

The Garden and the Wilderness



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Introduction

The Bible is a book that tells a story. Unlike other books we read, either inside or outside the classroom, the Old and New Testaments tell a complete story of man, beginning with the Creation of the world and concluding with a revelation of the end of the world. The Jewish Bible consists of what Jewish people themselves call simply the Bible or Scripture. It includes the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings. The Christian Bible consists of the Jewish Bible (the Old Testament) plus the New Testament. Each group's Bible ends with a vision of doomsday and the coming of a Messiah, that is, a savior or deliverer.

In the Old and New Testaments, we have the story of man, Adam, and the story of a people, Israel. In the New Testament, Jesus is called a second Adam, and is believed by his followers to be the Messiah whose coming was prophesied in the Old Testament. Christian biblical writers thus continue the story begun in the earlier parts of the Bible and see man (Adam) and the people chosen of God (Israel) as rescued by Jesus from the wilderness in which they have been lost. Jewish readers see the Old Testament account of the Exodus from Egypt and the return from captivity in Babylon as the great divine acts of rescue. In addition, they look to the coming of their Messiah at some future time.

The shape of the Bible stretches from the beginning to the end of time. In its first book, Genesis, we read of a man created in the image of God. He is placed in a garden which includes a tree of life and a flowing river. Hundreds of pages later, in the last book, Revelation, we read again of that same river and that same tree. Adam and Eve, we recall, were banished from their garden, Eden, for disobeying God's command, yet the writer of Revelation sees the river and tree of Eden as symbols of the Creator's triumph over all evil in the universe. Now, at the end of the story, whoever wishes may drink freely of the water of life. The leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations of the world.

Adam and Eve stand for all human beings. Each reader of the Bible is invited to take part in a metaphor, to see himself or herself as Adam or Eve. The Bible addresses us as exiles from our original home, the garden of Eden. The human longing for a better world than the one we inhabit is presented in the Bible as a homesick urge to get back to the

Promised Land or to enter the New Jerusalem of heaven. As we read the Bible, then, we identify ourselves as individuals with Adam and Eve, or as groups with the people of Israel. In so doing, we learn something more of who we are and of what it means to be human.

This great story has within it many complex parts—fragments of history, law codes, moral systems, stories, poems, prophecies, philosophies, visions, wise sayings, letters—but the main structure or outline is simple. It can be seen as a completed circle which first moves downward from the garden of Eden into the wilderness of human history, and then slowly and painfully back to the starting point, as man proceeds toward Eden restored or the New Jerusalem.

The Bible offers its readers an experience of the most complete account of man's life that exists in western civilization. Its imaginative structure has shaped the world we live in: our literature and art, many of our laws and moral beliefs, some of our sense of scientific cause and effect, and three of our great religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

The book you are about to read is not the Bible but an anthology of selected biblical writings combined with nonbiblical literary selections. The study of literature is concerned primarily with the human imagination as it is expressed in such writings, and as it reaches out to something inside each one of you. The many nonbiblical pieces of literature will help you, here and now, to sense the immediate power and importance of the Bible as literature for our own time and place in history. Remember this book is prepared for you as students of literature, not as students of history or religion. The Bible has enormous importance historically and as a sacred book, but it is also literature, with a central place in any serious study of the works of the human imagination. We hope that in years to come you will be stimulated to move from this volume and its companions to the Bible itself, and that some of you will even study the ancient languages of Hebrew and Greek as paths to the rich absorbing writings found there.

A. A. L.

H. A. L.

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ALL THAT HE HAD MADE

The Creation of the World

In the beginning of creation, when God made heaven and earth, the earth was without form and void, with darkness over the face of the abyss, and a mighty wind that swept over the surface of the waters. God said, "Let there be light," and there was light; and God saw that the light was good, and he separated light from darkness. He called the light day, and the darkness night. So evening came, and morning came, the first day.

God said, "Let there be a vault between the waters, to separate water from water." So God made the vault, and separated the water under the vault from the water above it, and so it was; and God called the vault heaven. Evening came, and morning came, a second day.

God said, "Let the waters under heaven be gathered into one place, so that dry land may appear"; and so it was. God called the dry land earth, and the gathering of the waters he called seas; and God saw that it was good. Then God said, "Let the earth produce fresh growth, let there be on the earth plants bearing seed, fruit trees bearing fruit each with seed according to its kind." So it was; the earth yielded fresh growth, plants bearing seed according to their kind and trees bearing fruit each with seed according to its kind; and God saw that it was good. Evening came, and morning came, a third day.

God said, "Let there be lights in the vault of heaven to separate day from night, and let them serve as signs both for festivals and for seasons and years. Let them also shine in the vault of heaven to give light on earth." So it was; God made the two great lights, the greater to govern the day and the lesser to govern the night; and with them he made the stars. God put these lights in the vault of heaven to give light on earth, to govern day and night, and to separate light from darkness; and God saw that it was good. Evening came, and morning came, a fourth day.

God said, "Let the waters teem with countless living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the vault of heaven." God then created the great sea monsters and all living creatures that move and swarm in the waters, according to their kind, and every kind of bird; and God saw that it was good. So he blessed them and said, "Be fruitful and increase, fill the waters of the seas; and let the birds increase on land." Evening came, and morning came, a fifth day.

God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures, according to their kind: cattle, reptiles, and wild animals, all according to their kind." So it was; God made wild animals, cattle, and all reptiles, each according to its kind; and he saw that it was good. Then God said, "Let us make man in our image and likeness to rule the fish in the sea, the birds of heaven, the cattle, all wild animals on earth, and all reptiles that crawl upon the earth." So God created man in his own image; in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase, fill the earth and subdue it, rule over the fish in the sea, the birds of heaven, and every living thing that moves upon the earth." God also said, "I give you all plants that bear seed everywhere on earth, and every tree bearing fruit which yields seed: they shall be yours for food. All green plants I give for food to the wild animals, to all the birds of heaven, and to all reptiles on earth, every living creature." So it was; and God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. Evening came, and morning came, a sixth day.

Thus heaven and earth were completed with all their mighty throng. On the sixth day God completed all the work he had been doing, and on the seventh day he ceased from all his work. God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on that day he ceased from all the work he had set himself to do.

This is the story of the making of heaven and earth when they were created.

GENESIS 1; 2:1-4

In what way do we pattern our time so that it imitates the creation story?

What actions described in this story are still happening?

He's Got the Whole World in His Hand



1. He's got the whole _____ world in his hand, He's got the
2. He's got the wind and the rain in his hand, He's got the
3. He's got the gamb - ling man in his hand, He's got the



1. great big world in his hand. He's got the
2. stars and the moon in his hand. He's got the
3. ly - ing man in his hand. He's got the



1. whole _____ world in his hand, He's got the whole world in his hand.
2. wind and the rain in his hand, He's got the whole world in his hand.
3. crap - shoot - in' man in his hand, He's got the whole world in his hand.

4. He's got the little bits of babies in his hand,
He's got the little bits of babies in his hand,
He's got the little bits of babies in his hand,
He's got the whole world in his hand.