

# AND GOD SAID WHAT?

An Introduction to Bible  
Study for Catholics

Session 2

# The Direction of Intention

My God, give me the grace  
to perform this action with you  
and through love for you.  
In advance, I offer to you  
all the good that I will do  
and accept all the difficulty I may meet therein.

Our Lady of Good Counsel, Pray for us.  
St. Francis de Sales, Pray for us

# AN OVERVIEW

- What is the Bible?
- Literary Forms – Myth, Legend, Debate
- Literary Forms – Fiction, Songs, Narratives
- What is a Gospel?
- The Infancy Narratives
- The Miracle Stories
- Parables and Allegories
- The New Testament Letters
- The Book of Revelation



# Literary Forms – Myth, Legend, Debate

- What is a Literary Form?
  - Literary forms are the categories in which we speak (**Oral Traditions**) or write (**Written Traditions**)
  - The organization, arrangement, or framework of a literary work
- Common Literary forms in the Bible
  - Myth, Legend, Debate, Fiction, Narratives, Songs, Poems, Lists, Parables, Allegory

# Literary Forms – Myth, Legend, Debate

- Why is it important to Understand Literary Forms?
  - We need to know what we are reading!
    - Is the passage a Narrative? A Song? A prophecy?
  - We need to know how to read it!
    - Literally or Figuratively, Religiously, Metaphorically?
  - We need to place ourselves in the original setting in which the passage was written!
    - Who is the passage intended for and what is its message for us?



# Literary Forms – Myth, Legend, Debate

## □ Myth

■ **Modern Meaning:** **Something once believed to be true but now is known to be false.**

■ **Biblical Myth:** **an imaginative story that uses symbols to speak about reality, but reality that is beyond a person's comprehension.**

■ Different societies compose myths to orient themselves in a moral and spiritual world.

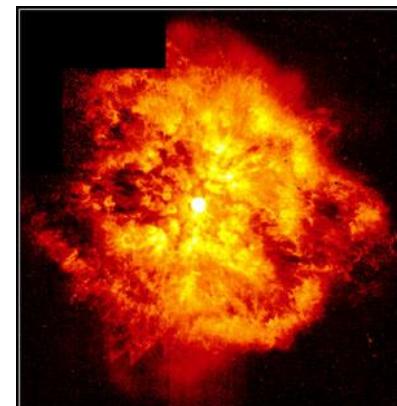
■ Example:

- Ronald Reagan's "City on a Hill" speech.
- George Washington and the cherry tree



# Literary Forms – Myth, Legend, Debate

- What a Myth is:
  - It is about reality
  - Truth or Falsity is not the issue
  - It is an attempt to come to terms with “OUR” reality
    - **How did we get here?**
    - **Where are we going?**
    - **What is our purpose?**
- The Creation Myth – The Big Bang Myth
  - The Creation Theory – The Big Bang Theory
  - Are they the same thing?



# Literary Forms – Myth, Legend, Debate

- The FIRST Creation Myth in Genesis
  - There is ONE God
  - All creation is Good – especially Human Beings
  - Sun and Moon are not gods
  - Human beings are made in God's image and likeness
  - God is loving
  - Keep holy the Sabbath

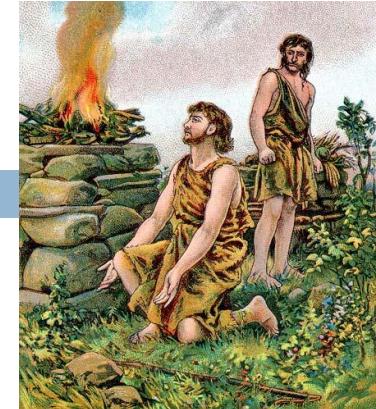


# Literary Forms – Myth, Legend, Debate

- The SECOND Creation Myth in Genesis
  - Not really about creation – attempts to address the concept of suffering and death
  - Use of symbol to convey truth
    - The Tree of Good and Evil, The Tree of Life, The talking snake
  - What the Myth conveys
    - Human beings were not intended for suffering and death
    - Original Grace
    - Suffering and Death are not part of God's plan
    - We have a choice on how we live
    - God is a God who loves and saves – the willing

# Summary of Genesis - Myth

- Early parts of Genesis written around 450 BC



- Not Historical as we understand History (wasn't intended to be historical)

- Later truths were written into Genesis stories

- 6 day week – Day of Rest
- Marriage
- Consequences of Sin, Murder, Death, Punishment
- Farming and Animal Husbandry
- Ethnic – national divisions



# Literary Forms – Myth, Legend, Debate

- Myth and Legend are not the same
- Legend
  - More based in historical reality
  - Questions that Legends attempt to address
    - The reality of the Patriarchs and Matriarchs of the Hebrew People
    - The development of National Identity of a certain group of people
    - Political, social, economic religious and geographical information is relayed



# Literary Forms – Myth, Legend, Debate

- How to read the Legends of Genesis
  - Not Exact quotations
    - Ask Why does the legend picture God as saying this... AND not...why did God say this?
  - Not Exact Chronology
    - Legends are Episodic not exact history
  - Not Exact Social Setting
    - Why was an event recorded
  - Some Information is Presumed Known
    - Our presumptions are not the same as those of the Original Oral Tradition
      - Be careful and not read our modern understanding into the text
      - OR to look into the text for justification

# Literary Forms – Myth, Legend, Debate

- **Debate:**
  - Formal method of interactive and representational argument.
  - More than just a presentation of a logical argument
  - Some degree of emotional appeal to the audience is important
  - Use of persuasion using facts, emotion and imagination are necessary
- **Biblical Debate:** an attempt to figure out God's motives by presenting God debating with a human
  - Between Abraham and God over fate of Sodom and Gomorrah
  - The Book of Job
  - The Temptations of Jesus
- Often focuses on suffering and sin



# Literary Forms – Myth, Legend, Debate

- The Book of Job
  - Series of three arguments as to why Job is suffering
    - Retribution – God is punishing Job for something
      - Job rejects this line of thinking because he has done nothing wrong
      - His friends assume that God sends physical punishment (sickness, natural disasters)
        - Job rejects this as well
      - Argument of retribution calls into question God's Justice
        - Job rejects that God is unjust

# Literary Forms – Myth, Legend, Debate

## □ Job and God

### □ What is discovered by Job

- Suffering is part of creation after the Fall
- It is not God who causes – but allows to exist
- All of creation is ordered and has a purpose
- We only perceive part of creation...and thus in turn can only perceive part of God
- God never abandons Job even in his suffering
- All suffering has meaning when united to God

### □ In the end, we don't have all the answers

- Revelation is a process.



God is in  
control