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
Why is it important to Understand Literary Forms?

- We need to know what we are reading!
  - Is the passage a Narrative? As Song? A prophesy?
- 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?
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
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
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
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
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
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
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