

July 10, 2005 AM

DAY 7: GOD'S REST

GENESIS 2:1-3

Seventh day is different from other six: (1) no "and God said" (creation is finished); (2) no formula to "bookend" the day: "and the evening and the morning were...." Some have seen the absence of this formula as being a theological statement that God's rest from creation is eternal; (3) this day is "blessed" and "consecrated" (made holy); (4) the three-fold repetition of the phrase "seventh day" is also unique. Great stress is being laid on this day.

1. COMPLETION AND REST (1-2)

No warrant for a new chapter here. The day is not "separated" from the rest of the week. It is distinguished from it in that it has a different character and purpose. This is the consummation.

Man finds his purpose in this movement.

Heaven(s), Earth and all their hosts finished: Connection with 1.1; what God began doing on the first day of the week he has now completed: the heaven and the earth with all their hosts.

Description = the forming ("heaven and earth") and the filling ("all their hosts") The earth which God formed out of water, being shaped and structured by God, is now a habitable place.

Moses adds something that we do not find in 1:1: the hosts. This word in Hebrew—*sabbaoth*—is used in various and sundry contexts to speak about several different things.

(a) "Hosts" is used to speak about the sun, moon and stars; i.e., the hosts of heaven (cf. e.g., Deut 4:19; 17:3). (b) "Hosts" is also used many times to speak about "armies" (cf. Num 1:52; Judg 4:2). (c) "The hosts of heaven" sometimes refer to the angelic armies that surround the throne of God (cf. 1 King 22:19). (d) YHWH is called many times YHWH Sabaoth, YHWH of hosts, YHWH of armies (cf. e.g., 1 Sam 1:3).

While some commentators seek to make fine distinctions here by saying that what is being referred to is the sun, moon and stars, I don't think that those distinctions need to be made. Everything created to fill heaven and earth was created during the six days of creation; whether that be sun, moon and stars, or man, animals and sea creatures, or angels. All the hosts of heaven and earth are now filling their respective positions in God's created order.

"... were finished" - 2x in first two verses. Completeness, finality. God did not simply come to a good stopping point and decided to quit. The work of creation that he had been doing is now complete. It has been brought to its intended end.

"Finished" and the consequent "resting" have the specific reference to God's six-day creation work. I.e., God does not become inactive after creation week. He continues to be active in the world (i.e., *providence*; cf. e.g., Heb 1.3)

Deists - God creates the world like a clock-maker, it is bound by impersonal "natural laws," and it winds down.

Application: Thus, it must be remembered that the God who created the world is the same God who holds our every breath in his hand.

Sabbath and the course of history: The seventh day is *eschatological*; i.e., the end of all things, where everything is headed. The first Sabbath of the first week of the history of the universe points us to God's purposes for the history of the world.

Creation week with its culmination or consummation in the Sabbath proclaims for us here in seed form that all of creation is intended to be brought into God's rest.

We are also given us the *pattern* of how God's purpose will be accomplished: dominion activity then rest.

Cf. Heb 4.1-11 - Context: the author is describing when the children of Israel were delivered from Egypt, passed through the sea and were now wandering through the wilderness. The gospel was preached to them as it was to the 1st century Jewish Christians. What was the promise of the gospel for those who were wandering in the wilderness? The inheritance of the land and with it rest. He quotes Gen 2.2 and then Ps 95.11: He understands the "rest" of God from all of his works of creation and the rest promised to the children of Israel to be the same rest.

How is this? What is the connection between the rest of God from creation's work and the rest promised to Israel? The answer lies in the connection between God's purpose for Creation as fulfilled through the vocation of man. Man is to image God and bring creation to its place of rest.

Adam failed in this task. So, God, never leaving his original purpose for man in creation, raises up a new man through Abraham and his seed, Israel. Israel had the promise and privilege of being God's new humanity, those re-made in God's image, with the responsibility of entering in and bringing creation into God's rest. Down-payment = Canaan.

He says that David (who wrote **Psa 95**) lived long after Joshua. Yet he says David told the people "**Today** if you will hear his voice harden not your hearts." Even after Joshua is long gone and the kingdom is established under David, still there remains a rest for the people of God. That rest is the rest that is God's original purpose of creation. The Sabbath, or the resting of God, then, is to be seen as the goal of God's purpose and plan for creation.

The concluding exhortation based upon this commentary on Gen 2:2 is this in Heb 4:11: "Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience." The author assumes the pattern of history as well as the purpose of history. The purpose of history is that God's people with all of creation be brought into his rest. The pattern of history is this: first labor ("creation") then Sabbath ("rest"). Cf. Heb 10.36

Cf. also John and all allusions to creation and new creation. Jesus, on the sixth day of the week, the final day of Creation, cries out from the cross, "It is finished." The word that John uses here is in the same family of words used in the LXX in Gen 2:1, 2. The old creation is now finished. It must die because of sin ... and it does die in Jesus. Then Jesus enters the rest that creation had to face: the tomb. Jesus is raised again from the dead bringing in that new creation and making it certain that all of God's creation will be swept up in his dominion.

Discipling the nations is about helping people understand what it means to be truly human; i.e., God's image-bearers. This involves my "personal life" to be sure. But it also involves bringing the whole creation and every thought within it into captivity to the Lord Jesus Christ.

2. BLESSING AND REST (3)

God blessed the seventh day: "Blessing" = life (cf. Gen 1.22, 28). Those who enter into God's Sabbath enter into the place and promise of life.

The seventh day was a particular day that is set aside for the special worship of God's people (cf. Lev 23.3). The seventh day was the time in which the people of God were to gather together to worship God. This was the time in which they were to receive the promise and participate in that blessedness of God, in the life of God. This was also the time that they were to anticipate the promise of God for life in the age to come.

God sanctifies the seventh day: puts it in a special relationship with the rest of the week. Sabbath observed even before Ten Words given (cf. Ex 16). Creation and redemption become the basis of observance (cf. Ex 20.8-11; Deut 5.12-15)

This day would be a memorial, a sign of the covenant, in which God would remember his covenant promises and act in behalf of his people to bring those promises to pass (cf. Exod 20:8; 31:13, 17).

This was to be a special day for the people of God. Well, what happened to it? Should we still observe the seventh day (Saturday) as the day of rest? Since there remains a rest for the people of God (Heb 4.9), the sign of that rest still exists.

Application: Be faithful as God's image-bearer.

Application: Coming into God's rest is not a "leaving behind" of our work but a consummation and celebration of it.

Application: The Lord's Day should be kept by God's people (as much as is possible) as the anticipation of our promised inheritance.