

## **Aim of lesson**

The key aim of this lesson is to help the young people to realise that the scriptural account of creation is about more than the formation of life.

## **Bible background**

Genesis 1-3.

## **Preparation required**

Before you teach any of the lessons in this series, please read the introductory notes in the previous section. You may not agree with everything they say, but please give them your careful thought, in particular if you have an interpretation of Genesis that you would like to teach to the young people in your group.

If you are sharing the teaching of these lessons with others, you will need to liaise with them to pass on any points that need to be borne in mind for later.

## **Suggested outline of lesson**

### **Find out what they think**

Begin by getting the young people to tell you what happens at school; what they are taught, and how they get on. Do they find it hard to stand up for what they believe? Are their teachers and friends sympathetic to anyone who believes the Bible? Do they themselves have a clear idea of what happened in the beginning?

Find out what their difficulties are. Is it that they themselves don't know what to make of the biblical account of creation? Do they know what they think, but find it hard to know what to say at school?

Explain to them that you are about to spend four weeks or so thinking about creation and evolution, and discuss with them what you should try, together, to achieve. Explain the structure of the four weeks of these lessons, and what each lesson tries to accomplish.

### **Without excuse**

Look together at Romans 1:18-21, and discuss what it says. Its implications are profound:

- It is not that people do not know about God - rather, that they suppress the truth.

- The creation gives us clear evidence of God's power and divine nature. We can see these two characteristics of the Almighty when we look around us. His might can be seen in the power of nature - storms, lightning, earthquakes, volcanoes. We have all seen television pictures of buildings being lifted into the air by tornadoes, of mountains being blown apart by volcanoes, and we all know that mankind is powerless to resist. His divine nature is seen in the beauty and intricacy of creation - the incredible complexity of plants and animals and the way in which they depend on each other.
- These things mean that we have no excuse for not believing in God as the creator. It is not we who should feel defensive about our faith but everyone who does not believe in God. The truth is clear to those who have eyes to see.

### **What is important?**

Get the young people to open their Bibles to Genesis 1 and to look at what it has to say. You may like quickly to summarise what the Almighty did on each day, and then briefly remind them of the events of chapter 2 (not that they don't know already - just to get their minds set on the subject).

Ask the young people to say what they think are the most important things about these chapters. If they weren't included in the Bible, what information would we miss? They will probably come up with several answers like:

1. It tells us that God did everything
2. It tells us that we are made in the image of God
3. It tells us the sequence of events
4. It tells us that creation happened in 6 days

Ask them if there is any other way of finding out what are the most important aspects? Who else might have highlighted a few things from the accounts of creation as being particularly important? Try to lead them toward the idea that we can look in the New Testament, and see how the account of creation is referred to there.

Divide the passages between the young people; ask them to look up the New Testament verses, and to relate them back to the corresponding verses in Genesis. The aim in this exercise is to demonstrate that none of these points has anything to do with the things that cause tensions with some scientists. The prime purpose of the Genesis account, we can conclude, is not to provide a scientific record but to lay the foundation for the account of God's dealings with his creation.

### **God the creator and sustainer**

God is not just the creator of the earth but the one who sustains it day by day, and wishes men and women to come to him.

## **Adam and Eve**

Eve was formed from Adam's side, and the pattern of their relationship, that Eve was a help to Adam, is intended to be followed by men and women today.

## **Adam**

We are all descended from Adam; so Adam in Genesis 2 must be the same as 'man' in Genesis 1.

## **Let there be light**

Paul is lifting the statement in Genesis 1:3 'Let there be light' into a spiritual dimension, and getting us to think that Genesis is not just about a creative process that happened long ago - it is also a set of eternal statements of what the Almighty intends for his creation.

## **The Sabbath**

The statement at the start of Genesis 2 that 'God rested' is confirmed in the New Testament; not only that, but the writer of the letter to the Hebrews interprets it to refer to the kingdom.

## **Let us make man in our image**

There isn't a direct reference back to Genesis 1 in the New Testament verses, but a common theme indicating that God's statement in Genesis 'let us make man in our image and after our likeness' is another passage with a future application.

## **The dominion of the King**

The statement about man having dominion is really a prophecy about the kingdom of God, when the Lord Jesus will have dominion over the world.

## **The tree of life and the curse**

The description of the garden of Eden applies to God's purpose for the end of time as well as his actions in the past.

## **Summary**

The point of all this is that Genesis is not simply intended to tell us what happened a long time ago; it has spiritual and prophetic meanings as well. We should not therefore read it in the same way as we would a textbook on evolutionary biology. These are not the words of a man, written to solve a twentieth century problem; they are God's revelation of himself and his purpose from the beginning.

## **The words God used to describe what he did**

Do not feel that you have to go through all the words in the Students' notes. They are there simply to make three points:

1. There are many different words for what God did, and sometimes more than one word is used to describe the same thing. For example, God 'formed', 'made', and 'created' man. The most important thing is that whatever process was used, God was in control.
2. Nearly all the words are also used for things that we do, or for normal processes of growth. Some involve making one thing from another. So God may have used normal activities for at least some of his creation. He may have formed every species specially and instantaneously, but these words do not say that he did.
3. The list does not give us any basis for being dogmatic about how God created things, and confirms that this is not what Genesis is for.

## **Relevance to our lives**

Whether we were made or whether we arrived here by chance is the most fundamental question we could ask about ourselves and our reason for existing. It affects everything we are, and everything we do.

## **Prayer**

Dear Lord God, your word is a wonderful revelation of yourself and of your purpose with mankind. Help us to understand it, and where we are uncertain please guide us into truth. Help us to be honest in the way we read it and not to seek to make it say what we would like. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

## **Other suggestions for activities**

There are many other accounts of creation. The ancient Californian native Americans believed, for example, that the Great Spirit placed the land on the backs of seven turtle brothers, and that earthquakes were caused by the brothers fighting.

Two such accounts are included in the students' notes. They make amusing reading, but are not included for fun. The contrast with the Biblical account of creation is dramatic; yet both these accounts were written long after the book of Genesis. The simple beauty of Genesis 1 is evidence enough of the God who wrote it.