

THE STORY OF CREATION: FAMILY WORSHIP IDEAS

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Chapter 1: 1-5

The First Day: In this chapter we find the story of creation which is easily adapted to the minds of small children. As a matter of fact, the state of little children's minds are clearly indicated by those two questions which they ask so many times each day—how and why? In this chapter we are told how the Lord created the world, and we should find no difficulty in explaining the story to children. It is not until the twelfth or thirteenth year, when the first rational has begun to form, that a more interior interpretation is needed. The literal account in Genesis is the most beautiful allegory ever written, and children are deeply impressed by the wonder of it all.

In these verses we learn that the first things that God created were the day and the night. The use of each should be explained. Children can readily appreciate that the day is for play or work and the night is for rest. Many illustrations of the usefulness of both are immediately suggested to our minds.

In the daytime little children play and help their mothers around the house. If it were always dark it would be very hard to do many of the things that we need to do. Here tell the children of some of the things that people in their own little world do. For example, what older brothers and sisters do, what father does, and other simple illustrations. Their little minds can easily grasp the difficulty we would have if all these things had to be done in the dark. It is also well to point out that if there were no light the crops would not grow in the fields, and we would not have food to eat.

Important as the light of day is to all of us, it is also necessary that we have a time to rest. Here is an opportunity to impress up on the minds of the children the need for sleep. Not only must little children have sleep, but so must men and women and all the animals of the field and forest. Without sleep we could not be strong, and, if we wish to grow up to be strong men and women, we must rest at night. This is the reason why the Lord created the night. Here also is an opportunity to tell the children that during the night the Lord's angels watch over us, and that this work is given only to the very best angels of heaven. The reference here, of course, is to the teaching of the Writings that it is the celestial angels who are with a person when he sleeps — this in order that no evil spirit can approach, for evil spirits cannot withstand the sphere of the celestials.

Chapter 1: 6-8

The Second Day: The next thing that the Lord created was the firmament, that is, the sky. All small children have an interest in the sky; in their little minds it is associated with heaven. This idea is proper to their state of life and should not be discouraged in any way. Note carefully that it is said here that "God called the firmament Heaven."

There is also the possibility for further instruction in this series of verses, for it is said that "God divided the waters." The waters above the firmament are rain. Speak here of the uses of rain; children will be intensely interested to know that if it did not rain they would have no water to drink, no food to eat, and there would be no way in which we could keep things clean. The waters

below the firmament are the great oceans, lakes, and rivers. These great bodies of water are a source of interest to all children, especially to those who have seen boats sailing upon them. At an early age they can grasp the marvel of One so wonderful that He could form these waters.

Chapter 1: 9-13

The Third Day: In the preceding lesson we spoke of the oceans, lakes, and rivers; we did this in order that the children would have an objective idea of what is meant by "the waters under the firmament." In this lesson, however, I would tell them that when the Lord, first made the world it was all covered by waters. There was one great ocean everywhere, but people cannot live upon the ocean. We must build our houses upon the land, and we must have fields where we can grow food. So it was that the Lord, "gathered the waters together," into oceans and lakes, and then the dry land appeared.

From the land people quarry the stones with which they build their homes. Upon the land grow the great forests that provide timber for many different uses. In the spring men plant seeds in the soil so that they may have food to eat. Out of the land come many minerals such as gold, silver, iron, coal, tin and other well-known metals. Here we find the fertile plains, the high mountains, the beautiful valleys. It was on the land that the Lord prepared a place where the people whom He was going to create could live and be happy. All these and many other thoughts are suggested by these verses. There is no lack of material for little minds to grasp. Each idea in its turn impresses the children with the wisdom and the power of their Creator.

It was also on this day that God brought forth "grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit." As soon as the earth was made ready the Lord planted the seeds that brought forth the grass upon which the cattle and other beasts of the field could feed. He sowed the herbs and all the vegetables in order that the people whom He was going to create might have food to eat. The same was true of "the fruit tree yielding fruit." Here parents might ask children to name the different fruits that they know. After children have mentioned the apple, the orange, the banana, and other common fruits, they can be reminded of the date, the fig, the pomegranate, and other fruits which were a part of the daily diet of the people of the Word.

In this connection, we would like to suggest that parents make use of questions as a method of instruction. In this way the children's mind is stimulated and he is encouraged to take an active part in his own instruction. Many teachers make a serious mistake in this regard. They do not seem to realize the importance of directing children's attention to the subject by means of questions addressed to the children. Some of these should be questions which the children can answer, in whole or in part; others may be questions which the children cannot answer, but which will fix the idea in their minds by means of the emphasis which the question imparts. By way of illustration, we might say to children, "Why do you suppose that the Lord kept the children of Israel in the wilderness for forty years?" Again, we might ask them, "Why was it that the Lord was born in Bethlehem and not somewhere else?" Unless previously instructed, the children will not be able to answer these questions, but, if they are allowed to wonder about it for a moment, the answer which is given is more apt to be retained in their memories than if it is simply told without questioning. We mention this because it is a useful method to cultivate, one which, if not overdone, helps to fix certain important ideas in children's minds. Try it several times, and it will soon become a natural mode of instruction which we will do instinctively at the proper time.

Chapter 1: 14-19

The Fourth Day: All little children are interested in the sun, the moon, and the stars. They will be deeply impressed by the fact that it was the Lord who created these beautiful lights that shine in the sky. It will not occur to them that there is a contradiction in the letter of the Word arising from the Genesis account of the creation of the day and the night before the creation of the sun. In this, and in all the other apparent contradictions of the letter, the minds of the children should not be disturbed. Discrepancies in natural facts should not be considered with children until they are old enough to have some appreciation of the existence of the spiritual sense of the Word. This is important—so important that too much stress cannot be placed upon it.

Here, as in the story of the first day of creation, the uses of light can be considered. To adults this may seem repetitious, but children are not bored by repetition, their interest is usually aroused by a return to familiar ground. We know how children will frequently become attached to certain stories and will ask to have the same story read over and over again. In this story, however, the sun as the source of heat as well as the source of light can be considered. Tell them that it is the sun which warms the earth and if it were not for the sun all things would freeze—it would be so cold that people could not live upon the earth. From this they can readily understand why it was that the Lord made the sun.

In speaking of the stars and the moon ask the children if they can count the stars. Tell them that there are so many stars that no one could count them all. Yet the Lord made each one of them and set it in its place in the skies. We can also tell them that each of these stars is a great sun like our own sun, but that it is so far away that it looks like a small point of light in the sky. This is easily illustrated by children's own experience of looking at large objects on the horizon from a distance, such as their own homes or other buildings, when viewed from several miles away. All this will serve to inspire children in an increasing appreciation of the extent of the Lord's creation.

APPEARANCES IN THE WORD

“It was said above that although the doctrine of faith is in itself Divine, and therefore above all human and even angelic comprehension, it has nevertheless been dictated in the Word according to man's comprehension, in a rational manner. The case herein is the same as it is with a parent who is teaching his little boys and girls. When he is teaching, he sets forth everything in accordance with their genius, although he himself thinks from what is more interior or higher; otherwise it would be teaching without learning, or like casting seed upon a rock. Nevertheless in its internal sense the Word is elevated to the angelic understanding; and yet that sense, in its highest elevation in which it is perceived by the angels, is infinitely below the Divine. It is hence manifest what the Word is in its origin, and thus in itself; and that it thus everywhere involves more things than the whole heaven is capable of comprehending, even as to a small part, although in the letter it appears so unimportant and so rude” (*Arcana Coelestia* 2533).

“If a person were not instructed by appearances, he would not suffer himself to be instructed at all. What is contrary to the appearance he does not believe, or comprehend except at a later period, when he possesses judgment and has been gifted with the faith of charity” (*Arcana Coelestia* 1838).

Chapter 1: 20–23

The Fifth Day: We now come to the day on which the Lord made the birds of the air and the fishes of the sea. First let the children name all the birds that they know. To this parents may add a few of the more common birds that the children know but fail to mention. In speaking of the uses of birds all children are interested to learn that many of the birds feed upon harmful insects which destroy the crops in the fields. This is one reason why we should be kind to birds and not destroy them. Also remind children that some birds are beautiful to look at and that others cheer us with their happy songs. It would be a sad thing for all of us if children threw stones at the birds or broke down their nests, for the birds would go away, and we would miss them very much.

All children should be taught compassion for other living things, especially for creatures which are smaller and weaker than they. In the exercise of the spirit of mercy, people find the highest expression of their humanity. The greatest of all human needs is a sympathetic understanding of our own mortal weaknesses. We who ask this of the Lord should surely extend this same spirit of mercy to others. With this in mind, it is vital that we teach our children the meaning of mercy while they are still young. This early training is the means whereby remains are implanted that will bear fruit in the life of regeneration. From the time they are very small, encourage children to be compassionate for all who need their protection and help. The first object lesson in mercy will be found in their relations with smaller children and with the animal life with which they are associated. At this time speak of the need for compassion for these helpless creatures—make a real point of it. Most children will understand and will readily respond to the instruction.

The whale, mentioned in these passages, is the largest of the inhabitants of the sea. He is a gigantic fellow, sometimes attaining a size of one hundred feet in length. But the sea is filled with many other inhabitants; there are thousands of different kinds of fish, also clams, oysters, shrimps, lobsters, and other crustacea. If parents refer to some book on marine life they will find ample material for an interesting talk on all the marvelous little creatures that inhabit the waters of the world.

Chapter 1: 24-25

The Sixth Day: On the sixth day of creation God created animals and Man. The animals are mentioned first, for they precede Man in the ascending order of creation. Here is a subject of unending interest to children. In their minds animals have all the personality of people. No children has ever heard an animal talk, but it does not occur to them to question the validity of the books which are read to them in which animals take on all the thoughts and feelings of human beings. The world of children is an imaginary world, and it should not be destroyed by the suggestion of scientific fact. Note that in the story of Adam and Eve the serpent talked with the woman. Children will not question this. Do not destroy this illusion. There is a reason for it. Again children will take delight in naming the animals which they know. Allow them ample time to make their contributions to the lesson. When they have finished, the point to emphasize is the fact that it was the Lord who made all these creatures. To each one He gave those things which are necessary to its life. To the bird He gave a bill so that it could pick up small seeds from the ground, to the horse He gave great strength so that it could draw heavy loads, to the animals which live in cold climates He gave warm coats. All these illustrations will impress children with the wisdom of God.

There is so much to be said about animals that parents will find no difficulty in directing the children's thought to the wisdom of God as it is illustrated in the creation of animal life. Allow a few minutes before the discussion to organize your thoughts on the subject and you will find the subject matter for discussion is ample. The same rule should apply for every service—a few minutes of preparation will make a great difference in your ability as a teacher. Preparation, which is largely a matter of organization of thought, is invaluable.

Chapter 1: 26-28

The Sixth Day (Cont.): Now the day has come when the Lord, having formed the earth and inhabited it with birds and animals, could create Man. This is the most wonderful story of all, and it should be explained in such a way that children will sense this. So far the Lord had done many wonderful works, but the most wonderful of all was the creation of Man. In the next chapter we are told how the Lord did this, *i.e.* out of the dust of the ground. But here it is sufficient to know that it was done. This was a very special creation, and to this Man was given dominion over all the other things that the Lord had placed upon the earth. This can be explained to small children by showing them how the other living things on the earth are intended to be of use to human beings. For instance, the horse carries loads that are too heavy for people, the cow gives milk, the sheep gives wool, the birds give eggs, the fish give food, and the ground gives wheat and corn and apples *etc.* The illustrations are endless and should be selected according to the children's own knowledge of the economy of the animal and vegetable kingdoms. All these good things are for us, and we should be grateful to the Lord, who loves us so much that He made all these things for us.

Conclusion: With the story of the sixth day this chapter ends. What you find here is purely suggestive—much of this material can be deleted and other means of approach can be substituted. The important thing is that parents develop a facility for story-telling—that like the people of the Most Ancient Church we adapt living truths, by means of the gift of speech, to those who are still in the sphere of innocence. In doing this parents must cultivate the use of simple language and stimulate children's minds by the imagery of child-like ideas. This takes practice and thought, but the spiritual rewards are great.

Chapter 2: 1-3

The Seventh Day: On this day the Lord rested. Now the truth is that the Lord never rests; unlike people He has no need of rest. The emphasis, therefore, should not be on the Lord resting because He was tired, but on the fact that the Lord had *completed* the work of creation. This is a good place to review the previous chapter and give the children the opportunity to recount the things which the Lord made. We would recommend this practice because it enables children to retain what they have learned in previous lessons. Perhaps it is well to begin each lesson by asking the children if they remember what they learned last time.