

1. CREATION OF THE WORLD

Genesis 1:1-23

To begin with: Note that in the Bible, a new day begins when the sun sets, not when it rises. The source of light (v. 3) was not the sun; the sun was created on the fourth day.

Verses 1-5. The first day. «In the beginning» can also be translated «in his firstborn son».

- What existed and what happened before the first verse of the Bible?
- What happened during the first day of the creation?
- Where are the origins of the matter and information which was necessary for the Earth to be born?
- How was the triune God involved in the creation of the world?
- The leader reads Rev. 10:5-6. When did time begin and when does it end?
- Where did the light originate before the sun existed? Think about different options.

• The beginning of John's gospel reads: «In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... All things were made through him... In him was life, and the life was the light of men» (John 1:1-4).

What do these verses and verses 1-5 of Genesis have in common?

- Do you think that these verses correspond with the Big Bang theory?
- Imagine how the world looked at the end of the first creation day.

Verses 6-8. The second day. Apparently, "an expanse" means the atmosphere.

- What happened on the second day of creation?
- Discuss how days were counted before the sun existed.
- Does one day in the creation story mean 24 hours or a longer time period? Justify your opinions.
- How did the world look at the end of the second day of the creation?

Verses 9-13. The third day.

- What does «each according to its kind» mean?
- Does the creation story contradict the theory of evolution? If it does, how?
- What else did God do during the first three days, in addition to creating?
- How did the world look at the end of the third day of the creation?

Verses 14-19. The fourth day.

- What were the functions of the celestial bodies?
- How is it possible that the celestial bodies were created or became visible only on the fourth day? Think about different explanations.
- How did the world look at the end of the fourth day of the creation?

Verses 20-23. The fifth day.

- Why did God want to make nature so rich and diverse – why was it not enough with less?
- Why was God's blessing necessary?
- How did the world look at the end of the fifth day of the creation?

Applied questions:

- What do you think was most wonderful in the creation of the world?
- Why do many of the intelligent people of our time find it impossible to believe that God has created the world or that there is intelligent design behind everything?

- The creation story shows us all that God can do with his Word alone. What does it mean for you when you think about your personal problems?
- Finally:** «In the beginning» can be translated «in his firstborn son». This shows that Jesus was involved in the creation work and holds everything even today: «For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities – all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.» (Col. 1-16-17)

2. THE SIXTH DAY AND SABBATH

Genesis 1:24-2:6

To begin with: Let's revise what happened during the five first creation days. In the first chapter the Creator is called «God», in the second one «the Lord God».

Verses 1:24-27

- What can we conclude when we notice that mammals and humans were created on the same day?
- Why does God say: “Let the earth bring forth living creatures» - though he made them himself (24-25)?
- With whom did God plan the creation of man? (Why is plural used in the creation story only when man is created?)
- Which task did God already plan for man before his creation?
- What does it mean that the creation was given for man to rule/dominate? (How can nature be ruled for its advantage, not for its destruction? 26b, 28b)
- How does the creation of man differ from the creation of nature?
- What does it mean that man is a) like God b) created in his image?
- What makes man more valuable than an animal?
- What happens in the world where man is thought to be just like an animal and animals are thought to be as valuable as people?
- Compare two young people who hear: «You are an animal that belongs to the homo sapiens species» or «God has created you in his image».
- Think why two genders are needed for «the image of God»: a man and a woman?
- What happens in a world where dividing people as men and women is forbidden?
- What would you say to a man or a woman who experiences their gender to be wrong or that they are neither of the two genders? (Compare Matt. 19:12)

Verses 1:28-31

- Define the blessing of God described in verses 22 and 28. What does it contain?
- Why was it not appropriate for people or for animals to eat meat before the fall of man?
- How would such a world be where nobody would threaten or kill anybody?
- What does verse 31 say to the people who blame God for a horrible situation in the world?

Verses 2:1-3

- Think about different reasons why even the Almighty God wanted to rest the seventh day?

- In the first chapter the ability to multiply was mentioned twice to be a blessing (22, 28). What does verse 3 add to the definition of the blessing?
- What happens if man works seven days in a week?
- The word «sanctify» means separation. How should one sanctify the sabbath/restday?
- Think about what kind of blessings you could get if you rested and sanctified one day in a week for the word of God?

Verses 2:4-6 (See verse 6 in NIV or ESV)

- Which time do these verses relate to? To which verses in the previous chapter do they refer to?

Applied questions (if time):

- What are weaknesses of Darwinism?
- Is it possible for creation and the theory of evolution to be compatible?
- Think why Darwinism has caused oppression and even destruction of the weak during its history (for example the nazis in Germany).

Finally: God created man and himself became a man in Jesus Christ. This shows us the value of humans – your value, too. You have also been created in the image of God, and Jesus was born to this world to atone for your sins, too. Your life has a meaning that no one else can fill.

3. MAN, WOMAN, PARADISE AND MARRIAGE

Genesis 2:7-25

To begin with: In chapter two, the creation of man is described again, now with more details. Note that, in Hebrew, “the earth” is “adama” and a man is “adam”. The word Eden means the land of happiness and refers to a real geographical location. Note that paradise is not Eden, but it was located in Eden.

Verses 7-9.

- Compare verses 2:7 and 1:27. Why did God want to describe the creation of a man and a woman first together and then separately? (How would the text be if the creation of a man alone would have been described in the first chapter and the creation of the woman only in the second chapter two? Would that change the view of the woman in the Bible?)
- Why did God form the man from dust and not, for example, from an animal?
- Imagine what the first people’s home was like and how their everyday life would have been, compared to our home and life today (8-9).
- What was the tree of life needed for?
- What was the function of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil? (Is there a connection between people’s morality and that tree?)
- What if the tree had been called “the tree of knowledge”? How would that change its function?
- Why did God want to plant those two trees **in the middle of** the garden, not in a remote corner of the garden?
- Why do there have to be temptations in your life, too?

Verses 10-14. Gihon must mean the river Nile, because Cush is in Africa. The location of the Pishon is unknown unless it is the Blue and White Nile. The other two rivers are the Euphrates and the Tigris.

- What difficulties do we face if we try to locate Eden on the current world map?
- What was, perhaps, God's motive for leaving the location of Eden as a secret for posterity?
- Why does the text mention the good gold, bdellium and onyx stone found by the river Pishon at this point of the story (11-12)?
- Why did Jesus say to a criminal hanging on the cross next to him: "Today you will be with me in paradise"?

Verses 15-17.

- What was Adam's first task?
- What does it show that the nature in the paradise should be cared for, even though the man was not yet fallen into sin (15)?
- Verses 16-17 include the first Bible for mankind. Where is its law and gospel?

Verses 18-20. The Hebrew word "helper" (ezer) in the verse 18 does not mean an assistant, but it is widely used in the Bible when describing the help from God. The words "companion"/"a suitable help" include also the idea of a counterpart.

- What do you think about the fact that the woman was formed as a suitable help and companion for the man?
- Why did Adam have to live without a wife for a while?
- Why did God name the light, the dark, the sky, the earth and the sea but let the man give a name to everything else (19, compare 1:5, 8, 10)?
- What was mankind's first task? How would you describe it with the words of our time? (How has this task of naming creatures continued until our days?)
- What does it tell us about man that God's friendship, the company of animals or work were not enough for him?

Verses 21-25.

- Can you find a deep meaning for the fact that God did not form the woman of dust but of the man's rib?
- Imagine how Adam and woman felt when they saw each other for the first time.
- In verse 24, God instructs all the coming generations the way of getting married. What does it mean in practice that a man should leave his father and mother **before** he is united to his wife?
- Why does God ask **man** to leave his parents, but woman does not get the same command?
- What happens to a relationship unless spouses leave their parents and form a new unit publicly in society?
- What does it show that the man and woman were not ashamed of their nakedness in front of each other?
- Jesus comments on this part of the creation story by saying: "He who created them from the beginning made them male and female... Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. So, they are no longer two but one flesh. **What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate** (Matt. 19:4-6). What does Jesus teach about marriage?

Finally: The tree of the cross is the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil joined together. That tree bears fruit which let those who eat it live forever. In the new Jerusalem there is the tree of life, but the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is no longer there.

4. THE FALL OF MAN

Genesis 3

To begin with: The Bible does not reveal to us the origin of evil. We meet evil for the first time as an adversary of God that that comes to paradise as a serpent. At that time a serpent did not look like a disgusting reptile but a noble creature. Read verses 2:16-17. God gave His word to the man who communicated it to the woman - and this word was now attacked by the serpent.

Verses 1-3

- Why doesn't the Bible tell us more about the origin of evil?
- What is the best explanation for the origin of evil according to verse one?
a) God and the Devil have always existed. b) God is the origin of the evil. c) Devil is an angel created by God, but has fallen.
- What are the implications if we think that the origin of evil is God?
- Why didn't the serpent talk to Adam but to Eve?
- Why did Eve think that they were not even allowed to touch the forbidden fruit (compare verse 3 to 2:17)?
- How did the serpent try to make Eve doubt God's word and His love?
- What did the serpent lie about and what was true in his words (compare verses 2:16-17)?
- How can one notice today that many people act as if they would like to be like God?

Verse 6

- What great Eve now noticed in the forbidden fruit? What attracted her?
- What makes sin look good, beautiful and attractive, instead of looking disgusting?
- Compare your own battle against sin, the Devil and your own sinful nature to Eve's battle against the serpent. Who has a harder situation; which battle is more difficult?
- When did Adam come or was he present all the time?
- What does it tell us about Adam that he did not stop the conversation between Eve and the serpent?
- Why did Eve want Adam to fall into sin as well?
- Why did Adam also eat the forbidden fruit that he got from Eve?
- What do you think the fruit tasted like in Adam's and Eve's mouth?
- How are knowledge and experiences still tempting people – including damaging knowledge and experiences destroying life (5-6)?
- What would you deem too high a price for a "top experience"?

Verses 7-8

- God had said that the sinner would "surely die" (2:17). What happened? (How is death now present in people and the whole universe?)
- What does it mean that Adam's and his wife's eyes were opened? What did they see that they had not seen before?
- What was now wrong with being naked? What happened to its former loveliness? (verses 7 and 10, compare to 2:25)
- What does it show that the man and woman were now hiding from God? (What did they believe about God while hiding?)
- In what sense had Adam's and Eve's knowledge increased? (What did they know about evil?)

Verses 9-13

- Why did God correct the man at first even though the woman had fallen at first?
- What do you think about the answers Adam and Eve gave to their Creator (12-13)? (What did Adam mean by his words? How might Eve have felt when she heard them?)
- What happened to the first married couple's love story?

Verses 14-15

- What were the consequences of the fall to the serpent?
- Verse 15 is said to be the first gospel. What does it say about the coming Savior?
- How did the promise in verse 15 affect Adam and Eve's relationship with God?

Verses 16-20

- What would the woman's relationship with the man and a child be like if the fall of man had not happened?
- What was the man's primary sin and how can it be seen nowadays (17a)?
- What influence did the fall have on creation? (What was work like before and after the fall?)
- Why did the man want to call his wife Eve, "the mother of everything living", even though death came to the world through her?

Verses 21-24. Read the verses and "finally" below.

Finally: God was the first to shed blood on earth when He clothed Adam and Eve with garments of skin. A substitute "surely died" such that the first people could wear "a garment of righteousness". This deed of God is the pre-image of all sacrifices ever after – including Jesus' sacrifice.

5. THE FIRST MARTYR

Genesis 4:1-16

To begin with: Adam and Eve had been expelled from paradise. They had to learn live in a world of sin and death, where God can no longer be seen; one can only believe in Him. Adam and Eve could fortunately hold on to the promise about the one who would bruise the head of the serpent, about the one who would solve the problem of sin and open again to them the way to paradise.

Verses 1-2

- What do you think it might have been like for Adam and Eve when expecting a child and giving birth? Was the situation different for the next generations?
- According to the reference in the ESV bible, the name Cain is close to the word «produced». Why did Eve want to choose this name for the firstborn?
- According to some translators the end of the first verse could also be translated: «I have received a boy, the Lord.» If this translation is possible, what could Eve have meant?
- Abel's name means «emptiness, vanity». Why did the parents give this kind of name for their son?

Verses 3-5a. Before the fall, animals were not killed or sacrifices sacrificed. These offerings are the first ones in the history of the world, except for the ones that the Lord performed in paradise (1:21).

- How did people know that they should offer to the Lord?
- What may Adam's sons have achieved with the offerings?
- At that time, sheep were not kept for meat but for wool. How may Abel have felt, as the first man in the world to strike a stone knife to the heart of his sheep?
- Traditionally, one has believed that God accepted Abel's offering by lighting his offering or by rising the smoke but refused Cain's offer by lowering the smoke from his offering. Why did the Lord accept the firstborn lambs but not grain?
- Why does God not accept everything that people decide to offer Him?
- Hebrews explains the case like this: «By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended as righteous, God commending him by accepting his gifts. And through his faith, though he died, he still speaks.» (Hebr. 11:4) How does this verse help to understand Abel's and Cain's offering?
- What was the difference between Abel's and Cain's **faith**? (How did Cain believe he could be accepted by God, and how did Abel?)
- In which way was Abel Jesus' image and his offering the image of Jesus' offering?

Verses 5b-7. In verse 7, the originally feminine word «sin» is made masculine – this refers to the serpent. Jesus said also that Satan has been a murderer from the beginning (John 8:44).

- Why did Cain find it difficult that his offering was not accepted (5b-7)?
- What should Cain have done when he realised that his offering was not acceptable to God?
- What did God mean when he talked to Cain in this situation?
- According to the Bible «everyone who hates his brother is a murderer». (1. John 3:15) How could we let our anger go before it is burst out as words and actions?

Verse 8-10. Notice that the first death on earth was a brother's murder. Jesus called Abel the first martyr (Matt. 23:35).

- Cain's attack against this brother was also the first persecution on earth. From where does the world's hate towards believers come?
- Which weapon did Cain possibly use when killing his brother?
- What was especially heartless in Abel's murder?
- Compare Cain's sin to his parents' sin in paradise.
- Why did the Lord ask Cain what He already knew?
- What does Cain's answer show?

Verses 11-12

- What do we learn about the relationship between people and the earth? And about climate change? See also the verse 10.
- What have killings, murders and abortions done to our own country?
- We remember that God's blessing comprised three things: descendants, own place and sabbath. What is God's curse according to verses 11-12?
- The leader reads Hebrews 11:4 once more. What does it mean that Abel still speaks after his death?
- What does it mean that Jesus' blood (in communion) «speaks a better word than the blood of Abel» (Hebr. 12:24)?

Verses 4:13-16

- What do you think about Cain's answer to God's curse – what does it show about him and his relationship to God (13-14)? What does it show about his relationship to his dead brother and mourning parents?
- What does it mean that somebody is hidden from God's face?
- How do we notice that God nonetheless loved Cain?
- A guess: what was the mark of Cain?
- What do we know about the place where Cain moved?

Finally: The only offering that is acceptable to God is the blood of the lamb. Abel's blood was an image of Jesus' blood offering, and Abel was both the offerer and Jesus' image as a martyr. Hebrews says that Jesus' blood «speaks a better word than the blood of Abel» (12:24). It speaks forgiveness to every sinner who repents: to Cain, to you and to me.

6. CAIN AND THE ANCESTORS

Genesis 4:17-6:4

First: Last time we were left at how God drove Cain out from his home and set a mark on him. Cain had settled down in the eastern side of Eden (that place did still exist!) where he founded the first town in the world. This time we'll also discuss the question that is often asked: where Cain got his wife.

Verses 4:17-24 Cain's descendants are listed for seven generations. Founding a town at this early point may seem unrealistic. Nevertheless, it is calculated that if Cain's every male descendant got six children, the patriarch of the family got more than 100 000 descendants when he turned 400 years old!

- What kind of observations can you make of Cain's family?
- Which parts of the culture originate in Cain's descendants?
- What does it show that a family that is cursed by God, can be this talented?
- There was blood revenge, because in those days there were no police authorities and people could not defend themselves and their families in any other way. Compare verse 15 with 23-24. What did revenge mean to Cain's family?
- Jesus altered Lemek's words so that he tells his followers to forgive 70x7 times (Matt.18:22). How well have you been able to obey this command?

Verses 4:25-26. We remember that people became mortal only after the Fall of Man.

- How were Adam and Eve able to bear the consequences of their sins, when one of their sons had killed the other and then gone into exile? What did they think about their own fall?
- Adam and Eve had to live by themselves probably for quite a long time; they were already 130 years old, when Seth was born (5:3). What was their comfort in those years of loneliness?
- What could comfort today's parents when they regret their sins and neglects they have done in raising their children?
- What did Seth's birth mean to his parents?
- The end of the verse 26 is considered to mean the beginning of regular church services. What does this verse tell about the service of Adam's family, what was it like?
- Why did Adam's family start church services especially at that time?

Verses 5:1-5

- Adam was created in the likeness of God, but Seth was like his father (1,3). What does this mean?
- Where did Cain get his wife?
- Was Adam's and Eve's life happy or unhappy? Explain why.

Verses 5:7-20. You don't need to read this. Instead, the leader lists the names and the ages of the first ten ancestors. See the list below.

- Why did people live that long in those days? Think about possible reasons.
- Why do there have to be genealogies in the Bible?
- In the New Testament there are two genealogies. Luke repeats those first ten ancestors mentioned before. Why did Luke want to list Jesus' ancestors till the beginning of the world?
- Luke ended his genealogy by stating that Adam was the son of God. What did he mean by that? (Luke 3:38)

Verses 5:21-24 are about the 8th ancestor, Enoch, who reached less than half of the other ancestors' ages. The New Testament tells about him: By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death, "and was not found, because God had taken him", for before he was taken he had this testimony, that he pleased God. (Hebr. 11:5)

- How did Enoch's life and death differ from his ancestors' lives and deaths? (What does it mean that Enoch did not see death?)
- What was the contents of Enoch's faith?
- Why did this man, who pleased God the most, lived the shortest life of all the ancestors?
- In the Epistle of Jude we find out that Enoch was also a prophet.

Now Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men also saying: "Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousand of His saints to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him." Jude 1:14-15
 What does this prophecy reveal about Enoch himself and about the seven ancestors before him?

Verses 5:28-32. We'll go through them next time.

Verses 6:1-4. There are two ways to explain these extraordinary verses:

1. The fallen angels got involved with people, and their offspring were destroyed during the Flood.
2. "The sons of God" mean God's children i.e. Seth's family and "daughters of men" mean Cain's family. According to Jesus those people, to whom the word of God came, really can be called "gods" (John.10:35).
 - Which of the explanations above do you find more reliable? Why?
 - What kind of problems will there be in a marriage, where the other one is a believer and the other is not?
 - What happens if all the believing families disappear from some nation?
 - Also verse 3 can be interpreted in two ways: 1) The age of a man was determined 120 years. (Though patriarchs lived longer than that.) 2) The Flood would happen after 120 years. Which of these two explanations do you find more reliable? Why?
 - Note, that there were still giants more than three meters tall during the days of Moses and even David (4. Moos. 13:34). How it might have affected the relations between people when some people were much bigger than others?

Finally: This is the first genealogy in the Bible. Cain's family ends in the Flood, but Seth's family lives on until Jesus and us (Luke 3:23-38 and Matt. 1:1-17). In fact, Jesus' genealogy is the red thread of all the genealogies in the Bible.

Seven ancestors lived more than 900 years. The oldest of them was Methuselah, who was 969 years old, when he died. The youngest, Enoch, died at the age of 365 years. Four of the ancestors became fathers when they were under a hundred years old, five of them, when they were between one and two hundred years old, but Noah didn't become a father until he was 500 years old.

The ancestors' lifetimes: Adam 930 years, Seth 912 years, Enosh 905 years, Cainan 910 years, Mahalalel 895 years, Jared 962 years, Enoch 365 years, Methuselah 969 years, Lamech 777 years and Noah 950 years.

7. NOAH MAKES AN ARK

Genesis 5:28-6:22

FIRST: Lamech belonged to the ninth generation and Noah to the tenth generation after the creation. From Adam to Noah people lived without God's law. The only law was "the Golden Rule" written into people's heart: "So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you" (Matt 7:22). Noah's story is important to us to understand because Jesus said that in the Last Days life will be quite similar as it was in Noah's time.

Verses 5:28-32

- Check the footnote for the verse 29. Lamech named his son Noah. What does it tell you about Lamech's life and faith? (What was the life like during the first nine generations?)
- In which situation could you give your child a name meaning "a comfort"?

- Noah had to wait to become a father for a long time, three times longer than his progenitors. Why did God make him wait for a child for such a long time?

- The Bible mentions only the first sons of all the progenitors, but all three of Noah's. Why is that?

Verses 6:5-7 Read the verse 5.

- How was it possible that the world had turned that violent only during the first ten generations? Check the verses 11-12, too.

- What was the life like with the kind of people described in verses 5,11 and 12?

- There was no law for people at that time. Could that explain the magnitude of the violence?

- What would have happened to the mankind if there would not have been the Flood at all?

- Compare the violence in Noah's time with the present time.

- What do verses 6 and 7 teach you about God?

- What was the relationship between people and God in Noah's time? (What was their God like if they had a faith in God at all?)

- Why don't more people nowadays have faith in God who can act like it is described in verses 6 and 7? (What will happen if people totally forget that God is the Holy, and He is going to punish evil?)

- How does the idea of God in Noah's time differ from the idea of God today?

- How could the Christians today try to prevent the magnitude of the violence in the world?

- God decided to destroy not only all the people but also all the animals (7). What do you think about that?

Verses 6: 8-10. A blameless man can also be translated a righteous man. It means a man is pleasing to God. This is the very first time the word righteous can be seen in the Bible. Later it can be noticed that Noah knew about sacrificing and its meaning.

- What was the biggest difference between Noah and the other people around?

- What is the difference between the old and new versions: "Noah received mercy in the eyes of the Lord." (The old version), and "Noah found favour in the eyes of the Lord." (The new version)?

- Why does the Bible describe Noah's relationship with God in this order (verses 8-9)?
- Did Noah please God by his faith or by his deeds? Why?
- How was Noah able to keep his faith in the middle of all the bad around him?

Verses 6: 13-16. An ell is 50 cm, and the size of the ark was 150m x 25m x 15m. It had three floors and the whole area was 1000 square meters – as big as a huge oil tanker. Iron could be found only from meteorites. Noah built the ark for about one hundred years (5:32, 6:3 and 7:6).

- How does the ark differ from an ordinary ship?
- Building the ark required many steps and different kinds of tools. What problems might there have been with tools or labour? (The first builders were Lamech (father) and Noah's wife. Later the three sons took part as well.)
- What was Noah's three sons' childhood and youth like?
- How, perhaps, Noah would have spent his life unless he hadn't been building the ark?

Verses 6:17-22. There was hardly any other three -floor- building around and no big ships, not on dry land anyway. The ark must have been a real "tourist trap".

- What was Noah thinking when God revealed him His plan about the flood?
 - How did Noah understand God's will to establish His covenant with him, what do you think?
 - How did other people comment on Noah's slow work on the ark?
 - Peter calls Noah a preacher of righteousness (2Pet 2:5) and in Hebrews (11:7) it is said that Noah have condemned the world by his faith. So, while building the ark Noah also preached . How did he do that and what was his message?
 - Nobody believed his words. Why? Why wasn't there any awakening?
 - What did Noah's wife think about the long-lasting building project?
 - Who and what kind of girls from ungodly world agreed a proposal and married Noah's sons?
- Righteousness by faith. "By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family...and became heir of the righteousness that comes by faith." (Heb 11:7).
- How did Noah build the ark by faith?

- What kind of struggles did Noah probably have in his heart during the long building project?
 - How is it possible to stay in faith for a hundred of years if all the others disagree with you, except your own family?
- Finally:** Noah was given mercy and righteousness, not by his deeds but because he had faith in God's mercy . When he was sacrificing the sacrifices, he believed in God's promise about the Saviour who will crush the serpent's head.

8. THE FLOOD

Genesis 7

First: According to the Bible the Flood really happened. Even Jesus spoke about it. Geneticists talk about a "bottleneck" of the mankind. The population of the humankind turned down radically. We assume here that Noah built the ark for about one or two hundred years.

Verses 1-5. At that time animals were tame because they were not hunted and eaten. Lord had already talked to Noah about the Flood (6:17).

- What were Noah's thoughts like when he finally heard Lord speaking after more than hundred years?
 - What does it tell about Noah that he did not start arguing with God?
 - How would you react if you heard a terrible catastrophe to come in a week?
 - In verse one God calls Noah again the only righteous. In Hebrews the Bible explains why he really was like that. By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and become heir of the righteousness that comes by faith (Heb 11:7). Once again, by what reason was Noah righteous? (What did Noah believe in according to verse 7? How do faith and righteous belong together?)
 - Even before the Law of Moses Noah knew which animals were clean and which were not. What does that say about his relationship with God?
 - According to verse 4 what would you say to people who think God is not responsible for natural catastrophes (like tsunamis)? Do they happen just by accident or Satan's work?
 - Why does God send natural catastrophes on the Earth?
- Verses 6-9.**

- What was weird and special in the way the animals entered the ark?
- How did Noah make the animals walk into the ark during that week (8-9 and 15)?
- What did people think when they saw the animals walking in like that?

Verses 10-16. (Read 10-13) Noah and his wife had siblings, aunts, uncles and cousins. None of them entered the ark. No relatives of Noah's daughters-in-law's were saved. At that time Noah's sons were about a hundred years old and still childless.

- When did Noah stop preaching? (Peter calls him a preacher of righteousness (2 Pet. 2:5).
- The Fall started on the seventeenth day of the second month. In the old Jewish calendar a year begins in autumn and in the new one it starts in spring. We do not know which one was intended here. Why was the start of the Fall mentioned that accurately in the Bible?
- On which day did Noah's family enter the ark?
- Compare Noah's strength of faith with his daughters-in-law's faith while they were entering the ark. (Whose faith led them, Noah's or the daughters'? How much faith was needed to save the daughters-of-the-law?)
- Why didn't God give Noah any grandchildren before the Fall?
- Why didn't God let Noah himself shut them in the ark(16b)?
- Jesus said that the last days would be like Noah's time. For in the days before the Flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man (Mat. 24:38-39). How are people similar at Noah's time and at the last days?
- Why did the catastrophe surprise the people though Noah had warned about it for a hundred of years?
- Do people today know what the Bible says about the destruction in the last days?

Verses 17-20. In verse 11 it was already told that all the springs of the great deep burst forth, and the floodgates of the heavens were opened. The earth was probably surrounded by a thick cloud layer, and it ruptured in the Fall. (Compare that with Genesis 2:5-6, the old version). Some studies nowadays

have revealed that there is three times more water existing deep down in the ground of the earth than there is water now in all the oceans.

- What was it like when all the springs of the great deep burst forth?
- How heavy must the rain have been the rain as the earth was covered with water in 40 days?
- How can we notice that it was not only a local flood?

Verses 21-24.

- How did people try to save themselves and their families during the first weeks of the Flood?
- What did people think about Noah's preaches before their death, and about their own reaction to it?
- What will our relatives and friends think about our preaches on the last judgment?
- What were Noah and his family thinking during the 40 days when the waters rose on the earth?
- Noah and his family were in the ark for five months. What did they do there?
- Why didn't God talk to Noah while they were in the ark? 1 Pet. 3:21. Peter says in his letter that the ark symbolizes the baptism. Only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water in the ark. And this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you all – not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience towards God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- What does the Christian baptism have in common with the ark?
- What is the purpose of baptism according to Peter? And what is it not?

Finally. The baptism is the ark which will save us from the fiery lake of burning sulphur. It does not mean that we become sinless but we establish a covenant with God. In other words our sins are forgiven and we get a good conscience before God because of Jesus's death and His rise from the death.

9. A NEW START

Genesis 8

First. In many cultures people have some knowledge about a flood covering the earth and about a few people who were saved from that. For example, the Sumerian Gilgamesh epic tells about that. The Chinese letter describing a boat has three parts: a boat + a number eight + a mouth. Some geological

surveys also prove the flood. There was no helm in the ark, so it could not be controlled. Nobody knew how long Noah and his family were supposed to be in it.

Questions:

- Do you know any proofs for the Flood?
- What if we deny the historical truth of the Flood?

Verses 1-4. The end of verse 1 takes a lot after the first words of the Bible: Now the earth was formless and empty and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. The Hebrew word “wind” can also be translated “spirit”.

- What were Noah and his family feeling as they watched the open sea for a month after another?
- What was it like to understand that they were the only people in the world?
- The weather was calm at first. Then the wind started to blow. What did that mean to the people and the nature around?
- How long did it take from the start of the rain till the ark coming to rest on the mountains (verse 4, see with 7:11)?
- How did life differ in a floating and in a stranded ark?
- The stay in the ark must have been a school of faith for Noah’s family. Why?
- What gave faith in the future for Noah and his family?
- What kind of schools of faith do we have nowadays?

Verses 5-12. A raven is a carrion eater, good flier and the smartest bird in the world. A pigeon has a radar in its head. With that it can find back home from anywhere. A pigeon has been used as a carrier for over 5000 years.

- Why are all these details mentioned in the Bible?
- How long had Noah been in the ark before he started sending the birds for flights (7:11 and 8:5-6)? Why did he do that?
- How long did the raven fly in the air (4, 6, 14)? Why didn’t it come back?
- An olive tree grows on the lower slope of a mountain. Noah sent three pigeons into the air. What did their coming and going tell him about the dehydration of the soil?
- What does it require for water to come down that fast?
- Why did they have to wait in the ark for two more months after the pigeon had brought the leaf?

Verses 13-19. A new year has arrived. They had already been in the ark for 10½ months.

- On the first day of the first month Noah removed the roof from the ark. Why did Noah want to do that?
- For how long were they in the ark (see 7:11 and 8:14)?
- Why are all these dates written in the Bible?
- What was the best thing the people and animals felt when they finally got out of the ark?
- Why did the animals leave the ark by genus?
- Getting out of the ark was like an access to new creation.

How?

Verses 20-22. The mankind or at least Noah already knew about clean animals according to the law of Moses. The clean animals were taken to the ark in pairs, seven pairs of each (7:2). In these verses “altar” and “burnt offerings” are mentioned for the first time in the Bible. The burnt offering brought a reconciliation between man and God.

- The first thing Noah did was build an altar and sacrifice burnt offerings. Why?
- Why did God give his promise when he smelled the pleasing aroma of the offering?
- God promised that He will never destroy all living again, but Peter says in his letter: “ By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men (2 Pet. 3:7). According to this, what is the end of the world going to be like?
- Compare verses 6:5b with 8:21. What was mankind like before and after the Flood?
- Where did the evil come from into the hearts of the first eight saved people?
- What does verse 21 tell us about godly Noah who walked with God? (What does it tell us about his righteousness?)
- Did God succeed with the Flood? Did He achieve what He meant to? Justify your answer.
- What things will be unchanged till the end of the world, regardless of any climate change or wars?

More questions:

- How is Noah a good example for us what it comes to faith? How about his family?
- What does the Great Flood teach us?
- The mountains of Ararat are situated in Kurdish region on the border of Turkey and Armenia. It has always been hard to get

there (see the map). What do you think about the stories that some people have seen a frame of an old boat under the age-old snow in that area?

Finally: The original sin never vanished from the hearts of Noah's family members. Man's thoughts and plans are still selfish and evil. That is why the blood sacrifice was and is needed. Noah's sacrifice was a preview of Jesus's sacrifice. The blood was and is needed to get forgiveness from God. With blood people were and are able to start a new life.

10. GOD'S COVENANT WITH NOAH AND NOAH'S SIN Gen 9

Genesis 9. The first ten generations were vegetarians. Animals were not killed and that is why they were not afraid of people.

Verses 1-4. The relationship between animals and humans was rearranged by God.

- The blessing and fruitfulness were repeated, again – even twice, why?
- Why was the rearrangement between animals and humans made?
- What would have happened if people had never been promised to eat animals?
- God denied eating meat with blood. Why? (Did it have something to do with sacrificing and Jesus's sacrifice?)
- What is the "state of war" between animals and humans needed for?
- How is it possible that that the situation will be different in the new creation, so that the wolf will live with the lamb (Isa. 11:6-9)?

Verses 5-7. These verses are the base for the court in the modern world. Remember that violence among people was great before the Flood (6:5).

- What will happen in a society if people do what they want?
- Why is it important that the base for court is bound by God's word, not human's mind?
- According to these verses what is the right punishment for a murderer?

- How does God justify the death sentence in these verses? What about human dignity?
- If people give up faith the human dignity will reduce straight after, why?
- How much can the law of a country, or God's law, restrain evilness and violence?

Verses 8-11. God had already promised to establish His covenant with Noah before the flood (6:18). Later God established a covenant (the old one) with Israel and Jesus with his followers a new one. Normally there are terms and conditions for both parties of a covenant.

- What is the covenant needed for? Why is an open relationship not good enough?
- Who was this first covenant established with? (Why were the animals a part of it as well, see verse 10?)
- How was this covenant different from a normal covenant? (What were the terms and conditions of the covenant? What did God promise to do? What about the other part?)
- What was the covenant needed for at this point especially?

Verses 12-17.

- Why was the sign of the covenant needed? (What should Noah always remember when he saw a rainbow?)
- What does God want you to remember when you see a rainbow?

Verses 18-23. The ark was finished now, and Noah could spend his time by learning the agriculture.

- How did Noah learn how to make wine? What do you reckon?
- Did Noah know that the wine would get him drunk? Justify your answer.
- Compare Noah building the ark with Noah described in verse 21. What is the difference?
- Why was it so terrible for Noah's sons to see their father uncovered?
- How do children in general feel when they see their parents drunk?
- Ham is considered to make fun of his father by telling his brothers about Noah's condition (for example according to Luther). Why was it such a great sin that it caused a terrible curse?

- What is going to happen in communities if parents are criticized instead of honored by their children?
- Verses 24-26. In the following chapters it can be seen that The Hamites are both Africans and the original inhabitants of Mesopotamia and the Land of Canaan (black and white). The Semites are Jews and Arabs. Asians and Indo-Europeans are the Japhethites. According to verse 26 only the Semites held on to faith in God.
- Why are these Noah's words written in the Bible?
 - What kind of a future does Noah prophesy for the offspring of Shem, Ham and Japheth? (Why were Shem and Japheth blessed, by text?)
 - Noah's curse was referred to to justify racism, slavery and apartheid for about two hundred years. What do you think about that?
 - Have Noah's prophecies come true by now?
 - When and how was Noah's curse invalidated?
 - Compare Noah's prophecy with these words of Lord: "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation (Mark 16:15).

Verses 28-29.

- What were the last 350 years of Noah's life like?
- What do you think about the fact that until their time according to Ezekiel Noah was among the three most righteousness men in the world (Eze. 14:14)?

Applied questions:

- Why doesn't the Bible hide the sins of its heroes?
- People are never divided by their race in the Bible. What do you think about that?
- What is the right attitude for a Cristian in Finland towards alcohol, as every ten person here is a large consumer of alcohol?

Finally: Shem was blessed because the Savior of the world, Jesus, was born of his family. Japheth's descendants were able to "live in the tents of Shem" because the Christian church grew among them for 2000 years. Nowadays most of Japheth's descendants have given up their faith. The Christian church is now flourishing most among the Hamites.