

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

Intro

- I. Created by God, like God, and for God**
- II. The Fall**
- III. The Old Testament**

Intro

- Our Story
 1. In the last presentation we talked about God – who He is and how we come to know Him. Now it's time to talk about *us*, Who we are, and where we come from.

This is the ***Story of Humanity***
 2. ILLUSTRATION OF A NOVEL: Imagine you pick up a novel, and instead of starting at the beginning, you just open the book right in the middle, or even skip to the end and start reading. What will happen?

You'll be totally lost! You won't understand anything, because you don't know what came before. ["Oh... so the Butler did it. Um, what did he do?"] You won't understand the events or the characters or the references – *because you don't know the story.*
 3. So how can you possibly understand what it means to be a Catholic, or a Christian, or *even a human being!* unless you have a firm grasp on what the human story is?

That's what this session is all about – understanding ourselves by understanding our story.
- Now the Human story before Jesus has basically three parts
 1. First, how our original parents were first created
 2. Second, how our original parents first sinned
 3. Third, how God continued to reach out to humanity through his chosen representatives

So let's start the story

I. Created **by God, like God, and for God**¹

A. First of all, Adam and Eve, the first human couple, were created **by God**

i. 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.

B. Secondly, Adam and Eve were created **like God**

i. 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**"

ii. 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.

iii. So the human person is a combination of **body and soul**

- Our intellect and will are the powers that make up our spiritual (= immaterial) soul.

They are how we know and desire things that aren't detectable by the senses (like love, justice, honesty, etc...).

Because we have a spiritual component, it means that although the human body has material causes, every human soul is always miraculously produced by God.

- And it's good that we are body and soul! The angels are spiritual creatures, rocks and 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

C. Finally, we were made **for God** – for an eternal **relationship with God**
So what went wrong?

¹ The supporting material for this section is found in Lesson 3, "**Made in His Image**" and "**Body and Soul**"

II. The Fall – Humanity’s first Sin²

A. What happened when Adam and Eve disobeyed God’s command?

- i. God is our foundation, and when you reject your own foundation, everything starts to break down. So our whole humanity suffered.
 - Our **intellects** were darkened, so it became hard to perceive and grasp the most fundamental truths
 - Our **wills** were weakened, so it became difficult to do what is good
 - 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.

- ii. Adam and Eve, as the first parents, received a perfect human 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, especially the parents, the others suffer; and all humanity suffers from original sin.

B. This is how we know Adam and Eve were real – because we experience the results of their choice

- i. That’s why it’s a mistake to act as though the story of Adam and Eve was a fable, or a fictional story with a nice moral.
- ii. 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?

² The textual support for this material is found in Lesson 3, “Fallen from Grace” and “The Story Unfolds”

III. The Old Testament: *God reaching Out*³

- A. God didn't leave us in our wretchedness. Although the story of humanity is a story of continual sin and sadness, it's also a story of God taking initiative time and again to bring us back into relationship with Him.
- i. How does He do that? By choosing certain leaders – and their communities – to be His representatives to the rest of humanity.
- B. For instance:
- i. God started with **Adam**, who was the head of the first human **couple**
 - ii. Then God initiated a relationship with **Noah**, and saved all of Noah's **family** from the flood
 - iii. Then God made contact with **Abraham**, and his **extended family**, who became the recipient of magnificent promises of land, and many descendents, and ultimately salvation.
 - iv. When Abraham's descendants became numerous and were enslaved in Egypt, God called **Moses** to lead this new **nation** to the promised land.
 - v. 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.
- C. In all these cases, we see God's generosity growing, even though the chosen people are continually sinning.
- i. 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)
 - ii. 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.

³ The textual support for this material is found in Lesson 3.