ANDREASCOURSE-1



Week 1: ´He's got the whole world in His hands´
Genesis 1 verse 1 - 2 verse 3

Intro
The Bible begins with the words: 'In the beginning God created heaven and earth..'
God was already there before something or somebody existed. That's why Christians (and Jews) say: God is eternal; He is from eternity.

Out of nothing God called forward the universe by his Word. Such a creative act is impossible for people or gods. This is only possible by God, the Bible says at its first page. Genesis without further explanation states: God only need to speak and it is al there!

But…who is He? How should we know and trust this God? Christians believe: we know Him (something about Him) through Jesus Christ. We will deal with that later.

Because 'creation' is God's work this word is never used for creative activities of people. We only can use, change something, or compose something out of other elements. Only God creates. He is the only real creative Artist, because He makes something that is really new.

The word 'create' is not only found in the first chapter of the Bible. Sometimes it also refers to God's work of rescuing or restoring, for example in Isaiah 65. Because his work in liberation and restoration is new and incomparable in the same way. God is the only One who can make our life really new.

When the Bible states that God has created the world, it also means that He is the owner. His supervision and his power not only relate to the actuality, but also to the past and the future. He is got the whole world in His hands..

Gods greatness in creation calls for respect. It might support us in certain sense: If He is so powerful, He is able to help us in every problem. He knows from what parts and elements the world has been composed. He is the Maker; He knows how it works. If you really believe that, you shouldn't be concerned about the future of the world.

But…is it that simple? There are many questions. How does this relate to all kinds of scientific insights? Can you harmonize the belief in God as creator of heaven and earth with theories of evolution and the big bang? How old is the earth? What represent the days of creation? Can we maintain that these are 'real' days as some Christians argue?

The best is that we take these verses just as they are here, read and reread them, think about it. Who is God? What does it mean to me/us that he has made the universe? Who are we and to what goal we are here on earth?

In Genesis 1 verse 27 we read too that God has created humans after (in Hebrew: in) his image. Do we look like God? In what respects we can resemble Him? In a certain way God took himself as an example, when He created man, but that doesn't mean that man is a sort of god…
'When you don't know who God is, you cannot know who you are yourself' (John Calvin said). How true is this statement? Do we miss meaning and goal if no God existed?

To get started

You find a text part for every day to read. A couple of indications may help you to concentrate (we are all busy people!). Questions may help you to reflect further

There are 6 text parts for 6 days. The seventh (or first) is the day that we meet together (Monday)

Day 1: Genesis 1 verses 1-5 God stands at the beginning

- Try to calm down your thoughts/feelings in order to concentrate.
- Read the five verses again and again. Put exclamation marks and question marks. Make annotations of your insights and questions.
- Questions to help you further:
    - What do you consider the most striking in the description of what God does? Take on of God's 'activities' here and reflect on it. What is –for example- the consequence of this activity for the way you observe the world and your own life?
    - What fragments provoke questions? Try to think through answers. Remember your questions and write them down.
- If possible for you: pray when you close this moment of reflection and use something that stroke you in the past reflection moment.

Day 2: Genesis 1 verse 6-13 God sets boundaries

- If possible pray for concentration at the start.
- Read and reread this passage, reflect, meditate, note.
- Questions:
    - God made boundaries, separations. What? Why are these separations important? Reflect about the meaning of boundaries in our life, and also the consequence of transgressing boundaries.
    - ´God saw that it was good (Hebrew: 'tof'). At what stage something is 'good' in your opinion? Looking at the text: at what stage something is good according to God's thoughts?
- If possible for you: closing prayer, give back in prayer something that you discovered.

Day 3: Genesis 1 verse 14 – 19. The heavenly bodies

- Prayer at the beginning, ask for calmness and insight
- (Re)read, think, write
- Questions:
    - For people in the ancient Eastern world sun and moon were gods, who were worshipped. Here the heavenly bodies just seem to be little lamps that God hangs in the universe. What is the meaning of sun, moon, planets and stars for you?
    - God is greater than the universe; He puts everything at the right place. That is too great for us to understand. Nevertheless try to think a little bit further and meditate about the incredible greatness of God.
- Closing prayer if possible. For what you want to thank God? What problems you want to indicate to Him?

Day 4: Genesis 1 verse 20 - 27 Animals and humans discerned

- Prayer at the beginning. Bring for God what hinders you, what troubles you.
- Let this passage and the meaning of it really come to you. Place (virtual) exclamation marks and question marks at words of little parts when you read and reflect about the text.
- Questions:
    - What is the difference between the creation of animals and that of humans as it is described here? In what you can notice the value of animals, and in what the value of humans according to the author of Genesis?
    - What does it mean to you to read in verse 27 (implicitly) that you have been created in God's image?
- Prayer at the closing. Points of thanks, doubts…You may try to write down a prayer, if you find it difficult to speak it aloud or in your thoughts.

Day 5: Genesis 1 verse 28 - 31 Culture mandate...

- Prayer at the beginning. Maybe you want to give thanks that you may enter into God's presence, leaving the turbulence behind you.
- Read, chew and ruminate the words
- Questions:
    - What task God gives to people? What is your 'place', your 'footprint' on this world? Where is the difference because of your existence?
    - 'God blessed man'. Can you understand from the text what this blessing represents? What is your imagination with the word 'blessing'?
- Closing prayer. You can pray for insight or guidance what and what not should be your tasks in this period of your life.

Day 6: Genesis 2 verse 1 - 7 Man Adam: dust from the earth and breath from God!

- Prayer at the beginning. Give back to God what bothers you today.

- Questions:
    - Again you will notice that God puts boundaries. He stops, rests at the 7th day. This means a lot, also for us. Why, do you think?
    - Man is from the earth (Hebr. Adama), he/she is moulded out of earthly matter, like clay. At the same time God's breath is given to him/her. How do we have to consider human life in the light of these texts? How do you think about yourself as a human creature?
- Closing prayer: For what you may thank God and praise him? What doubts and questions you want to give voice to?