

## 2—Life Is from God

### ***Objectives***

By the end of this lesson students will be able to ...

- recognize God as the Creator and source of all things, and everything God created is good.
- state that the two Creation stories in the Bible tell us the meaning of Creation.
- recognize that the Bible does not give a scientific explanation or an historical account of Creation.
- perceive God in what He has made.

### ***For the Catechist***

The biblical concept of Creation was frequently challenged in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Often the challenge revolved around one question: "How historically accurate is the presentation in Genesis chapters 1-3?" Opponents of the scriptural account point to the many scientific discoveries of the modern age. Geology, paleontology and related fields have shown that the universe is of an extraordinarily great age, while Genesis 1 says that it was created in six days. Genesis also suggests, or at least presumes, that each living thing was individually created in the form in which we know it. Thus, opponents question the Bible's truth in this area. On the other hand, some supporters of the biblical Creation stories deny the evidence of science. They adopt a historically literal interpretation of Genesis 1, believing that the world was created specifically in six days in the order mentioned in Genesis.

The truth lies somewhere in the middle. Contemporary Scripture scholars echo a number of Church Fathers in believing that, while some Old Testament books attempt to record history as we know it, other Old Testament writings do not. While they may contain a certain degree of historical accuracy, stories such as Genesis 1-3 are intended to teach deeper truths about life. The Genesis stories were seemingly written to refute the pagan theories of creation which were current in the Middle East in the centuries before Christ. The Jews' pagan neighbors believed that the world was made by gods and goddesses who labored at the work to the extent of shedding their own blood in the process. Genesis 1 gives a different account: Creation occurred through God's will and by His Word alone. Genesis 1, therefore, is not meant to be a scientific account of the origins of the universe; rather it tells us that Creation came about through God's wisdom and power.

Today many students are exposed to various theories of the origin of life; chief among them is the theory of evolution, the notion that higher forms of life evolved from lower. Ask the students what they are learning about Creation in their science classes. Tell them that today's lesson turns to the Bible to learn what God says about Creation.

### ***Materials Needed***

*Opening Prayer:* Bibles

*Review:* Icons and a place to display them reverently (e.g. shelf, table, poster board)

*Introduction:* Bibles

*Guided Reading:* student text

*Ancient Wisdom:* pens or pencils

*Vespers:* Folders, prayer sheets, tape or glue

*Activity A:* "Seeing God in Creation"

*Activity B:* "Journal," pens or pencils, journal folders

*Closing Prayer:* Vespers booklets

## 1. Opening Prayer

- Gather in front of the icon corner. Light the candle and have the students open their Bibles to Psalm 32 (33).
- Explain that this psalm includes another one of the Bible's creation stories.
- Pray verses 1-15.

## 2. Review

Ask the students to recall the main points of last week's lesson:

- God is the Creator of all things.
- The purpose of all things is to share God's existence.
- God has a plan for His creation and He will fulfill His plan.
- Christians have an optimistic worldview that reflects their trust in God's plan.

Encourage any further discussion of last week's session.

If you use Activity D (Icon Study), ask the students to share any icons of Christ they may have found on the internet and to explain any inscriptions written on the icons. Display the icons on a table or shelf. Downloaded images may be pasted on poster board and displayed.

## 3. Introduction

Introduce the reading of Genesis 1 with an explanation as follows:

- a) The Creation story as we listen to it from Genesis 1 is not a scientific description or an eyewitness account. It is a literary composition—a story meant to teach us about God and the world.
- b) There are many different interpretations of the several biblical accounts of Creation. We read them to appreciate the wonder of God's creation and to understand God's plan for humanity.
- c) As the stories are being read, try to picture the "awesomeness" of Creation and God's love.

Have the students read Genesis 1:1-2:4. Possibilities: Ask for volunteers to read the paragraphs aloud; the catechist read the paragraphs, and the students make a list of what is created on each day; the entire class reads the words aloud.

Continue the reading of Genesis 2:5-25. Follow the suggestions for the previous reading. At the end of the reading, allow the students to share what they thought and felt as they read the story of Creation.

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### Background Reading (Creation Stories)

"A careful reading of the creation account reveals two separate stories. Chapters 1 to 2:4 describe the creation of the universe in six days with God resting on the seventh, the Sabbath. In this account, humanity is the last element of creation brought into being. The second version begins with the creation of humankind, represented by Adam and Eve, and their fall into sin (2:5 to 3:24). Scripture scholars today attribute these two stories to different Hebrew cultural traditions. The first is the "priestly" tradition, the second is the "Yahwist" tradition, so named because references to God use the name 'YHWH' ('He-who-is') revealed to Moses" (*LLI* 20).

"Neither of these authors intended to write a history or science textbook in the modern sense, but rather to impart deeper religious truths about the origin of humanity and the world. The writing of a history would imply the presence of a human witness when God alone existed. The Hebrew authors were fully aware of the immensity of the chasm separating God and man and would not want to attempt definitive explanations of particular mechanisms God might choose" (*LLI* 20-21).

#### 4. Guided Reading, Pages 7-8, "Stories of Creation"

Before the reading, summarize the objectives of the lesson on a wall pad or easel pad so that the page can be preserved and used for review next week.

- Ask for volunteers to read aloud pages 7-8 ("Stories of Creation").
- After the reading, survey the students' ideas about what science says about the origins of the universe. Ask them to identify the difference between what they just read and what they are learning in school.
- Emphasize that science cannot disprove the real teaching of Genesis—that God is the author of Creation—because **Genesis does not intend to explain *how* the world was created but *who* created it and *why*.**

#### Guided Reading page 8, "Seeing God in Creation"

- Ask for volunteers to read this section aloud.
- Share any personal experience you may have had in being awed by nature, or of seeing the greatness of the Creator in it.
- Ask the students to share a description of the places they have been where they experience the greatness of God's creation. [Possibility: Ask them to bring in a picture of their place. Next week paste the pictures onto a bulletin board titled: God's Beauty.]

**Supplementary Activity:** Use **Activity A handout** (p. 26) that asks the students to reflect on times they experienced God's presence in nature. Read the Background Information at the bottom of this page for suggestions. Ask the students to share their answers. [Possible answers: God's presence can be experienced through the color, beauty, and fragrance of flowers. God's greatness is reflected by the size and height of the trees. We see God's power and His love that makes the world survive in spite of destructive forces. We can explain God as the Creator and Source of all things by helping the nonbeliever realize that the entire world of nature works together for survival. Only a loving and powerful God can create this codependence of the whole world.]

#### 5. Ancient Wisdom for Today

- Distribute worksheet along with pens or pencils.
- Ask for a volunteer to read aloud the quote on the worksheet. Have the students write their answers and then share them with the class.

[Suggestions: God has given us the gifts of nature; all Christians should imitate God's generosity; we can offer our gifts (our money, time, and talent) to other people.]

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#### Background Reading (Discovering God in Creation)

"If you observe the heavens, says Scripture, their order will be a guide for you toward faith. They do in fact reveal the Artist who made them. If you then observe the beauty of the earth, it will help you to increase your faith. It is true that we have attained faith, not because we have succeeded in seeing God with our bodily eyes, but because we have seen Him with our minds which perceive the Invisible by means of the visible. Look at a stone and notice that even a stone carries some mark of the Creator. It is the same with an ant, a bee, a mosquito. The wisdom of the Creator is revealed in the smallest creatures. It is He who has spread out the heavens and laid out the immensity of the seas. It is He also who has made the tiny hollow shaft of the bee's sting. All the objects in the world are an invitation to faith, not unbelief (St Basil the Great, *On Psalm 32,3*).

## **6. Icon Study**

Read "Icons Reveal Christ in Creation" on page 10 of the student text. Emphasize the following points:

- The icons show the Genesis 1 story of Creation amplified by the Gospel of John in the New Testament. God creates all things by His Word, who would become man, Jesus Christ.
- Have the students, individually or in small groups, draw their own image of one or more of the other "days" of Creation in Genesis 1, in the style of the icons in the text. Then have them explain their "icons" to the class.

## **7. Vespers**

- Have the students read the information about Vespers aloud.
- Distribute the Vespers folder that they made last week, and tell them to tape or glue last week's prayer at the top of the first page in their folder.
- Distribute the prayers for your jurisdiction. They can be found on pages 28-32 in this instructional manual.
- Ask the students to tape or glue these prayers on the bottom half of page one in their folder.

## **8. Activity A: My Personal Journal**

Distribute Worksheet A along with pens or pencils. Have the students complete the worksheet in silence (or you can play religious music if available) and place it in their folder. Plan accordingly, but they should need no more than 5 minutes to complete the journal entry.

## **9. Summary**

Ask the students what the main idea of today's lesson is. Refer back to the objectives that you might have listed on the board or read at the beginning of class. Ask the students if they have any further comments or questions about what you discussed today.

## **10. Closing Prayer**

- Gather the students at the icon corner.
- Pray the opening prayers that are in their Vespers booklet.
- Encourage the students to learn these prayers to pray every morning. Have extra prayers sheets that the students can take home to learn the prayers.

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## **Background Reading (Creation and Science)**

"Thus, there need be no absolute contradiction between the truths of Genesis and the hypotheses of science. Rather, their two views and interests are complementary. Genesis makes clear at the outset that God created all things good according to a definite purpose. Scientific investigation, which is confined by its own method to the empirical evidence of the material world, may succeed in describing the processes by which God's intentions were carried out. We cannot ask Genesis to teach physics, nor expect science to 'prove' God" (OT 37).

## Seeing God in Creation

List three examples of how you have experienced the presence of God in nature.

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How do you think nature reflects the greatness of God?

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Does the created world lead you to see other qualities of the Creator? What are they?

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How would you explain God as the Creator and Source of all things to someone who does not believe in God?

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## MY PERSONAL JOURNAL

*What do you consider is the greatest gift of God's Creation to you?  
Explain why you think so.*

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*Write a short poem or prayer of thanksgiving to God for all He has  
created.*

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*Illustrate your favorite scene of Creation. If you choose, bring in a  
picture of your favorite place in nature, and tape it to this journal  
entry.*

**LITURGICAL PRAYERS  
ACCORDING TO THE USAGE OF  
THE MELKITE GREEK CATHOLIC CHURCH**

Holy God, holy Mighty One, holy Immortal One, have mercy on us (*3 times*).  
Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,  
Now and always and forever and ever. Amen.

All-holy Trinity, have mercy on us.  
Lord, forgive us our sins,  
Master, pardon our transgressions,  
Holy One, look upon us and heal our infirmities for Your name's sake.

Lord, have mercy (*3 times*).  
Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,  
Now and always and forever and ever. Amen.

Our Father, who are in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory—of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit—now and always and forever and ever. Amen.

Come, let us worship God our King and bow down before Him. (*metany*)  
Come, let us worship Christ God our King and bow down before Him. (*metany*)  
Come, let us worship Christ our King and our God, and bow down before Him. (*metany*)

LITURGICAL PRAYERS  
ACCORDING TO THE USAGE OF  
THE ROMANIAN GREEK CATHOLIC CHURCH

Holy God, Holy Mighty One, Holy Immortal One, have mercy on us (*3 times*).  
Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,  
Now and always and forever and ever. Amen.

Most Holy Trinity, have mercy on us.  
Lord, cleanse our sins.  
Master, forgive our transgressions.  
Holy One, visit and heal our infirmities for Thy name's sake.

Lord, have mercy (*3 times*).  
Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,  
Now and always and forever and ever. Amen.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.  
For Thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory—of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit—now and always and forever and ever. Amen.

Come, let us worship God our King and bow down before Him. (*metany*)  
Come, let us worship Christ God our King and bow down before Him. (*metany*)  
Come, let us worship Christ our King and our God, and bow down before Him. (*metany*)

**LITURGICAL PRAYERS  
ACCORDING TO THE USAGE OF  
THE RUTHENIAN METROPOLIA**

Holy God, Holy and Mighty, Holy and Immortal, have mercy on us (*3 times*).  
Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,  
Now and ever and forever. Amen.

O Most Holy Trinity, have mercy on us  
O Lord, cleanse us of our sins,  
O Master, forgive our transgressions,  
O Holy One, come to us and heal our infirmities for Your name's sake.

Lord, have mercy (*3 times*).  
Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,  
Now and ever and forever. Amen.

Our Father, who are in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—now and ever and forever. Amen.

Come, let us worship our King and God. (*metany*)  
Come, let us worship Christ, our King and God. (*metany*)  
Come, let us worship and bow before the only Lord Jesus Christ, the King and our God. (*metany*)

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**LITURGICAL PRAYERS  
ACCORDING TO THE USAGE OF  
THE UKRAINIAN METROPOLIA**

Holy God, Holy and Mighty, Holy and Immortal, have mercy on us (*3 times*).  
Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,  
Now and always and forever and ever. Amen.

Trinity Most Holy, have mercy on us  
Cleanse us of our sins, O Lord.  
Pardon our transgressions, O Master.  
Look upon our weaknesses and heal them, O Holy One, for the sake of Your name.

Lord, have mercy (*3 times*).  
Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,  
Now and always and forever and ever. Amen.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power and the glory are Yours—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—now and always and forever and ever. Amen.

Come, let us adore the King, our God.  
Come, let us adore Christ, the King and our God.  
Come, let us adore and bow down to the only Lord, Jesus Christ, the King and our God.

**LITURGICAL PRAYERS  
ACCORDING TO THE USAGE OF  
THE UKRAINIAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF ST. JOSAPHAT**

Holy God, Holy and Mighty, Holy and Immortal, have mercy on us (*3 times*).  
Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,  
Now and forever and ever. Amen.

Trinity Most Holy, have mercy on us  
Lord, cleanse us of our sins,  
Master, pardon our transgressions.  
O Holy One, visit us and heal our weaknesses for Your name's sake.

Lord, have mercy (*3 times*).  
Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,  
Now and forever and ever. Amen.

Our Father, who are in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory—of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit—now and forever and ever. Amen.

Come, let us adore the King, our God.  
Come, let us adore Christ, the King and our God.  
Come, let us adore and bow down to the only Lord, Jesus Christ, the King and our God.