection between being a son of God and a priest-king. As mentioned, “image” and “likeness” connotes our filial status. Human beings are also called to “subdue” creation and have “dominion” over it (Gen 1:26, 28)—terms that later describe the role of the king (see 1 Kings 4:24; 2 Sam 8:11). And in Genesis 2:15, man is called to “till” and “keep” the garden—two words that together refer to priestly duties (see Num 3:7-8). Thus, the primordial identity of human beings is that of a son or daughter of God and for man to serve as a royal priest.

The Drama of Sin

The drama of the first sin, and indeed every subsequent sin, is that human beings are always seeking happiness, even when we do wrong. In part, we fall into sin because we lose trust that God's ways are really ordered to our happiness. That is, we buy into the lie of the serpent that God's commands are arbitrary and oppressive restrictions, stifling our fulfillment. As the *Catechism* explains:

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.² All subsequent sin would be disobedience toward God and lack of trust in his goodness (CCC 397).

The reality is that God is our Father, and therefore his commands are always given in love and perfect wisdom, for our true happiness.

With the outbreak of sin, though, the half-truths of the devil are on full display: Adam and Eve's eyes are opened, but to their own shame (Gen 3:7). They die spiritually, and their union with God is shattered, as is their communion with one another. In addition, physical death now becomes the lot of the human family: “You are dust, and to dust you shall return” (Gen 3:19), words we hear every Ash Wednesday. Here, original sin makes its way into human history, a deprivation of the holiness and justice with which we were originally

² Cf. Gen 3:1-11; Rom 5:19.

created (see CCC 404–405). From now on, man’s nature is wounded—our intellect is darkened, our will is weakened, and we are marked by concupiscence, an inclination to sin (see CCC 405, 407).

When the reality of sin is not acknowledged, we may find ourselves giving a superficial account of its source and thereby an insufficient account of its resolution, as the *Catechism* points out:

Without the knowledge Revelation gives ... we cannot recognize sin clearly and are tempted to explain it as merely a developmental flaw, a psychological weakness, a mistake, or the necessary consequence of an inadequate social structure (CCC 387).

Only when we reckon with the “dark side” of the good news can we fully appreciate the grandeur of what our Savior, Jesus Christ, has given us.

Redemption and the New Creation

Immediately after the Fall, God makes his first promise of redemption. Speaking to the serpent, God declares: “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel” (Gen 3:15). Christian tradition sees in this passage a veiled prophecy of Jesus, born of Mary, who will crush the head of the devil on the Cross but will suffer in the process.

Indeed, a new Adam (Jesus) will go to another garden (Gethsemane) and

will sweat drops of blood and wear a crown of *thorns*—as Adam now tills the land only by the sweat of his brow and yields from the ground only *thorns* and thistles (Gen 3:18-19). The new Adam will go to the new tree of life (see Acts 5:30; Gal 3:13)—the Cross—and fall into the deep sleep of death (as Adam was put into a “deep sleep,” Gen 2:21); and from the side of the new Adam will come forth the new Eve—the Church, whom Mary personifies (see Jn 19:26-27, 34). And the fruit of the new tree of life will be none other than the Holy Eucharist, which one may eat and “live for ever” (see Jn 6:51, 58; Gen 3:22).

The flood points to the sacrament of Baptism, whereby the old Adam in us dies so that we may rise with the new Adam (see 1 Pet 3:20-21; Rom 6:3-4). Through Baptism, we become part of the new creation (2 Cor 5:17). When the Holy Spirit comes down in the form of a dove at Jesus’ Baptism, it is reminiscent of the dove in the flood story, as a harbinger of the new creation (Gen 8:10-12).

At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit comes down upon the early Church, and many nations understand the gospel in their own languages (see Acts 2). Here, the scattering of Babel is overcome by the unifying power of the Holy Spirit, as the Church enters into the new creation.



THE COVENANTS

of Salvation History

The theme of “covenant” unites the entire Bible since it refers to the relationship God establishes with human beings, an intimate union that Scripture describes in filial and spousal language (see Ex 4:22; Hos 1–3, 11:1; Is 54:5; Eph 5:31–32; Rev 19:7). The familiar division between the Old Testament and the New Testament refers to two covenants: the first, which God made with Israel at Mount Sinai through Moses, and the second, which God offers to the whole human race through his Son Jesus Christ.

A covenant is a solemn agreement that establishes a relationship. While a contract specifies an exchange of goods or services, a covenant establishes a family bond. It corresponds to God’s nature to establish a covenant relationship with his people, since he is himself an eternal communion of Persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (see CCC 221). God establishes his covenant with human beings in order that we might share in his communion of life and love forever (see CCC 1).

In the ancient Near East, where biblical history began, covenants shaped relationships both between individuals (e.g., Gen 21:32; 1 Sam 18:3) and between nations (“treaties”). Sometimes covenants were established between equals, while at other times, they were established between a more powerful person, typically a king, and a less powerful individual or nation.

In the ancient world, only the God of Israel is described as entering into covenants with human beings (“divine covenants”). In each case, he does so at his own gracious initiative. God used the customs of a particular time and place to form a relationship with human beings in a manner they could understand. It was part of God’s pedagogy, the way in which he chose to reveal his ways to his people gradually, preparing them for the coming of Christ, using what was familiar to lead them into a relationship with him that they could scarcely have imagined.

Covenants usually included stipulations or conditions that were binding on one or both parties: the Ten Commandments are the foundational stipulations of the Sinai covenant (see Ex 20). In other cases, an ancient king might decide to bestow a benefit on his subject unilaterally without stipulations; scholars refer to these as royal grant covenants. God's covenant with Abraham is an example of a royal grant covenant (see Gen 15).

In the Bible, as in the ancient Near East, four rites, or practices, often accompanied the making of covenants: (1) a sacrifice; (2) oaths; (3) a shared meal; (4) a reminder or sign. For example, in the story of Jacob and his father-in-law Laban, after Laban defrauds Jacob of his wages and Jacob secretly departs with his wives and children, the two men eventually reconcile by making a covenant (Gen 31:44-55). In the course of their covenant-making, they swear oaths (Gen 31:49-53), offer sacrifice (Gen 31:54), share a meal (Gen 31:46, 54), and set up a pillar and a heap of stones as a witness to their covenant (Gen 31:45-52). Similarly, the covenant God made with Israel through Moses was ratified by *sacrifice*, an *oath*, a *communion meal*, and the tables of the *testimony* in the Ark (see Ex 24:3-12, 25:26, 31:18, 38:21).

From ancient times to the present, *sacrifice* has played a vital role in humanity's relationship with God. At its root, the concept of a sacrifice is that of a gift offered to God (see Rom 12:1). Sacrifices can express thanksgiving for blessings God has bestowed, humble submission to God's authority, atonement for sins and an appeal for mercy, or all of the above. In the Old Testament, sacrifice often entailed the death of an animal, but not always: Israel was instructed to sacrifice gifts of grain, wine, and oil as well. The New Testament exhorts Christians to offer a variety of kinds of sacrifices: praise, prayers, almsgiving and other charitable works (1 Pet 2:5; Heb 13:15-16),¹ and the supreme sacrifice, the Eucharist (1 Cor 10:16-17).²

¹ For more on Christian sacrifices, see Mary Healy, *Hebrews, Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016), 295-297.

² For more on the Eucharist as the Christian sacrifice *par excellence*, see George T. Montague, *First Corinthians, Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), 171-179.

The purpose of the *oath* in ancient covenants was to call upon God (or “the gods”) to witness and guarantee the covenant by pronouncing blessings for faithfulness to its terms and penalties for unfaithfulness. The blessings and curses that conclude various summaries of the Sinai covenant state the consequences for Israel of keeping or failing to keep their covenant promises (e.g., Ex 23:20-33; Lev 26; Deut 28). The history of Israel, as recounted in the books of Judges through 2 Kings and in the books of the prophets, demonstrates that God takes his people’s covenant oaths very seriously. It also shows that God’s intention in the judgments that come upon his people is for their own good: God’s fatherly discipline aims to lead his people back to himself and to the kind of conduct that will enable them to thrive. It would not have been love if God had allowed his people to do more and more evil without experiencing the negative consequences that could bring them to their senses.

Our own experience often confirms the Bible’s insistence on the negative consequences of covenant unfaithfulness. The Ten Commandments are intrinsic to the order of the world God created: When we violate God’s law, we hurt ourselves in the process. As our Creator, God gives us his law to enable us to flourish. Rejecting his law does not lead to freedom but rather to slavery. A comparison might be the situation of alcoholics or other addicts who misuse God’s gifts and end up enslaved, bringing great suffering on themselves and those they love.

The third element that characterized many ancient covenants was a *shared meal* (Gen 26:28-31, 31:46). When the Sinai covenant was ratified, there was a shared meal in God’s presence for Moses, Aaron and his sons, and the elders of Israel (Ex 24:5-11).

Finally, most covenants were reinforced by the establishment of some kind of reminder, whether a physical object established as a witness (e.g., a large stone in Joshua 24:25-27) or a practice of regular reading or recitation (Deut 6:6-7, 31:10-13).

In biblical history, six divine covenants with human beings stand out as turning points: (1) God’s covenant with our first parents

at creation; (2) his covenant with Noah after the flood; (3) his covenant with Abraham; (4) his covenant with Israel through Moses; (5) his covenant with David; and (6) the New Covenant in Jesus' blood that fulfills and completes the previous covenants. At each step, the covenant family grows: With Adam and Eve, it is a couple; with Noah, it encompasses a household—Noah, his three sons, and their wives. With Abraham, it is a tribe consisting of the patriarchs and their descendants. By the time of Moses, Israel has become a nation, and with David, the nation has become a kingdom ruling over the surrounding nations. Finally, with Jesus, the New Covenant family becomes universal; this is the meaning of the word *catholic*—the Church is the “universal,” worldwide family of God.

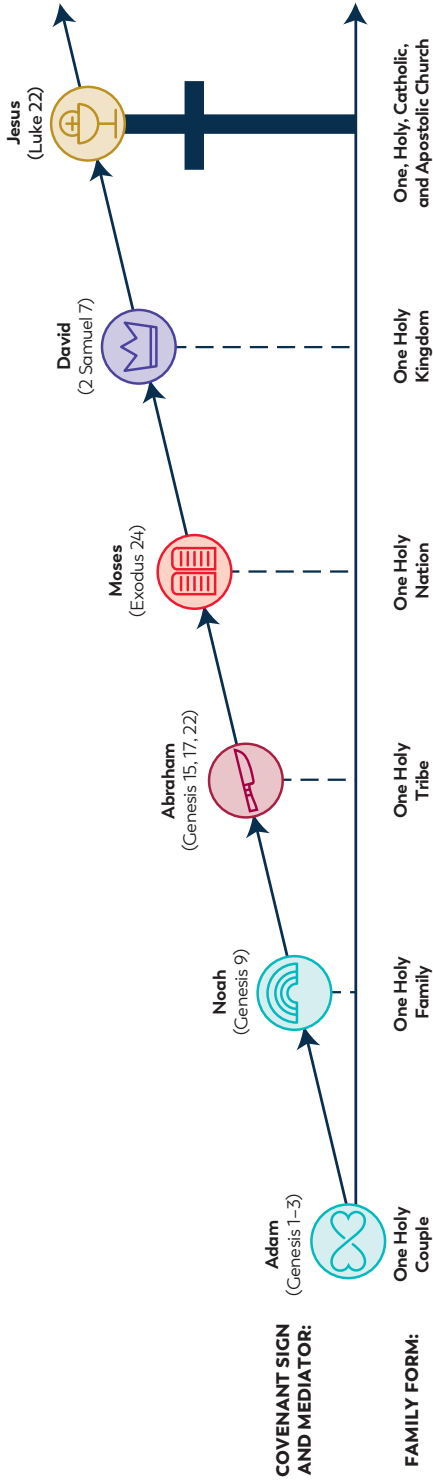
Understanding the central role of covenant in God's plan helps us to realize that our relationship with God is not individualistic; it is never a matter of just “me and Jesus.” Rather, the covenant makes us the family of God, sharing communion with him *and* with one another. If this was true of the Old Covenant, it is even truer in the New Covenant, since this relationship transcends death. The Church is the Body of Christ: Whoever is united to Jesus is united to everyone else who is united to Jesus (see Rom 12:5; 1 Cor 10:17, 12:12-13). Therefore, the saints who have gone before us are our older brothers and sisters in the Faith (see Heb 11; 12:1, 22-24), and Mary is our mother in Christ (see Jn 19:27; Rev 12:17).

The grandeur of the New Covenant is not merely that our sins have been forgiven, but that we have entered the covenant family of God and received the Spirit of his Son (Mt 12:50). God truly adopts each of us as his children, whom he loves as he loves his only Son, having united us to his Son through faith and Baptism and having given us the Spirit of his Son (Gal 4:4-7).³ This is a far cry from relating to God as a coach from whose team we hope not to be cut or as an employer from whose staff we hope not to

³ For a deeper explanation of how the gift of the Spirit makes us God's sons and daughters, see the comments on Galatians 4:4-7 in Albert Vanhoye and Peter S. Williamson, *Galatians, Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, forthcoming 2019).

be fired. This is a Father who has gone to unimaginable lengths to restore and elevate us, so that we might share in his eternal joy. God the Father loves us just the way we are, but he loves us too much to leave us that way. Instead, he has destined us for greatness, “to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that [Jesus] might be the first-born among many brethren” (Rom 8:29).

Covenant Structure of Salvation History





Genesis 1-3

The **COVENANT** at Creation

God speaks and brings all of creation into existence; he does not do so out of need or lack on his part, but to invite us into his own blessed life. The created world provides a space for the relationship between God and human beings. Although the word “covenant” does not appear at the beginning of Genesis, God’s very act of creating human beings is an implicit covenant in which God commits himself to care for them and bring them to the fullness of life; later texts confirm that this is the case (see Ex 31:16-17; Jer 33:19-26; Wis 11:24-26). It is a family relationship: God creates man, male and female, in his image and likeness, as his children, in a state of original holiness (see Gen 1:27, 5:3; Lk 3:38; CCC 375, 384). The first man and woman enjoy fellowship with God, who comes to walk with them in the garden (see Gen 3:8, 10). Although Adam and Eve have obviously done nothing to merit God’s blessings, they receive the Garden of Eden, everything they need for life and happiness, and authority as God’s royal representatives over the earth and over all other living creatures (see Gen 1:27-29). But God gives them one commandment as a condition for continuing to enjoy his blessing rather than the curse of death: not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Genesis 3 reports that our first parents failed to uphold their side of the covenant, but rather ate of the tree of which God had commanded them not to eat. Consequently, the man and woman became subject to a series of devastating consequences: shame (Gen 3:7), estrangement from God (Gen 3:8), discord in their relationship with one another (Gen 3:12, 16), disharmony with the created world (Gen 3:17-19), a loss of original holiness (see CCC 399), and death (Gen 3:19).

Nevertheless, a ray of hope for human beings shines forth when God places a curse on the serpent who tempted them: “I will put

enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel” (Gen 3:15). The Church Fathers referred to this verse as the *protoevangelium*, the first announcement of the gospel, since it foretells in veiled language the One who will himself suffer yet crush the serpent’s head and restore humanity to the blessedness that God willed from the beginning.

God has created human beings to be his children and to live in fellowship with him. Through the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ, he invites all of humanity into this relationship of faithful love—this covenant—offering us a share in his own life. We who have received this new life are called to renounce the distrust and disobedience of our first parents and to follow in the footsteps of Jesus, the new Adam (see Phil 2:5-9; Rom 5:12-21), and Mary, the new Eve (see Lk 1:26-38), by faith and obedience.



THE FIRST BOOK OF MOSES COMMONLY CALLED GENESIS

KEY EVENT

1

Creation

Genesis 1-2:24

► By speaking (see Ps 33:6; Jn 1:1-4), God creates “the heavens and the earth,” a phrase referring to all that exists, both the spiritual and the material (see CCC 290). Brought forth from nothing, all creatures depend upon God for their very existence at every moment.

1

Six Days of Creation and the Sabbath

1*In the beginning God created^a the heavens and the earth. ²The earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the Spirit^b of God was moving over the face of the waters.

³ And God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light. ⁴And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. ⁵God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, one day.

⁶ And God said, “Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.” ⁷And God made the firmament and separated the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament. And it was so. ⁸And God called the firmament Heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, a second day.

⁹ And God said, “Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.” And it was so. ¹⁰God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good.

¹¹And God said, “Let the earth put forth vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, upon the earth.” And it was so. ¹²The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. ¹³And there was evening and there was morning, a third day.

¹⁴ And God said, “Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years, ¹⁵and let them be lights in the firmament of the heavens to give light upon the earth.” And it was so. ¹⁶And God made the two great lights, the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night; he made the stars also. ¹⁷And God set them in the firmament of the heavens to give light upon the earth, ¹⁸to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. ¹⁹And there was evening and there was morning, a fourth day.

²⁰ And God said, “Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the

1:1; Jn 1:1.

* 1:1–2:4a: The aim of this narrative is not to present a scientific picture but to teach religious truth, especially the dependence of all creation on God and its consecration to him through the homage rendered

by man, who is the climax of creation. Hence its strong liturgical character and the concluding emphasis on the sabbath. It serves as a prologue to the whole of the Old Testament.

a Or *When God began to create.* b Or *wind.*

KEY EVENT

2

Fall

Genesis 3:1-24

► The serpent tempts our first parents by casting doubt upon God's goodness (Gen 3:4-5), and they disobey God, thereby inaugurating the tragic history of sin and its devastating consequences. Mankind loses trust that God's ways are ordered to our happiness (see CCC 397).

KEY EVENT

3

Curse and Promise

Genesis 3:8-24

► After the Fall, pain and laborious work enter the human experience. Nevertheless, in Genesis 3:15, God gives the first promise of redemption, known in Christian tradition as the *protoevangelium* (Latin for "first Gospel"). It points to Mary (the woman) and Jesus (her seed), who will ultimately crush the head of the serpent on the Cross.

firmament of the heavens."²¹ So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarm, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. ²² And God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth." ²³ And there was evening and there was morning, a fifth day.

²⁴ And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds: cattle and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds." And it was so. ²⁵ And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the cattle according to their kinds, and everything that creeps upon the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

²⁶ Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after 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 earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth." ²⁷ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. ²⁸ And 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." ²⁹ And God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. ³⁰ 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. ³¹ And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, a sixth day.

2 Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. ² And on the seventh day God finished his work which he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had done. ³ So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all his work which he had done in creation.

Another Account of Creation

⁴ These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created.

* In the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens, ⁵ when no plant of the field was yet in the earth and no herb

1:26, 27: Gen 5:1; Mt 19:4; Mk 10:6; Col 3:10; Jas 3:9.

2:1-3: Ex 20:11.

2:2: Heb 4:4, 10.

* 2:4b ff: This account of the state of the world at the beginning, which introduces the story of the first sin, comes from a different and earlier source and is composed in a very different style. There is nothing in

these early chapters that commits us to any particular scientific view of the origins of the world or man, or that would exclude the evolution hypothesis.

of the field had yet sprung up—for the LORD God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was no man to till the ground;⁶ but a mist^c went up from the earth and watered the whole face of the ground—⁷ then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.⁸ And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he had formed.⁹ And 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.

10 A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden, and there it divided and became four rivers.¹¹ The name of the first is Pishon; it is the one which flows around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold;¹² and the gold of that land is good; bdellium and onyx stone are there.¹³ The name of the second river is Gihon; it is the one which flows around the whole land of Cush.¹⁴ And the name of the third river is Tigris, which flows east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

15 The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it.¹⁶ And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, “You may freely eat of every tree of the garden;¹⁷ 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.”

18 Then the LORD God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.”¹⁹ So out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast 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 every living creature, that was its name.²⁰ The man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every

beast of the field; but for the man there was not found a helper fit for him.²¹ So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh;²² and the rib which the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man.²³ Then the man said,

“This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman,^d because she was taken out of Man.”^e

²⁴ Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh.²⁵ And the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed.

The Fall of Man

2 Now the serpent was more subtle than any other wild creature that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree of the garden?’”² And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden;³ but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’”⁴ But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not die.⁵ For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”⁶ 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, and he ate.⁷ Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves aprons.

3 8 And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and

2:7: 1 Cor 15:45, 47.

2:9: Rev 2:7; 22:2, 14, 19.
3:1: Rev 12:9; 20:2.

2:24: Mt 19:5; Mk 10:7; 1 Cor 6:16; Eph 5:31.
3:4: 2 Cor 11:3.

his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. ⁹But the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, “Where are you?”

¹⁰And he said, “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.” ¹¹He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?” ¹²The man said, “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.” ¹³Then the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this that you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent beguiled me, and I ate.” ¹⁴The LORD God said to the serpent,

“Because you have done this,
cursed are you above all cattle,
and above all wild animals;
upon your belly you shall go,
and dust you shall eat
all the days of your life.

¹⁵ I will put enmity between you and the woman,
and between your seed and her seed;
he shall bruise your head,*
and you shall bruise his heel.”

¹⁶To the woman he said,
“I will greatly multiply your pain in
childbearing;
in pain you shall bring forth children,
yet your desire shall be for your
husband,
and he shall rule over you.”

¹⁷And to Adam he said,
“Because you have listened to the voice
of your wife,
and have eaten of the tree
of 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;

¹⁸ thorns and thistles it shall bring forth to
you;

and you shall eat the plants of the field.

¹⁹ In the sweat of your face
you shall eat bread
till you return to the ground,
for out of it you were taken;
you are dust,
and to dust you shall return.”

²⁰ The man called his wife’s name Eve,^f
because she was the mother of all living.
²¹And the LORD God made for Adam
and for his wife garments of skins, and
clothed them.

²² Then the LORD God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil; and now, lest he put forth his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever”—²³therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from which he was taken. ²⁴He drove out the man; and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.

Cain and Abel

4^{*}Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, “I have gotten^g a man with the help of the LORD.” ²And again, she bore his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain a tiller of the ground. ³In the course of time Cain brought to the LORD an offering of the fruit

3:13; 2 Cor 11:3.

3:14, 15; Rev 12:9; 20:2.

3:17, 18; Heb 6:8.

3:22, 24; Rev 2:7; 22:2, 14, 19.

* 3:15, *he shall bruise your head*: i.e., the seed of the woman, that is, mankind descended from Eve, will eventually gain the victory over the powers of evil. This victory will, of course, be gained through the work of the Messiah who is *par excellence* the seed of the woman.

The Latin Vulgate has the reading *ipsa conteret*, “she shall bruise.” Some Old Latin manuscripts have this reading, and it occurs also in St. Augustine, *De Genesi contra Manichaeos*, II, which is earlier than St. Jerome’s

translation. It could be due originally to a copyist’s mistake, which was then seen to contain a genuine meaning—namely, that Mary, too, would have her share in the victory, inasmuch as she was mother of the Savior.

* 4:1: The story of Cain and Abel has the purpose of showing the effects of sin within society, the fratricide of Cain leading to the vengeance of Lamech and so to the Flood. We are, however, no longer in the first age of humanity, as can be seen from verses 14, 17, etc.

^fThe name in Hebrew resembles the word for *living*. ^gHeb *qanah*, get.