

(T) Welcome to **Discipleship training On The Air**. In this Bible study series you may learn to become a disciple of Jesus Christ. Two teachers will do Bible study together about one important aspect of being a disciple of Jesus Christ. We will use a very easy Bible study method called the five steps method. As you listen to this programme, make notes in a notebook or record the programme. The first series of 6 Bible studies is about 6 fundamental questions in life: “How do I respond to God’s Word?” “Where do I come from?” “Who am I?” “Why am I here?” “Where am I going?” And “How do I bear fruit?” Today’s Bible study is: A DISCIPLE KNOWS WHERE HE COMES FROM. The fundamental question is “WHERE DO I COME FROM?”

(S) **STEP 1. READ**

Let us read Genesis 1:1 – 2:4 for ourselves.

(T) **STEP 2. DISCOVER**

Let us discover and discuss some important truths in this Bible passage. “Which truth in this passage is important for you?” or “Which truth in this passage touches your mind or heart?” Think and write your answer in your notebook. After a few minutes take turns to share your discoveries with one another.

(S) An important truth for me is in Genesis 1:27. God created man and woman in his own image. I am different than animals, because they do not have the image of God. As an image of God, I am a recognisable copy of God’s personality. I have been given the same kind of characteristic features God possesses.

(T) An important truth for me is in Genesis 1:28. God created me for a specific task. I am created to have a relationship with God, with other people and with nature. With regard to God, I am to bear his image in a worthy way. With regard to other people, I must respect the difference between male and female. With regard to nature, I must subdue it and rule over it.

(S) **STEP 3. QUESTION**

Let us try to understand all the truths in this passage and ask our questions about the things we still do not understand. “Which question about anything in this passage would you like to ask?” Think and write your question in your notebook. Then discuss the questions and try to find answers.

1st Question. How long did creation take?

(T) The Bible says “in six days”. How must these days be interpreted? The Hebrew word “day” is “yom” and in Genesis 1 the author could not have intended a literal 24-hour day. First. In Genesis 1:27, on the sixth creation day, God created man, both male and female. After creating all the land animals, this was God’s closing act on the sixth creation day. But in Genesis 2:15-22 a considerable interval of time must have intervened between the creation of Adam and the creation of Eve. Before the creation of Eve, Adam’s task was to work in the enormous Garden of Eden and take care of it. God’s decision to make a suitable helper for Adam implies a long enough period of time to lose his initial excitement at working in the Garden. To compensate for his lonesomeness, God gave Adam the enormous task of classifying every species of animal and bird. This comprehensive inventory of all animals, birds and insects must have taken a very long time. Finally, after Adam’s renewed loneliness, God created a wife for him from that part of his body that was closest to his heart. Second. In Genesis 2:4 the word “day” refers to the whole period of creation and includes not only all the six creation days, but also the original creation in Genesis 1:1-2. Therefore Genesis 1 was never intended to teach that the six creation days lasted a mere 24 hours each. The purpose of Genesis 1 is NOT to tell HOW FAST God performed his work of creation, but to tell WHO created the universe and FOR WHAT PURPOSE he created it.

2nd Question. How did God create the universe?

(S) *In the beginning of time*, God (Yahweh) created the heavens and the earth. This refers to the creation of all the heavenly bodies in the universe and the planet earth. All physical matter was created. But the earth was still formless, empty, dark and its physical matter was still in a fluid state. There were no living creatures on earth. And there was no light. This description simply serves as an introduction to the six creation days. The six days of creation set forth the orderly progressive stages in which God completed his work of creating the planet earth as we know it today.

The first day of creation. Genesis 1:2-5 sets forth the formation of light. This must have meant primarily the light of the sun and the other heavenly bodies.

The second day of creation. Genesis 1:6-8 sets forth the formation of the sky that separated the moisture suspended in the sky and the moisture condensed on the surface of the earth. Thus, a thick layer of clouds covered the whole earth.

The third day of creation. Genesis 1:9-13 sets forth the formation of dry land and sea. The waters of the oceans, seas and lakes receded to a lower altitude than the masses of land that emerged above them. By God's creative command, the dry land produced the various species of plants and trees. The different species did not evolve, but were created! Water and sunlight shining through the still thick layer of clouds around the earth made photosynthesis possible.

The fourth day of creation. Genesis 1:14-19 reveals that God parted the cloud cover enough for direct sunlight to fall on the earth and for accurate observation of the movements of the sun, moon and stars to take place. The verb in verse 16 should not be translated as "made the two great lights and stars", but as "caused them to govern". Thus, verse 16 should not be understood as indicating the creation of the heavenly bodies for the first time, but informs us that the bodies of light created on the first day have been put in their appointed places to benefit man on the earth. Eventually they would function as indicators of time, that is, as stellar signs that aid travelling, as an agricultural calendar of the seasons, and as a historical calendar of days and years. All this points to the fact that God created the earth for man! The sizes of the light bodies were not intended as a scientific fact, but described the way people saw them.

The fifth day of creation. Genesis 1:20-23 relates the creation of marine life, freshwater life and all flying creatures. These included the great sea creatures, fish, shellfish, crabs and shrimps on the one hand and insects and birds on the other hand. It is interesting that the Cambrian period of geology shows the first evidence of invertebrate animal life with startling suddenness. There is no record whatever of the 5000 species of marine and terrestrial animal life of the Palaeozoic era prior to the Cambrian levels of fossil bearing strata. God did not command them to multiply, but blessed them with the ability to multiply.

The sixth day of creation. Genesis 1:24-26 relates the creation of all the land animals after their species and the creation of man. Verse 24 should not be understood to mean that the earth had the ability to produce animals by itself. God created animals from the elements present in the earth by his creative command. The land animals included livestock like sheep and cows, all small animals moving along the ground and all the larger wild animals like lions and elephants. This was not intended to be a scientific classification, but the way people looked at animals.

Each one of the days of creation was symbolised by a *complete 24-hour cycle*, from sunset to the following sunset. The real intention of the formula "and there was evening, and there was morning, - the first day, etc." was to show that there were definite and distinct stages in God's creational procedure. The intention of the author was not to use this formula as evidence for a literal 24-hour day concept.

Genesis 2:1 is a summary statement: the creation of the whole organised universe was now completed. Verse 2 says that the seventh day started as soon as God had finished his work of creation.

3rd Question. How should we understand the seventh day that concluded God's original work of creation?

(T) The Bible does not teach that God rested only one 24-hour day at the conclusion of his creative work. The seventh day of creation has no closing formula and therefore also no end! After the six days of creation no more days of creation followed. The New Testament teaches that this seventh day of creation has continued right into the church age as "God's rest". In Hebrews 4:1-11 it is clearly taught that when God complete his work of creation, he rested. This is a guarantee that when God's people have completed their service on earth they too will enter into God's rest. This "Sabbath rest" of the people of God refers to the life in God's presence either immediately after death or after the resurrection on the new earth. However, this "resting" of God does not mean that God is "doing nothing". It means that God is doing "no more creating". God is still sovereignly maintaining and reigning over his creation.

4th Question. How should I regard the so-called cave men or various man-like species that lived many thousands of years ago?

(S) Palaeo-anthropologists have found the remains of man-like creatures, commonly called "ape-men" or "cave men". They are estimated to have lived between 1 750 000 and 20 000 years ago. These early man-like creatures cannot be dismissed as mere "apes" in their mentality. Their remains are accompanied by stone implements, such as arrowheads and axe heads. Charred remains indicate strongly the use of fire for cooking purposes. In case of Neanderthal deposits, there seems to be evidence of burial with adjacent implements as if there were some belief in life after death. Some crude statuettes found may possibly have had cultic purposes. Some remarkable cave paintings may have been of Neanderthal origin. All these species, from the "Cro-Magnon" back to the "Zinjanthropus", must have been advanced apes or man-like creatures that possessed considerable intelligence and resourcefulness. Whatever the dating methods used, these early man-like creatures can hardly be dated later than the creation of Adam and Eve referred to in Genesis 1-3. The statistics of Genesis 5 can hardly end up with a date for Adam much earlier than 10 000 BC. Therefore we are compelled to regard all these man-like creatures as having lived before Adam.

Acts 17:26 says that from one man, literally from one blood, God made every nation of men. And Romans 5:12-21 demands that all mankind subsequent to Adam's time, at least, must have been literally descended from

Adam, since he entered into covenant relationship with God as the representative of the entire human race. This indicates that there could have been no true *genetic relationship* between Adam and the pre-Adamite races. All the man-like creatures that lived before Adam were genetically not Adam's ancestors, nor were they involved in the Adamite covenant with God. Like all the dinosaurs, they all died out before Adam was created.

However close the skeletal structure of these cave men may have been to modern man, this factor is scarcely relevant to the principle question of whether these cave men possessed a truly *human soul or personality*. The implication of Genesis 1:26-27 is that God was creating a qualitatively different being when he made "Adam", which means "man" in the original language. Adam was the first man created in the spiritual image of God! There is no evidence from science to disprove this.

5th Question. What does it mean to be created in the image of God?

(T) Genesis 2:7 says that God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed the breath of life into man, and man became a *living being*. The human body, just like the bodies of animals, consists of the elements that are found in the earth. However, in differentiation to animals, which were formed by God's creative command, people were formed by God's hands. The human, just like animals, was given the breath of life (Genesis 2:7, 7:22). However, in differentiation to animals, which were given life by God's creative command, man was given life directly by God's breathing into his nostrils. This means that God gave man respiration and thereby life.

Genesis 1:26-27 says that the creation of man is even much more special. Man's creation is specially introduced by a decision of the Triune God, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness." And then God made man in his own image or likeness. Man was given a spiritual nature that corresponds to God's spiritual nature. Man possessed the real and characteristic features of God. Man was in another degree a copy of God's personality. In this respect, man is unique in creation. Nothing in creation besides man bears the image of God!

Thus, man has a physical and a spiritual existence, or in short, man has a body and a spirit. Man's body is very special, because God formed it with his own hands. And man's spirit is unique in creation, because only man bears the image of God.

Genesis 1:28-29 says that God spoke directly to man. This is the very first revelation of God to man! This means that man has the ability to know God and to communicate with God. Moreover, God gave man the task to subdue the earth, to rule over all living creatures and to utilise all plants and trees. God thus reveals that he created the earth FOR MAN and made man the steward of his creation.

(S) **STEP 4. APPLY**

Let us brainstorm with one another and record a list of **possible applications** from Genesis 1:1 – 2:4.

(T) Help fill this earth with people that bear the image of God.

(S) Obey God's cultural command in verse 28 and care for God's creation.

(T) Realise that except for sin, everything God created is very good.

(S) Obey God's command and rest one out of every seven days in the week.

(T) Afterwards consider which possible application does God want you to turn into a **personal application**.

(S) My personal application is the following. I am a special creation of God. Both my body and spirit are very precious to God. Therefore I never want to look down upon myself, despise myself or reject myself. I want to take good care of my body and my spirit.

(T) My personal application is the following. I want to take my God-given task serious. As God's creation, I want to know God and bear his image in a worthy way. Created either male or female, I want to take this difference serious. Created to be God's steward of the earth, I want to help take care of nature.

(S) **STEP 5. PRAY**

Let us take turns to pray about one truth that God has taught us in Genesis 1:1 – 2:4.

Dear Father in heaven, help me never to despise or reject myself. Give me your grace to know myself, my talents, my skills, my convictions, my feelings, and my value in your eyes.

(T) Dear Father in heaven, help me to do the task you have given to me. Give me the desire to know you and serve you on this earth.

(S) **ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK**

First. Meditate on the following question. "Where do you come from?"

Second. Prepare next week's Bible study from Ephesians 2:1-22. Join a house fellowship that does Bible study. See the workbooks "Go and make disciples" and Internet on www. etc

Third. Listen on short wave radio every SATURDAY to WEDNESDAY to "Discipleship training on the air".