

HUMANITY BEFORE CHRIST: Creation, the Fall and the Old Testament

Let's talk about us, who we are and where we come from. We need a firm grasp on our story to understand what it means to be a Catholic, or a Christian or even a human being. That's what this session is all about – understanding ourselves by understanding our human story. Before Jesus, our human story has basically three parts: first, Adam and Eve were created; then, they sinned; and lastly, God continued to reach out to us through his chosen representatives.

Created by God, like God, and for God

First of all, Adam and Eve, the first human couple, were created by God. And, like everything God makes, they were good. So human nature is fundamentally good. It's a good thing to be a human being. Very good! Secondly, Adam and Eve were created like God. We're like God because we have intellect (intelligence) and will (freedom). God is intelligent and free, and so are we! That's one of the reasons Genesis says we're made in God's "Image and Likeness." Now our intellect and will are the powers which make up our spiritual (immaterial) soul, which means although the human

body has material causes, every human soul is always miraculously produced by God. So the human person is a combination of body and soul. They are how we know and desire things that aren't detectable by the senses (like love, justice, honesty, etc.). Angels are spiritual creatures; rocks, trees and animals are material creatures; and we're both! We unite all the elements of God's creation. Also, it means that even if you destroy the body-part, the soul-part is still left, which is why human souls survive death. Finally, we were made for God – for an eternal relationship with God, so what went wrong?

The Fall – Humanity's First Sin

What happened when Adam and Eve disobeyed God's command? Most importantly, we broke our relationship with God. And once we had broken it, we couldn't fix it. It's always possible to break something you can't fix (like if you break a stained-glass window, or set fire to a mansion you don't have enough money to rebuild). And with sin we broke the most beautiful gift we had – our relationship with God – and we couldn't fix it. Adam and Eve, as the first parents, received a perfect human

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experience that was supposed to be our inheritance – but they squandered it, and so their descendants are born poor, with a weak human nature and a loss of God’s presence. God made humanity to be an interdependent community – which is a beautiful thing – but when one member of a community fails, the others suffer; and all humanity suffers from original sin. The story of Adam and Eve is an explanation of our human condition, and our need for a savior. Now the question is: how did God respond to our sin?

The Old Testament: God reaching Out

God didn’t abandon us. Although the story of humanity is a story of continual sin and struggle to live in close relationship with God, it’s also a story of how God takes the first step time and time again to bring us back into relationship with Him. How does He do that? By choosing certain leaders – and their communities – to be His representatives to the rest of humanity. For instance, God started with Adam, who was the head of the first human couple. Then, He initiated a relationship with Noah, and saved all of Noah’s family from the flood. Then,

God made contact with Abraham, and his extended family who became the recipient of magnificent promises of land, many descendants, and ultimately salvation. When Abraham’s descendants became numerous and were enslaved in Egypt, God called Moses to lead this new nation to the Promised Land. Generations later, God chose David to be in charge of the Kingdom, and promised that one of David’s descendants would be the universal and eternal king. In all these cases, we see God’s generosity growing, even though the chosen people are continually sinning. But we also see a pattern where God chooses one man to govern all of God’s people. And we see a pattern where God’s people keep growing. So where do we see today the largest international community of believers, governed by one man who represents God? (Hint: it’s the Catholic Church). But before we talk about the Catholic Church, we have to talk about the most important part of the story of Humanity: namely, when God Himself became human. That’s what we’ll look at next time.