

QUIET TIME

Theme: The creation

- Try to make a specific time every day to meet Jesus Christ through reading and meditating his Word.
- Pray, talk with Jesus Christ and make a few short notes about this Bible passage in your notebook.
- Record what you discover, what speaks to your mind and heart, what you find difficult or what you understood.

- Day 1 Colossians 1:15-20
God created by means of Christ
- Day 2 Psalm 33:1-11
The power of God's speaking Word
- Day 3 Job 38:1-14
The Creator versus the creature
- Day 4 Romans 11:33-36
From God, through God and to God are all things
- Day 5^{BS} Genesis 1:1 – 2:4
The creation of heaven and earth
- Day 6 Genesis 2:4-25
The creation of man and woman
- Day 7 Ephesians 1:3-12
God's eternal plan for people
- Day 8 Romans 8:18-25
The (fallen) creation now waits for the recreation
- Day 9 2 Peter 3:1-13
The (fallen) creation will finally disintegrate
- Day 10 Revelation 21:1-5
The creation of the new heaven and the new earth
- Think about Jeremiah 32:16-17,27.
Nothing is too hard for God to whom you pray!
 - Therefore pray to God in all your problems and trials.
 - Pray every day for someone or something specific and wait in expectation for what God is going to do (Psalm 5:3).

STUDY

Theme: The creation

Read study 2 carefully before the next meeting. If you have questions, write them down and mail them to one of your group leaders. We will seek an answer together.

BIBLE STUDY

Theme: The creation of heaven and earth

If you like, you may already prepare the Bible Study for the coming meeting by reading through the Bible passage. Make use of the 5-step Bible Study method. The Bible passage is: **Genesis 1:1 - 2:4**

MEMORISATION

1. Motivation

Bible verses which you memorise will help you to live upright, pure and holy lives within a degenerate world (Psalm 119:9,11).

2. Memorisation

Memorise this verse in the Bible version of your choice.

THE CREATION

Hebrews 11:3

By faith we understand
that the universe was formed at God's command,
so that what is seen
was not made out of what was visible.

Hebrews 11:3 (NIV)

3. Review

Review the first two memorised verses once every day.

4. Memorisation of the Bible books

The first 6 of the 12 historical books:
Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel and 1 Kings

2. The creation

A. Theories of creation

Man has devised different theories for the origin of the world. There are different evolution theories as well as different creation theories.

Non-Christian theories:

The atheist for example believes that in the beginning there existed primordial matter. It always existed and its origin is unknown. By pure chance this primordial matter evolved by itself into all the different species and forms today, without the co-operation or intervention of a personal God.

The scientist believes that the world originated by an evolution process in which the lower and simple forms of life developed into higher and more complex forms of life, also without the co-operation or intervention of a personal God.

The deist believes that 'god' is the designer and creator of all evolution processes. But after he had programmed the evolution process, he withdrew and from a great distance observed the unfolding of this system.

Christian theories:

Also Christians have developed different theories in order to rhyme the discoveries of modern science with the history of creation in the Bible.

Some Christians believe in *the gap-theory*, which proposes that there existed a previous creation millions of years ago (cf. Genesis 1:1-2) that was destroyed by a great disaster. After this, God created the earth again in 6 days of 24 hours each (Genesis 1:3-31).

Other Christians believe in *the flood-theory*, which proposes that the universe was created about 10 000 years ago in 6 days of 24 hours each. But later the great flood brought about the different geological layers of rock and fossils that are found today.

Finally other Christians believe in *the day-age theory*, which proposes that the 6 creation days have to be viewed as 6 very long ages of creation.

THE HISTORY OF CREATION IN THE BIBLE

B. God revealed the history of the creation

What does the Bible reveal? The Bible does not defend a particular *theory* of creation. It also does not tell a *story* of creation or even a *myth* about creation. The Bible reveals the fact of creation as a *historical event*.

Genesis 1 is a *revelation of God* to the first people about the Creator and how and why *he* created everything. The history of creation is not given in the form of a vision or a poem. It is also not given in the form of a symbolic story. It is given in the form of a historic account. Genesis 2:4 literally says: "This is the historical account of the heavens and the earth on the day they were created" (Genesis 2:4). The creation is therefore a historical event that was completed when man was created.

God often spoke to man in Genesis chapters 1 to 4. He revealed to man who created the heavens and the earth, for whom he created everything and why he created. Man passed this historical account of the creation on to the next generation until it was finally recorded by Moses in the first book of the Bible.

C. When did God create the universe?

In his wisdom God did not reveal the details about *when* he created the universe or *how long* he took to accomplish this. Man did not need such information to live according to God's plan. The words 'in the beginning' means that God's plan to create and the execution of that plan existed before the beginning of human time and history. Man cannot imagine this beginning. And the question about 'time' cannot be answered, because 'time' as we humans know it was only created on the fourth creation day (Genesis 1:14)!

D. How did God create the universe?

In his wisdom God also did not reveal the details of *how* he exactly created the universe and *how long* he took to accomplish this! Man also does not need this information to live as God wants him to live.

God created the universe 'by his Word', so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible (Hebrews 11:3). God called things that did not exist into existence (Romans 4:17b). By God's speaking (his Word) the empirical matter, energy, space and time were created. Before his speaking, these did not exist. God's speaking is not only the way in which God reveals his will, but also the way in which God carries out his will. The creation of the universe was such a great and powerful event that man in this life will never be able to imagine or grasp it. That is why man can also not describe the creation! God had to reveal it to man!

The God who created the material universe is the same God who gave the special revelation in the Bible to man. That is why the facts discovered in science will never be able to contradict the truth revealed in the Bible. The scientific theories with respect to the creation must be regarded as human theories that are based on information available at this time. These theories must continually be adjusted and corrected!

E. What was the order of creation?

The intention of the sentence in Genesis 1:5: “And there was evening, and there was morning – the first day” is to indicate that there were different distinguishable phases in God’s approach in *completing* his creation (Genesis 2:1), which he *began* in the beginning (Genesis 1:1-2). Because these six days are *divine creation days* and not human days, the duration of the creation cannot be determined.

During the first three divine creation days: God created (1) the light, concentrated in bodies like the sun and stars; (2) the atmosphere in the middle of the water above (the clouds) and the water below (the sea); (3) and the land with its vegetation amidst the oceans.

In the next three divine creation days: (4) God ‘caused’ (Hebrew: ‘made’, not ‘created’) the sun to rule by day and the moon by night; (5) populated the atmosphere with birds and the sea with fish; (6) and finally created animals and man.

F. Why did God reveal the history of creation?

1. God revealed the history of creation in order to let us know WHO the Creator is

He revealed that the LORD (Hebrew: JaHWeH), the God who revealed himself in the Bible, is the only true Creator and God of all that exists. He himself existed forever and will exist forever. He was forever God and will remain God forever (Psalm 90:2). By means of his commanding Word he created the universe out of nothing (Psalm 33:6, 9; Hebrews 11:3; Romans 4:17; 2 Peter 3:5) and sustains the universe through his sovereign reign (Hebrews 1:3b).

2. God revealed the history of creation in order to let us know WHAT he created

He created the universe with its uncountable number of galaxies and stars. He created the solar system (the sun with all its planets, including the earth) in the galaxy called ‘the Milky Way’. He created the atmosphere around the earth so that it could sustain life. He created the continents amidst the oceans with its great variety of flora and fauna (Genesis 1:11), the birds that fly, the fish that swim and the creatures that crawl and walk on the land (Genesis 1:24). And he created man in his image (Genesis 1:26-27).

3. God revealed the history of creation in order to let us know FOR WHOM and FOR WHAT PURPOSE he created the earth

“The highest heavens belong to the LORD, but the earth he has given to man” (Psalm 115:16).

God first created all the heavenly bodies (the sun, moon and stars) (Genesis 1:1) and later caused (Hebrew: made) these to be the bearers of light for the sake of man on the earth (Genesis 1:14). These heavenly bodies are ‘signs’ that guide people when they travel, mark the seasons for agriculture, determine the days and years of the calendar and show the time of the festivals.

God created the seed of all plants and the fruits of all trees as food for man (Genesis 1:29). He created the earth as a visible witness to man that God really exists (Romans 1:19-20a) and he created the stars as a visible witness to man of the unimaginable greatness of God (Isaiah 40:25-26; Psalm 19:1-4). He created everything on earth to show man his goodness by fulfilling their needs and by giving them joy (Acts 14:17). God created the earth FOR MAN. Man must receive everything on earth with gratitude (1 Timothy 4:4-5) and man may enjoy it. But man must also share it with others (1 Timothy 6:17b)!

4. God revealed the history of creation in order to let us know FOR WHAT PURPOSE he created man

God created the earth for man in order to give man a meaningful existence and a significant task (Genesis 1:28).

The task to fill the earth

God’s original intention was to fill the whole earth with people who would bear the likeness of the Living God (Genesis 1:27-28a)! God designed the earth to fill it with people who know him personally, who love him wholeheartedly and who would obey and glorify him.

The task to subdue the earth

God’s original intention was that man should subdue the earth (Genesis 1:28b). The word ‘subdue’ literally means ‘to conquer, to tame and to cultivate’.

The ultimate destination of man is to make the uninhabitable earth habitable, to cultivate fallow land for agriculture and to tame wild animals to use as domestic animals. Man is commanded to discover the laws of nature within God’s creation and to put them to use for the wellbeing of man. Man must practise science in a responsible way.

The word ‘subdue’ also means ‘to preserve’. The task of man is also to protect and to preserve God’s creation against abuse and destruction. God sets limits to the use of all natural raw materials of the earth. No man may claim possession of the earth’s natural resources to enrich himself. No man may apply scientific laws for the destruction of people. People may not destroy God’s creation by polluting the atmosphere, air, water or land. People may also not destroy nature by bad management like deforestation, overgrazing and unfair partition of land. This often leads to draughts, floods, hunger and epidemics.

The task of 'subduing' the earth means bringing *biblical and Christian culture (kingdom culture)* to the people in the world. After the fall of man into sin (see the next study) all nations in the world began to absorb sinful aspects into their cultures. But God's goal is to establish the kingdom of God and restore the culture of the kingdom of God in it.

The task to rule over the earth

God's original purpose was that man should rule over the earth in service of God (Genesis 1:28c). The word 'to rule' literally means 'to exercise authority over', 'to manage'. That is why it is the task of man to manage the animals on the land, the birds in the air and the fish in the sea. Man must care for God's creation and not be cruel towards God's creatures (Proverbs 12:10). He must make wise decisions with respect to animals, birds and fish in order to use them in a well-balanced manner for the wellbeing (pleasure, work and food) of man (Genesis 9:2-3).

This ruling and managing task is however limited to the animals, birds and fish. Man may not rule over (lord it over) other people, no matter whether they belong to another nation, are foreigners in your own country or belong to the opposite sex (Matthew 20:25-26)! People may not put themselves above other people, oppress them, make slaves of them, abuse them or destroy them. The Bible clearly limits the authority to rule over people in a good and wise way to the legally instituted governments (Romans 13:1-2). But no government on earth has unlimited authority (Acts 4:19-20; Acts 5:29).

The task to live for Christ on earth

In the light of the New Testament revelation, everything was made by Christ and for Christ (Colossians 1:16). It is God's purpose that people should live for Jesus Christ (Romans 14:7-8), i.e. live in accordance with God's intention and to the glory of God (Isaiah 43:7; Romans 11:36)!

MAN CREATED IN GOD'S IMAGE

G. Man is created with a body and a spirit

Genesis 2:7 says that God made man from the dust of the ground and then breathed into his nostrils the breath of life through which man became 'a living being' (literally: a living soul). Like animals, man received a body consisting of the elements of this earth. But while animals were created *by God's creative Word*, the first man and woman were created directly *by God's own hands and breath*. And while animals received the breath of life by God's creative command (Genesis 7:22), man received the breath of life (Genesis 2:7), i.e. the human spirit, directly by God's breathing into his nose. God gave man breath and through breath life.

H. The spiritual nature of man

Genesis 1:26-27 says that the creation of man is unique. At the creation of man, God said: "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness." God's breath of life gave man a spiritual nature that corresponds to God's spiritual nature. Man received characteristics which God also possessed. Man was created a person as God is a Person in a much higher order! In all of creation only man is the bearer of God's image. Man is thus absolutely unique! Man *is* a unity, 'a living soul or being' (Genesis 2:7), and *has* a physical and a spiritual existence, i.e. man has a body and a spirit.

Later the Bible no longer differentiates between the words 'spirit' and 'soul' (cf. 'spirit' in Ecclesiastes 12:7; Luke 8:55; and 'soul' in Revelation 6:9; Revelation 20:4).

The body of man remains very special, because God formed him as it were with his own hands. Also the spirit of man is absolutely unique in the whole creation, because only man is the bearer of God's image. Only man has the ability to think, communicate in different languages and practise science. Only man has the ability to create by means of art and technique, but also the ability to destroy creation. Only man is able to care for the creation. Only man can distinguish between good and evil, make decisions and plans, communicate with God and have fellowship with God.

Genesis 1:28-29 says that God spoke directly to man. This was the first revelation of God to man! This means that as a human being you are able *to listen* to God, *to know* God and *to talk with* God. God gave man the task to fill the earth, to subdue the earth and to rule over the other creatures in creation. Man received the right to use plants and later also animals for the wellbeing of man. This means that God created the earth FOR MAN and that he had appointed man to be the steward of his creation!

Why is this subject important?

Many people pose the question: "Where do I come from?"

Genesis chapters 1 and 2 give the answer. God created you for a very special purpose: namely,

- a. to fellowship with God (1 Corinthians 1:9),
- b. to be his steward on earth (Genesis 1:28),
- c. and to live in complete dependence on him to his glory.