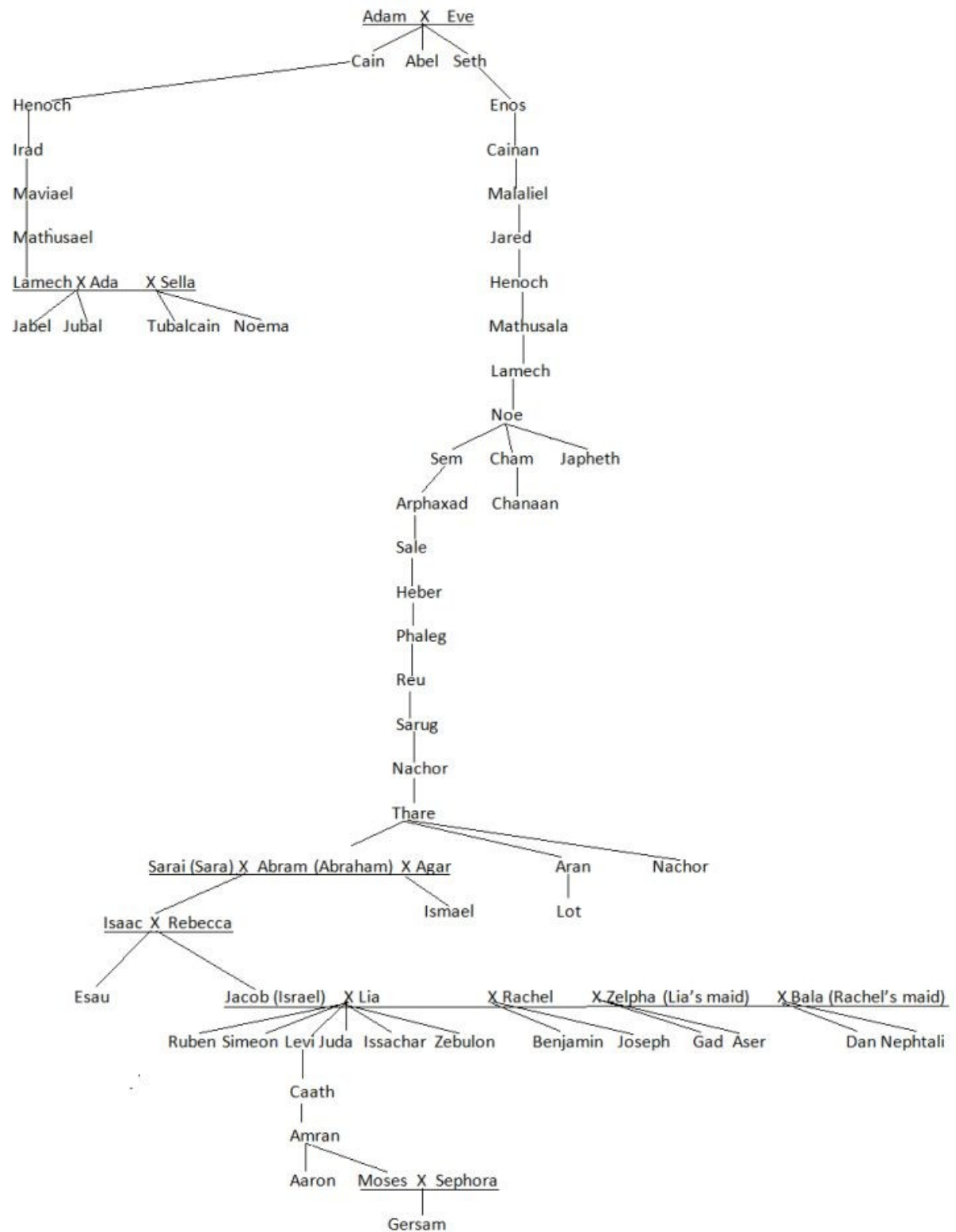


Readings for Children from the Book of Genesis for Septuagesima, Sexagesima, and Quinquagesima Sundays

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Septuagesima Sunday: Genesis 1-4

A long, long time ago, there was nothing -- no trees, no animals, no people, not even time itself. Just darkness and a liquidy void. But then God, out of pure love, decided to make everything we see.

First He said "Be light made!" And light was made! He separated the lightness from the darkness, and called the light "day" and the darkness "night". And that was the very first day ever!

Then He separated that liquidy void, making the firmament -- sky we see -- way up high, above the clouds, and the waters below. And that was the second day.

Then He moved the waters below and made dry land appear, making the earth and the seas. And on the earth, He brought forth all sorts of plants, like carrots and zucchini and ivy and flowers. And He made trees, too, some of which give us beautiful, juicy fruits like lemons and apples and cherries! And that was the third day.

Then He put billions of beautiful, twinkling stars up in the firmament! After this, He made one special star called the Sun to rule the day. Then He made the Moon to rule the night. And that was the fourth day.

After this, He filled up the seas with fish and whales and jellyfish and all sorts of swimming critters, and He filled the air with birds! Parrots, crows, owls and sparrows -- all sorts of birds. And that was the fifth day.

Then He made animals for the earth -- crawling ones, creeping ones, running ones... Beavers and cows and elephants and kitty-cats and -- well, any sort of animal you can name. And then He did something very, very special: He said, "Let us make man to our image and likeness, and let him have dominion over the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the air, and the beasts of the whole earth." And, so, He took dust from the earth, breathed life into it, and made a man whom He called "Adam," which means "Man." And that was the sixth day.

Then, on the seventh day, God rested, which is why we also rest on Sundays!

Now, God had made for Adam a beautiful, verdant garden called Eden. It had a gorgeous, sparkling river in it, and the animals were there, and flowers and plants grew everywhere. It also had two very special trees: the Tree of Life, and the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. God told Adam he could eat fruit from the Tree of Life, but that he shouldn't eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil no matter what, even if he was very hungry or very curious about what the fruit of that tree might taste like. God warned him, telling him that if he were to eat forbidden fruit from that tree, he would die!

Adam listened to God, and everything went just beautifully. Except for one thing. God saw that Adam was alone and needed a friend and helper. So He made Adam go into a deep, deep sleep, and while Adam was sleeping, He took one of Adam's ribs and made -- a woman! When Adam woke up and saw her, he was thrilled! He named her "Eve," which means "Mother of All Living." Adam said, "This now is bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man. Wherefore a man shall leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they shall be two in

one flesh." And that is how marriage started! Adam and Eve lived in the garden happily even though -- now don't giggle! -- they didn't have clothes on! They were so pure and innocent and full of sanctifying grace from God that it didn't even matter that they didn't have clothes.

Now, one day, Eve was puttering around in the garden, near the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, when she heard a soft, whispery voice. "Sssssssso, Eve, why did God tell you not to eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil --- sssssssssss?" It was a serpent! Actually, it was the devil who took on the appearance of a snake -- a sneaky snake!

Eve told the serpent that God told her and Adam that if they ate of that tree, they would die.

The serpent replied, "No, you shall not die the death. For God doth know that in what day ssssssssoever you shall eat thereof, your eyessssss shall be opened: and you shall be as godssssss, knowing good and evil."

Eve looked at the tree. She saw that its fruit looked delicious. "Juiccccccyy.... Sssssweet..... Sssssssuculent!" whispered the snake. "Tassssssste it!"

So Eve reached out her hand, plucked a fruit, and took a bite. And then she gave some to Adam, and he ate it, too. Terrible! They'd disobeyed God! Now sin had entered the world -- the very first sin, or what we call "original sin." And because of it, Adam and Eve lost their purity, innocence, and the beautiful sanctifying grace that God had given them! And when all of their descendants were born, they, too, lacked this sanctifying grace.

Because of this loss, Adam and Eve felt intense shame -- something they'd never felt before. They also, suddenly and for the first time, felt very, very naked. So they stitched together fig leaves to use to cover themselves, and they tried to hide from God. But then they heard God's voice. "Where are you?" He asked.

Adam said, "I heard Thy voice in paradise; and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself."

God said, "And who hath told thee that thou wast naked, but that thou hast eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldst not eat?"

And do you know what Adam did? He tried to blame God and the woman! He effectively said, "Hey, you gave me this woman, and she gave me the fruit! If you hadn't given her to me, this wouldn't have happened!"

God then asked Eve why she ate from the tree, and she blamed the serpent.

So what was the result of all this? Well, God cursed the serpent and told it, "I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed: she shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel."

God told Eve that she will have pain in childbirth, and that she would be under her husband's dominion.

And then He told Adam that he would have to work very hard, until the day he died, to put food on the table. He said, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread till thou return to the earth, out of which thou wast taken: for dust thou art, and into dust thou shalt return."

Human pain and death had entered the world because of that original sin.

Then God gave Adam and Eve clothes, and kicked them out of Eden, putting Cherubim armed with flaming swords in front of its gate to block it so they couldn't return.

After some years passed, Adam and Eve had many children. All their children, and their children's children, and their children's children after them, all the way down to us, were born without sanctifying grace because of that original sin. None of them, and none of us, can return to Paradise on our own. We need a Savior to save us!

Anyway, among Adam and Eve's children were three boys—Cain, Abel, and Seth. Cain grew up to be a farmer, growing vegetables, and Abel became a shepherd, caring for lots of fluffy sheep. One day, they both wanted to give an offering to God. Abel thought and prayed about it very hard, and picked his very best lamb to give to God. Cain didn't think and pray about it very much at all, and just brought a few of his vegetables -- not even his very best ones. Well, God saw that Abel did his best, so He loved his offering, but Cain's? Well, God knew Cain put no effort into his offering, so He wasn't happy with him at all. And Cain got envious and angry about it, and he came to hate his own brother.

One day, Cain's envy and anger grew so much that he killed Abel. God, of course, knew exactly what Cain did, but he asked him anyway, "Where is thy brother, Abel?"

Cain said, "I know not: am I my brother's keeper?"

God said back, "What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth to me from the earth!"

He then cursed Cain and told him he'd be a vagabond -- someone who wanders from place to place. And he set a mark on him so he'd be recognized, but people wouldn't harm him. So Cain went East of Eden to live, and he had many children.

The third brother, Seth, also had many children. And those children had children. And soon, we'll learn about some of his descendants!

Sexagesima Sunday: Genesis 6-9:1-17

A few generations after Adam and Eve -- nine generations to be exact -- there came to be lots of people living on the earth. But the problem was that so many of them forgot about God and started being awful. Selfish, prideful, lazy, lustful, angry, envious, gluttonous, stingy -- they were just generally rotten. God saw all of this and decided they must be punished.

So He planned to send a great flood -- a deluge -- to wash away all the badness. But Adam and Eve's 7th great-grandson, Noe (some call him Noah) was very different from the bad people. He was a just man, a good man, so God had a plan for him.

God told Noe about the flood and that He wanted to save him from it. He told Noe to build an ark -- a giant boat -- and gave Noe very specific instructions: "Make thee an ark of timber planks: thou shalt make little rooms in the ark, and thou shalt pitch it within and without. And thus shalt thou make it: The length of the ark shall be three hundred cubits: the breadth of it fifty cubits, and the height of it thirty cubits. Thou shalt make a window in the ark, and in a cubit shalt thou finish the top of it: and the door of the ark thou shalt set in the side: with lower, middle chambers, and third stories shalt thou make it." Wow, that is big! A cubit is about 20 inches, so the ark was about 500 feet long, 83 feet wide, and 50 feet tall. Whew! That's about as long as one and half football fields, and about as tall as a four-story building!

God also told Noe to bring animals onto the ark -- two of each kind, one male and one female -- and to bring food for all of them.

So Noe got busy and built that ark. The Bible doesn't say so, but I bet the Noe's neighbors thought Noe was being foolish! I can imagine them saying, "Ha, look at Noe, hammering and sawing and working all day and night to build a boat in the middle of nowhere!" And can you imagine what they thought when Noe started bringing animals on board? My goodness!

But Noe trusted God and did as God asked. He got the ark finished, then set about gathering up the animals, two by two. Cats, dogs, cows, sheep, goats, horses, ravens, doves -- you name the animals, they all piled into the ark.

And then came the rains. And then came the rains. And then came the rains. It was endless! Water kept pouring out of the heavens, and it rose and rose on the ground until it was deeper than the mountains were high! For 40 days and 40 nights, it rained and rained and rained, but Noe and his family were safe and snug on their boat. On the ark were all those animals, Noe, his wife, his sons Sem, Cham, and Japheth (Shem, Ham, and Japheth), and their wives. For many months they floated around. Can you imagine all the animal sounds on that ark? Moo! Baa! Roar! Meow! Woof! Oink! Gobble-gobble! It must have sounded like a very interesting symphony!

After ten months had passed, Noe sent a raven out to see if it would come back. It didn't, which meant that dry land was appearing someplace so the bird could land elsewhere. Then he sent out a dove, but the dove flew back. After a week, he sent the dove out again, and this time it came back with the twig of an olive tree, leaves and all, in its beak. Noe saw that and knew that the flood was over at last!

Everyone got off the ark -- finally! -- and the first thing Noe did was to offer a sacrifice to God in thanksgiving. God could smell the incense Noe burned in gratitude, and was pleased with Noe's offering. He blessed him and made a covenant with him, telling him that He would never destroy the world by flood again. He said, "I will set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be the sign of a covenant between me, and between the earth. And when I shall cover the sky with clouds, my bow shall appear in the clouds: And I will remember my covenant with you, and with every living soul that beareth flesh: and there shall no more be waters of a flood to destroy all flesh. And the bow shall be in the clouds, and I shall see it, and shall remember the everlasting covenant, that was made between God and every living soul of all flesh which is upon the earth."

And then He put in the sky a beautiful rainbow. So every time you see a rainbow, think of Noe and God's promise to us!

Now, let's think a minute: can you name something that is very much like Noe's ark? What else is there that if we enter it, we might be saved? The Church! Christ's Church -- the Catholic Church, of course -- is the "ark of salvation." And we are blessed to be a part of it!

Quinquagesima Sunday: Genesis 11-23

After the time of Noe and his ark, Noe's sons -- Sem, Cham, and Japheth -- all had children of their own. After many generations, there came to be a lot of people in the world again, and they all spoke the same language. They got the idea to build a city, which was great -- but then they also got the idea to build a great tower in the middle of it -- not just any tower, but a tower that would reach to Heaven. Now, that is a terrible idea! No one can reach Heaven by his own efforts like that; we need a Savior to get to Heaven! So God confused their speech so they all started talking different languages. They couldn't understand each other at all, so they couldn't build the city or the tower, and they all went their separate ways to different lands. We call the tower they tried to build "the Tower of Babel" -- which you can remember because "Babel" sounds like "babble," which means to speak gibberish, which is what they all sounded like to each other after their speech was confused!

Now, Noe had many children and grand-children and great-grandchildren. One of his 7th great-grandchildren was a man named Abram. He lived in a town with his wife, Sarai, and his nephew, Lot. Then one day, God told Abram to leave his city, called Ur, and go on a great adventure. He told him, "And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and magnify thy name, and thou shalt be blessed. I will bless them that bless thee, and curse them that curse thee, and in thee shall all the kindred of the earth be blessed."

So Abram did just that. He grabbed his wife, his nephew Lot, his tents, his sheep -- everything -- and went to the land of Chanaan (Canaan), where God told him that, one day, that land would belong to Abram and his family, and then they went on to Egypt, where they made a fortune. Then they returned to Chanaan, with lots of wealth.

Some of that wealth included animals. Abram had lots and lots of animals -- but so did his nephew, Lot. They had so many that the animals ran out of grazing room, so they decided they needed to split up. Abram told Lot to choose which of them should leave, and Lot chose to go, moving to a city called Sodom.

Now, Sodom and another city called Gomorrah were terrible cities. The people of the cities turned their backs on God and lived selfish, ugly lives. On top of that, some bad kings got together and attacked them, looting them for all of their treasure. In one of those wars, Lot got captured!

His Uncle Abram went into action! He gathered up all of the 318 men who worked for him and went to battle against the bad kings -- and he won! He rescued Lot, and got back all of the stolen treasure. The kings of Sodom and Gomorrah were grateful and rewarded Abram. And Melchisedech, the king of Salem, which means peace, met with Abram, too. Melchisedech was not just a king, but a priest, and he brought bread and wine and blessed Abram.

After that great adventure, Abram went back to his regular life, but got to thinking about how he and his wife didn't have any children. He grew sad believing he would have no one to leave his fortune to. But God came to him in a vision and told him he would have a child. He told Abram, "Look up to heaven and number the stars, if thou canst. So shall thy seed be."

Abram's wife, Sarai, was also sad about not having children. She was sad for her husband, too, so she told him to take a second wife -- her handmaid named Agar (Hagar), thinking that Agar might be able to give him children. This sort of thing was allowed in those times, but most certainly isn't now! Anyway, Agar got pregnant, and she and Sarai began to fight. Agar ran away into the desert, but an angel of God came to her and told her to return, and that her seed will be great. So she went back, and soon she had a son named Ismael (Ishmael).

Time went on, and when Abram turned 99 years old, God appeared to him and said, "I am the Almighty God: walk before Me, and be perfect. And I will make My covenant between Me and thee: and I will multiply thee exceedingly. I AM, and My covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations. Neither shall thy name be called any more Abram: but thou shalt be called Abraham: because I have made thee a father of many nations."

God told him that he and all the other males of his people should be circumcised as a sign of this covenant. And He added, "Sarai thy wife thou shalt not call Sarai, but Sara. And I will bless her, and of her I will give thee a son, whom I will bless, and he shall become nations, and kings of people shall spring from him." Abram -- sorry, Abraham -- laughed at the idea because he and his wife were so old.

Not long after that, the Lord and two angels came to visit. They all looked like regular men, and Abraham and Sara put on a feast of boiled meat and ash cakes for them. While Sara was in the tent, the Lord told Abraham that he would come back again, and when he does, Sara would have a son. Sara overheard this and laughed just like Abraham had, thinking she and Abraham were now far too old.

After the feasting, the focus of conversation became Sodom and Gomorrah. The Lord sent the two angels to Sodom so they could warn Lot about what was about to happen, and after they left, He told Abraham: "Those cities are wicked and must be destroyed," he said.

But Abraham thought of Lot, and wondered if the good people would be destroyed along with the bad. "Wouldn't the city be spared if there were even just 50 good people there?" he asked.

The Lord said that the city would be spared for the sake of the 50 good men.

Then Abraham asked, "What if there were 45 good men there? Then what?"

"The city would be spared for the sake of 45 good men, too."

"OK, then what about if there were 40 good men there?"

"The city would be spared for the sake of 40."

"What about 30?"

"Yes, the city would be spared for the sake of 30."

"What about 20?"

"Twenty also."

"What about ten?"

"The city would be spared for even ten!"

The Lord left. And meanwhile, the two angels arrived at Sodom and went to Lot's house. Some of the people of Sodom were so nasty that they went to Lot's house, too, asking Lot to send the angels out so they could do bad things to them. To keep the angels and Lot and his family safe, God struck all the bad people outside of Lot's house blind.

Inside the house, the angels told Lot that he must take his family and leave Sodom immediately because it was about to be destroyed! "Leave -- but, whatever you do, don't look back! Do NOT look back!" they said.

Lot didn't have to be told twice! He gathered his family together, and they all ran from Sodom. But Lot's wife did a foolish thing: she looked back. And when she did, she turned into a pillar of salt.

And that is the story of Sodom and Gomorrah and how they were destroyed for being bad. But back to Abraham: Sara soon gave Abraham the son God promised. They named him Isaac, which means "Laughter."

Abraham and Sara were overjoyed! They now had a beautiful baby boy! The boy grew fine and healthy, and then came one of the hardest days of Abraham's life. God came to Abraham and told him to sacrifice his son Isaac to him. Abraham might not have known exactly what God had in mind, but He trusted God and did as He asked. He gathered wood and gave it to Isaac to carry. He, himself, carried a sword and some fire. Then the two went off into the wilderness. Isaac was confused. Where was the animal they were going to sacrifice? He asked his father, and Abraham told him, "God will provide himself a victim for the holocaust, my son."

He knew God would not let his son be truly sacrificed. Still, he did as God asked. He built the altar, put the wood on it -- and then, suddenly, he heard an angelic voice calling his name: "Abraham, Abraham... Lay not thy hand upon the boy, neither do thou any thing to him: now I know that thou fearest God, and hast not spared thy only begotten son for my sake."

Abraham then noticed a ram trapped in a bush full of thorns, and he knew that he'd found the right sacrifice. God had provided, just as Abraham knew He would!

Can you think of what the story of the almost-sacrifice of Isaac is like? Who else was willing to sacrifice His only-begotten son? And do you notice anything about the ram that reminds you of Jesus?