

God speaks and acts

Deltacourse

A discipleship training to equip Christians for works of service, so that the Body of Christ may be built up (Ephesians 4:11-16)

5

QUIET TIME

Theme: God speaks and acts in human history

- 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 understand.

Day 1^{BS} Genesis 6:5-14; 7:17-24

God destroys people with a flood

Day 2^{BS} Genesis 9:8-17

God gives the rainbow as a sign

Day 3^{BS} Genesis 11:1-9

God scatters the nations across the whole earth

Day 4 Psalm 33:4-19

God makes history within human history

Day 5 Genesis 12:1-3

God makes his covenant with Abraham

Day 6 Genesis 15:1-21

God reveals to Abraham what was going to happen in the future

Day 7 Exodus 3:1-15

God speaks out of a burning bush

Day 8 Exodus 12:29-42

God rescues Israel out of slavery in Egypt

Day 9 Exodus 16:1-20

God cares for his people in the desert

Day 10 Exodus 31:1-5

God gives talents of creativity

- Think about Matthew 6:5-8.
Not the length, but the sincerity of your prayers is important for God.
- Pray regularly for truth and sincerity in your prayers. Believe what God says in the Bible.
- 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 first continuous theme in the Bible: the Messianic line of descent

Read study 5 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: God speaks and acts in human history

If you like, you may already prepare the Bible Study for the coming meeting by reading through the Bible passages. Make use of the 5-step Bible Study method.

The Bible passages are: **Genesis 6:1-14**

Genesis 9:1-17

Genesis 11:1-9

MEMORISATION

1. Motivation

Bible verses which you memorise will help you to develop biblical convictions and habits in your family (Deuteronomy 6:4-9).

2. Memorisation

Memorise this verse in the Bible version of your choice.

GOD SPEAKS AND ACTS

Isaiah 14:24

The LORD Almighty has sworn:
'Surely, as I have planned, so it will be,
and as I have purposed,
so it will stand

Isaiah 14:24 (NIV)

3. Review and back-review

Review the last 5 memorised verses once every day and back-review all other memorised verses once every three weeks.

4. Memorisation of the Bible books

The 5 major prophetic books:

i.e. written by the 4 major prophets.

Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel.

(Lamentations is a poetical book).

5. The first continuous theme: The messianic line of descent

God reveals himself by speaking and acting in human history, but especially by entering his creation and human history through the Messiah (Jesus Christ). The Old Testament records the messianic line of descent, that is, the human descent of the Messiah. This is one of several continuous themes of the Old Testament! The words: 'Messiah' (in Hebrew) and 'Christ' (in Greek) mean: 'The Anointed One'. We will follow this human descent of the Messiah from the first book in the Bible until his first coming into the world.

A. God's first promise to man

The very first prophecy and promise in the Bible is written in Genesis 3:15. It is a promise to the first people, Adam and Eve, about the coming Saviour. God himself gave this promise to them after they fell into sin. The devil had seduced the woman to be disobedient to God's clear command. Then the woman seduced the man to also be disobedient to God. Adam has no excuse, because he was present when the devil tempted Eve, but he said or did nothing (Genesis 3:6)! Therefore God punished them. To the devil God said, "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring (Hebrew: seed) and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."

God said that there would be a constant struggle between the devil, his evil spirits and the people who support him (the offspring of the devil) on the one hand and the people of God (the offspring of the woman) on the other hand. Thus God changed the friendship which Adam and Eve made with the devil into enmity. This means that since the fall of man into sin all friendship with the devil or his associates are enmity against God and will result in a curse for such people (James 4:4). And vice versa, friendship with God would result in a blessing for man!

The New Testament reveals that with this prophecy (or promise of salvation) God foretold that this struggle was ultimately a struggle between two personalities: the devil and Jesus Christ, who would be born out of the descendants of the woman. The devil would attack Jesus Christ and try to kill him, because God had foretold that Jesus Christ would crush the head of the devil. Although Jesus would suffer the bite of the snake (i.e. death on the cross), he would conquer the devil and finally destroy him! Jesus would be the Conqueror!

THE STRUGGLE AGAINST THE FULFILMENT OF GOD'S PROMISE

1. The struggle: a central theme in the Old Testament

The history of the Old Testament describes the struggle that raged to hinder the fulfilment of God's promise. The enemies of the coming Saviour tried to hinder his coming. If you look behind the scenes you will see that the struggle between the enemy of God's people on the one side and the people of God on the other side throughout the Old Testament history of salvation is in reality a struggle between the devil and Christ!

Here follows an overview of this struggle:

B. The struggle from Adam to Noah

1. Adam and Eve

God gave the very first promise of salvation to Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:15). In the beginning they had two children: Cain and Abel. Cain became jealous and angry and murdered his brother Abel (Genesis 4:1-8). It seemed as if the devil wanted to destroy the descendants of the woman so that God's promise would not be able to go into fulfilment.

But God gave more children to Adam and Eve, both men and women (Genesis 5:1-5). In this way the human race continued to exist and God's promise could still go into fulfilment!

2. Seth to Noah

Seth was the third son of Adam and Eve and God designated him to be the bearer of God's promise of salvation (Genesis 5:6-32). After many years the population of the world had increased, but the knowledge of God, which God had revealed to Adam and Eve in the beginning, decreased. It became so vague that people had given themselves over to a very corrupt life-style. 'The sons of God' (i.e. the descendants of Seth who followed God) married 'the daughters of men' (i.e. the descendants of Cain who followed only man) (*Read* Genesis 6:1-4). The result was that the evil on earth increased enormously.

"The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time" (Genesis 6:5). God then decided to destroy man by a great flood (Genesis 6:5-7,11-13). It seemed as if the devil would succeed to destroy man as the bearer of God's promise of salvation. *But* God found one man who was righteous and lived blameless among the people of his time: Noah. Noah walked with God (Genesis 6:8-9). So God saved Noah and his family out of the flood (Genesis 6:14-8:22). In this way the human race continued to exist and also God's promise of salvation could still go into fulfilment!

C. The struggle from Noah to Judah

1. Abram (2167–1992 B.C.)

In the 21st century B.C. God's promise of salvation was given to Abram and Sarai. God promised that their descendants would be as numerous as the stars in the heavens and as the sand on the seashore. God said, "In you (Hebrew: in your Seed) all the families on earth will be blessed" (Genesis 11:26-32; Genesis 12:3; 15:5; 22:17-18). Humanly speaking this promise could not be fulfilled, because Abram and Sarai were both old and moreover Sarai was barren. It seemed as if the devil would be victorious.

But then a miracle occurred. When Abraham was 100 years old God gave them a son, Isaac (Genesis 21:1-7)!

2. Isaac (2067–1887 B.C.)

The promise of salvation was then given to Isaac (Genesis 26:4), but also his wife Rebekah was barren (Genesis 25:21). Again it seemed as if the devil would be victorious. *But* Isaac prayed to God and God gave them two sons, Esau and Jacob.

3. Jacob (2007–1860 B.C.)

The promise of salvation was then given to Jacob (Genesis 28:13-14), but Esau wanted to kill him (Genesis 27:41). Again it seemed as if the devil would be victorious. *But* God promised Jacob that he would protect him everywhere he went (Genesis 28:15).

4. Judah

The promise of salvation was then given to Judah, the son of Jacob, with Leah (Genesis 49:10). God promised that the royal line would remain in Judah until the coming of the Saviour. All the nations would obey this coming Saviour.

D. The struggle from Judah to Moses

1. The descendants of Jacob and Judah: the Israelites

Between the 15th and 11th century B.C. the promise of salvation was carried forward by the descendants of Jacob and Judah. Because the devil could not destroy Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, he concentrated his attacks on the Israelites, the descendants of Jacob. During the 430 years the Israelites lived in the land of Egypt (Exodus 12:40), they became a great nation. Finally a new king arose in Egypt who did not know Joseph and he gave a commandment to kill all the male children born to Israel (Exodus 1:7-22). It seemed as if the devil would finally succeed in destroying the promised Seed of the woman.

But God protected the Israelites. He even raised Moses inside the palace of Pharaoh and later called him to lead the Israelites out of Egypt, the land of slavery, to the Promised land (Exodus 3:1-12).

2. Moses (1527–1407 B.C.)

During their journey through the desert to the Promised Land, the Israelites fell into idolatry, unbelief and disobedience. They made a golden calf and worshipped it (Exodus 32:1-6). So God became angry and wanted to destroy the whole nation (Exodus 32:7-10). Again it seemed as if the devil would win.

But Moses prayed to God on behalf the nation of Israel and God heard his prayer (Exodus 32:11-14; Genesis 32:13).

E. The struggle from Moses to David

1. David (reigned from 1011–971 B.C.)

In the 11th century B.C. the promise of salvation through the coming Messiah was given to David. David was a descendant of Judah (*Read* 1 Chronicles 17:11-14). In this messianic prophecy God promised that he would give the kingship to 'one of David's sons' (offspring): Jesus Christ. This king would build 'a house for God': the Church (cf. 2 Corinthians 6:16; Ephesians 2:19-22; 1 Peter 2:4-6,9-10). God promised that 'the throne of Jesus Christ would be established forever' (Isaiah 9:5-6; Matthew 12:28-30; Revelation 17:14; 19:16). God promised that he would be 'a Father to Jesus Christ' and the Jesus Christ would be 'a Son to him' (Psalm 2:7; Matthew 3:17; Hebrews 1:5). In Jeremiah 23:5 we read, "The days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will raise up to David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land." Because God made all these promises to King David, the plan of the devil was to get David killed by his enemies. Twice king Saul tried to kill David by throwing a spear at him, but failed (1 Samuel 18:10-11). After that his own son, Absalom, together with a great section of the nation of Israel tried to kill David (2 Samuel 15:1 - 19:43). Every time it looked as if the devil was going to win the struggle. *But* the Bible teaches us that no one and nothing can hinder God from carrying out his sovereign plan!

F. The struggle from David to king Ahaz

1. Joash (reigned from 835–797 B.C.)

Between the 11th and 6th century B.C. the promise of salvation was carried forward by the kings of the southern kingdom of Judah. The kings of the northern kingdom of Israel often fought wars against the southern kingdom of Judah. Athaliah, the godless and wicked daughter of the departed king Ahab of the northern kingdom of Israel ordered all the princess of the southern kingdom killed! It seemed as if this brutal event would finally cut the line of the promised Saviour and that he would not be born.

But once again the Almighty God caused her plan to fail. Jehosheba, the daughter of the departed king Jehoram of the southern kingdom of Judah saved Joash, the son of her departed brother Ahaziah. For 6 years they hid this boy in the temple until he was crowned king (2 Kings 11:1-3).

2. Ahaz (reigned from 734–727 B.C.)

Later the northern kingdom of Israel made an alliance with Aram to destroy the southern kingdom of Judah (2 Kings 16:5). It seemed as if the surrounding nations would destroy God's people and that the devil would be victorious.

But the prophet Isaiah said to king Ahaz of the southern kingdom of Judah, "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14). God promised that however difficult the circumstances may be, no one in history would be able to hinder the coming of the Saviour! The coming Saviour would be called 'Immanuel', which means 'God with us' (Matthew 1:23). The Bible teaches that no nation, no political leader and no religion in the world would be able to thwart the God of the Bible in carrying out his eternal plan!

G. The struggle from Ahaz to Esther

1. Xerxes I (reigned from 486–465 B.C.)

In the 5th century B.C. (after the exile in Babylon) many Jews lived spread all over the Medo-Persian Empire. An evil man called Haman hated the Jews and tricked king Xerxes (Hebrew: Ahasuerus) to sign a decree to destroy all the Jews in one single day. Dispatches were sent by couriers to all the king's provinces with the order to destroy, kill and annihilate all the Jews – young and old, woman and little children - on the 13th of the 12th month (Esther 3:13). If Haman's evil plan had succeeded the devil would have triumphed over Jesus Christ. God's plan of salvation would never have become a reality.

But God used a Jewish woman, Esther, to become the wife of king Xerxes and she frustrated Haman's plan. Once more the devil suffered defeat!

G. The struggle from Esther to Bethlehem

1. Revelation 12:4-5: The dragon and the woman

In this struggle between the devil and Jesus Christ throughout the whole Old Testament and New Testament periods, Jesus Christ triumphed over the devil!

This struggle during the Old Testament history is depicted in two verses (Revelation 12:4-5): "The dragon stood in front of the woman who was about to give birth, so that he might devour her child the moment it was born. She gave birth to a male child, who will rule all the nations with an iron sceptre. And her child was snatched up to God and to his throne." 'The woman' is a symbol for God's people during the Old Testament period. She was destined to bring forth the promised Messiah child

(John 4:22). 'The dragon' is a symbol for the devil (Revelation 12:9). And 'the son' is a symbol for the Messiah, Jesus Christ, who would rule all the nations with an iron sceptre (Psalm 2:9; cf. Matthew 25:32). Throughout the whole Old Testament history the devil tried to hinder the coming of this promised Saviour!

But God is always the Sovereign King of his kingdom and he saw to it that his sovereign and eternal plan would not fail (Isaiah 14:24,27)!

2. Joseph and Mary

Finally the promise of salvation by the coming Saviour is given to Mary and Joseph. When the time was fulfilled that the promised Saviour, the Messiah, would be born the dragon made a few last attempts to kill this Saviour. The Roman king Herod (37–4 B.C.) heard from some wise men coming from the East that a King was born. He feared that he would lose his earthly kingdom to this King. So when he was told that this promised King would be born in Bethlehem, he ordered all babies below two years to be brutally killed in Bethlehem and its vicinity (Matthew 2:16)! Again it seemed as if the devil would succeed through the brutal plan of Herod.

But God's eternal plan cannot be thwarted! God sent an angel by night to warn Joseph and Mary to flee to Egypt. They stayed in Egypt until Herod had died.

3. Jesus Christ

When Jesus began his ministry on earth, the dragon tried to tempt him to submit himself to the devil (*Read* Matthew 4:1-11).

First the devil tried to tempt Jesus not to put his trust in God, but in himself – thus, to be independent from God: Jesus could change some stones in bread by his own power.

Then the devil tried to tempt Jesus to trust in the devil and so acquire kingship over all the nations by a shortcut: Jesus only needed to bend his knees before the devil. Finally the devil tried to tempt Jesus to a false trust in God and to a wrong obedience to God's Word (the Bible): He just needed to do what the Bible (quoted out of context by the devil) said and throw himself down the temple.

But Jesus triumphed over every temptation of the devil and unmasked him as the father of lies (John 8:44).

4. The promise went into fulfilment: Jesus Christ bound the devil!

During his work of salvation on earth, Jesus cast out evil spirits (demons of the devil) (Matthew 12:28). By his death on the cross he disarmed the devil and his demons and triumphed over them (Colossians 2:15). By his resurrection from the dead, his ascension into heaven and his enthronement at the right hand of God he now reigns triumphantly!

This is how the prophecy and promise of salvation in Genesis 3:15 went into fulfilment. The Seed of the woman crushed the head of the snake, that is, Jesus Christ triumphed over the devil (cf. Revelation 20:10).