

THE DAY OF REST

Genesis 2:1-3

INTRODUCTION

- The French atheist Voltaire wrote: “If you wish to destroy the Christian religion you must first destroy the Christian Sunday”
- He understood what a powerful, sanctifying influence the widespread observance of the Lord’s Day has upon a society
- Throughout history, anti-Christian revolutionaries have sought to abolish the Lord’s Day, particularly by means of abolishing the seven-day week
- The French Revolution instituted a ten-day week, then later the Soviet Union instituted a five-day week
- In each case the health and productivity of their societies was weakened and they eventually returned to a seven-day week
- But why is there a seven-day week?
- The answer is not found in nature or science, but in the Bible – it is because God made it so, and has so ingrained this principle in his creation that rebellious man cannot override it
- We’ve looked at each of the six days of creation, and we will consider more concerning the sixth day as most of Genesis 2 deals with events on the sixth day
- Note that Genesis 2 is not a separate, later work of creation to Genesis 1, nor is it contradictory to Genesis 1, but rather complementary
- It simply describes in greater detail certain events of chapter 1, especially relating to Adam, Eve and the Garden of Eden
- But here in the opening verses of Genesis 2 we are given details concerning the seventh day of the creation week
- The seventh day is in stark contrast to the previous six days
 - ✓ Nothing is created
 - ✓ There is no mention of “evening and morning”

- ✓ This day is blessed
- ✓ This day is sanctified
- The number seven is the most significant number in Scripture and denotes divine completeness and perfection
- Seven is used in over 600 passages in Scripture
- There are sevens all throughout these opening chapters which give further weight to the reality that God has performed a complete and perfect work
 - ✓ Genesis 1:1 consists of seven Hebrew words, Genesis 1:2 consists of fourteen words, and Genesis 2:1-3 thirty-five words
 - ✓ “God” is mentioned thirty-five times, “earth” occurs twenty-one times, and “heaven/firmament” also twenty-one times
- The number “seven” also dominates Genesis 1:1-2:3 in a startling way, not only in the number of words in a particular section, but also in the number of times a specific word or phrase recurs, which in all comprises the sevenfold patterning of this section:
 - ✓ The fulfillment formula: “And it was so” occurs seven times (1:3; 1:7; 1:9; 1:11; 1:15; 1:24; 1:30)
 - ✓ The execution formula: “And God made” occurs seven times (1:4; 1:7; 1:12; 1:16; 1:21; 1:25; 1:27)
 - ✓ The approval formula: “God saw that it was good” occurs seven times (1:4; 1:10; 1:12; 1:18; 1:21; 1:25; 1:31)
 - ✓ The subsequent divine word: God’s naming or blessing occurs seven times (1:52; 1:8; 1:10; 1:22; 1:28)
- 2:1-3 draws from 1:1, providing a conclusion to what began on the first day
 - ✓ In 1:1 God *created* the heaven and the earth, while in 2:1 the heaven and earth were *finished*
 - ✓ In 1:1 is the *beginning*, while in 2:2 God *ended* his work
- Chiasm of Genesis 1:1-2:3
 - A “created” (1:1)
 - B “God” (1:1)
 - C “heaven and earth” (1:1)
 - D The forming and filling of the earth (1:2-31)
 - C’ “heavens and earth” (2:1)
 - B’ “God” (2:2)
 - A’ “created” (2:3)

- Chiasm of Genesis 2:1-4

A "heavens" (1)
 B "earth" (1)
 C "made" (2)
 C' "created" (3)
 B' "earth" (4)
A' "heavens" (4)

I. IT IS THE DAY OF COMPLETION – God finished and ended his work (1-2)

A. This shows clearly that all of the universe, the heaven and earth and all things in them, were created within six days, not over long ages

1. Scientific laws accord with the Scripture's revelation that nothing is now being created
 - a. The 1st law of thermodynamics is the law of conservation of energy – energy cannot be created or destroyed; it is only converted to a different form of energy
 - b. The 2nd law of thermodynamics is the law of entropy – processes tend toward decay and disintegration
2. God has ceased from his work of creation, but he continues his work of conservation or providence (John 5:17; Hebrews 1:3; Colossians 1:17) and his work of redemption

B. God leaves nothing unfinished

1. Every great artist has an "unfinished work"
2. How few people can say they have finished their work in this world before death interrupts it
3. But no so with God – God leaves no work unfinished; what he begins, he completes
4. That is true of the creation – at the end of the sixth day, his work of creation was completely finished
5. That is true of his covenants – the promises he has made he will fulfil
6. That is true of his work of redemption of mankind

- a. “Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.” (John 4:34)
 - b. “I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.” (John 17:4)
 - c. “When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.” (John 19:30)
 - d. “When he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high” (Hebrews 1:3)
7. That is true of his gracious work of salvation in his people (Philippians 1:6; 2 Timothy 1:12; Jude 24-25)

II. IT IS THE DAY OF CESSATION – God rested from his work (2)

A. God rested

1. This does not at all indicate that God was wearied and required a day to replenish his energy
2. “Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding.” (Isaiah 40:28)
3. Exodus 31:17 says “for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed” – refreshed being an anthropomorphism to illustrate the sabbath principle
4. This is the rest of completion – the word for “rest” (*shabbath*) means to cease, still, desist
5. God in his seventh-day rest surveyed his works with satisfaction and pleasure, beholding that everything he had made was very good
6. Note that some “old age creationists” claim that the omission of reference to the “evening and morning” of the seventh day indicates that it was not a literal day but a long period of time, and that therefore the other six days were also long periods of time

7. This misses the purpose of the “evening and morning” formula in days one through six, which is a rhetorical function marking the transition between the days of creation
8. No such marker is required on the final day of the creation week – the terminus of the final day is marked by the *toledoth* (generations) in v.4

B. The emblem of “rest”

1. The reference to “rest” in this verse illustrates the “rest” that God gives to his people
 - a. The weekly rest of the sabbath day (Exodus 20:11; 31:17)
 - b. The spiritual rest of salvation (Matthew 11:28-30)
 - c. The eternal rest of heaven (Revelation 14:13)
2. Hebrews 4, the “rest chapter”, quotes Genesis 2:2, to illustrate the fact that as God rested at the end of the creation, so in every dispensation God is working to bring his people into a state of rest
3. This was true of Israel, who were given the “rest” of Canaan (vv.1-6)
4. But the greater rest that God offers to his people is the rest of salvation through Christ (vv.7-10)
 - a. It is rest from the guilt and burden of sin (Hebrews 9:14)
 - b. It is rest from the condemnation of God (John 5:24; Romans 5:1)
 - c. Is rest from “dead works” of religion that have no justifying power (Hebrews 6:1)
 - d. It is rest from the fear of death and judgment (Hebrews 2:15)

III. IT IS THE DAY OF CONSECRATION – God blessed and sanctified the day (3)

A. God blessed the seventh day

1. In chapter 1, God blessed the sea creatures and fowls on the fifth day (1:22) and man on the sixth day (1:28)

2. This one day of all the days is blessed, showing its significance to God as well as God's favour, goodness and grace extended towards it
- B. God sanctified the seventh day
1. This word (*qadash*) denotes consecrated, hallowed, dedicated
 2. God established here the principle that man must not only *rest* on one day out of seven, but *sanctify* this day, setting it apart specifically for the worship of God
- C. God gave Israel the seventh-day sabbath
1. The first mention of the sabbath is found in Exodus 16:23
 2. The sabbath commandment was made known to Israel at mount Sinai through Moses (Nehemiah 9:13-14)
 3. The sabbath was an outward sign showing that Israel was Jehovah's covenant people, distinguishing them from the heathen nations around them (Exodus 31:13-17; Ezekiel 20:12,20)
 4. God gave the sabbath for man's benefit (Mark 2:23-28) yet the Jews had turned it into a burden, grievous to be borne
 5. The sabbath commandment is part of the ceremonial law, along with the annual feasts, and is fulfilled in Christ (Colossians 2:16-17)
- D. Christians in the New Covenant keep the Lord's Day, the first day of the week
1. The Lord's Day bears resemblance to the sabbath but is something far better, and of far greater significance

SABBATH	LORD'S DAY
Connected to the earth	Connected to heaven
Earthly, physical rest	Heavenly, spiritual rest
Old Covenant of law	New Covenant of grace
Work followed by rest	Rest (in Christ) followed by work (service)

2. There is abundant evidence that the Christians in the New Testament worshipped on the Lord's Day and not on the sabbath
 - a. On the first day Jesus rose from the dead (Mark 16:9)

- b. On the first day Jesus first appeared to his disciples (Mark 16:9)
 - c. On the first day Jesus met with the disciples at different places and repeatedly (Mark 16:9-11; Matthew 28:8-10; Luke 24:34; Mark 16:12-13; John 20:19-23)
 - d. On the first day Jesus blessed the disciples (John 20:19)
 - e. On the first day Jesus imparted to the disciples the gift of the Holy Spirit (John 20:22)
 - f. On the first day Jesus commissioned the disciples to preach the gospel to all the world (John 20:21; with Mark 16:9-15)
 - g. On the first day Jesus ascended to Heaven, was seated at the right hand of the Father and was made Head of all (John 20:17; Ephesians 1:20)
 - h. On the first day many of the dead saints arose from the grave (Matthew 27:52-53)
 - i. The first day became the day of joy and rejoicing to the disciples (John 20:20; Luke 24:41)
 - j. On the first day the gospel of the risen Christ was first preached (Luke 24:34)
 - k. On the first day Jesus explained the Scriptures to the disciples (Luke 24:27,45)
 - l. On the first day the purchase of our redemption was completed (Romans 4:25)
 - m. On the first day the Holy Spirit descended (Acts 2:1) Pentecost was on the 50th day after the sabbath following the wave offering (Leviticus 23:15,16) Thus Pentecost was always on a Sunday.
 - n. The Christians met to worship on the first day (Acts 20:6,7; 1 Corinthians 16:2) Sunday is "the Lord's Day" (Revelation 1:10)
3. The Lord's Day, in in commemoration of the resurrection of Christ has been the day of Christian worship from the time of the apostles until today

4. The Lord's day then is to be "sanctified by a holy resting, even from such worldly employments and recreations as are lawful on other days and spending the whole time in the public and private exercises of God's worship"
5. The Lord's Day is sometimes referred to as the "market day of the soul", in contrast to the market days during the week for the body

CONCLUSION

1. Many people think that their works will make them accepted by God on the day of judgment
2. But only the work of Christ on our behalf, received by faith, can justify sinners
3. "Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." (John 6:28-29)
4. Do you remain in the guilt of you sins, burdened by guilt, without peace, without joy, without hope?
5. Heed the invitation of Christ: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." (Matthew 11:28-30)
6. Are you honouring the Lord's Day, or are you dishonouring it?
 - ✓ Make this day your priority
 - ✓ Prepare for it by ensuring the day will be free from anything that would diminish its sanctity
 - ✓ Prepare for it by using Saturday evening for spiritual activities
 - ✓ Prepare for it by getting adequate sleep
 - ✓ Be faithful to the corporate meetings of the church (Hebrews 10:25)
 - ✓ During worship, give yourself heartily to the singing and praying of the assembly
 - ✓ Carefully attend to the preaching, with the attitude that God is speaking to you through his word
 - ✓ Seek for opportunities to serve in the church