

Genesis 2:1-3 "The First Day of Rest"*

Proposition: According to Genesis 2:1-3, God fulfilled three accomplishments on Day 7 that hold tremendous significance for us.

- I. On Day 7, God finished His creative work (1-2a).
 - A. On Days 1, 2, & 3, He gave a formless world form.
 - B. On Days 4, 5, & 6, He gave an empty world inhabitants.
- II. On Day 7, God rested from His creative work (2b).
 - A. It doesn't mean God was tired.
 - B. Nor does it mean that God ceased from *all* work.
 - C. It indicates that God entered into a different type of activity.
- III. On Day 7, God gave mankind an example to follow (3).
 - A. He blessed the seventh day.
 1. It's a day for rest.
 2. It's a day for worship.
 - B. He sanctified the seventh day.
 1. It reminds us that there's more to life than work.
 2. It reminds us that we're not here to "do our own thing."

Implications: We can learn three lessons from Day 7...

1. God is the giver of rest.
2. Nothing is to be more important in our lives than God.
3. We were created to worship God.

Finish the statement: *Time is* _____. How many thought of the word *money*? Most of us have a production mindset when it comes to life. We work so we can *produce*. That's what life is all about, isn't it? We get the best job we can. Then we strive to be productive and acquire things--like a house, maybe a couple of cars, and some money in the bank for a rainy day. And then we play.

Work and play. That's what it's all about, or at least that's the conclusion to which the evidence seems to point in many of our lives. Take a close look at your checkbook and schedule-book, and what do you see? You discover the evidence of where your money and time are going.

I read this statement by a recently retired man, "We come into this world as babies, and that's the way we go out. I used to be able to pick up the phone and talk to anybody I wanted to. Enjoy your power while you can, because once you retire, they don't return your calls anymore."

Don't misunderstand me. There's nothing wrong with work and play. Nor with being productive in life.

But when life consists of work and play it doesn't take long until we develop a gnawing sense that we're missing something. Fulfillment is fleeting. We work fifty, sixty, seventy hours a week, and for what? To do it

again the next week. And the next.

Along the way we decide to spruce up our lives by buying some toys. Of course, we have to pay for them--so we work the long hours. When Friday evening comes we're exhausted, but that's what weekends are for, aren't they. Play time. *My* time.

In addition, if we have families, we know we need to carve out time for them, too. And so we race through life, juggling work, family, and recreation.

Yet all the while, that "gnawing sense" is still there, and when our head hits the pillow at night and we contemplate the rat-race, we may wonder, "Am I missing something? Something just doesn't seem right."

It's not. But what's the problem? Short and simple, the problem is a failure to take seriously the first three verses of Genesis 2.

Here's a guarantee. I want to state it and then defend it from the Word of God. You will never find fulfillment in life until you live in light of this truth. *You were created to live a life that revolves around the Living God.*

There are a lot of unfulfilled people in this world--and you may be one. Here's the reason--it's a failure to take seriously what God did on Day 7. Do you know what happened on Day 7, and more importantly *why*?

We're going to find out today. According to Genesis 2:1-3, God fulfilled three accomplishments on Day 7 that hold tremendous significance for us.

I. On Day 7, God finished His creative work (1-2a).

The text reads, "Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array. By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing."

Stop there. Verse 1 begins with the transition word "thus." There's an unfortunate chapter break that blurs the flow of the narrative. Genesis 1:1 states, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Now Genesis 2:1 explains that what God started, He *finished*--"Thus, the heavens and the earth were finished (KJV)."

As we've seen in previous weeks, God took six days to create this universe, and more specifically, this world in which we live. In Genesis 1, He tells us how He did it--*in stages*. When God first formed the created material of the earth, according to 1:2, the earth was *tohu* and *bohu*. That is, it was "formless" and "empty."

But in the next six days, God changed all of that.

A. On Days 1, 2, & 3, He gave a formless world form. He created boundaries. On Day 1, He put in place the light/darkness boundary. On Day 2, He put an expanse in place--called the "sky"-- to separate the waters above the earth from the waters on the earth. Then on Day 3, God gathered the waters on the earth into one place. He formed dry ground and sea. In addition, He caused luxurious vegetation to cover the earth.

So by the end of Day 3, the world that lacked form when God first spoke it into existence now had form. But it was still missing something else, and that came next.

B. On Days 4, 5, & 6, He gave an empty world inhabitants. On Day 4, God placed the sun, moon, and stars in place. On Day 5, He placed sea creatures in the water and winged creatures in the air. On Day 6, He placed land creatures on the ground, many types in fact, each "according to their *own kind*."

Then came the climax. On Day 6, God performed a second creative act. He fashioned mankind. He made man according to a *pattern*--in His own image (27). He gave man a purpose--to be fruitful and exercise dominion over the rest of creation (28). He also gave man a provision--food (29-30). The vegetable kingdom was there for the nourishment of the man, the woman, and their offspring, as well as being the food source for the animal kingdom.

At that point, God assessed all that He had made and concluded, "Very good (31)!" Moses, the human author of Genesis, wraps up the account of creation in 2:1 with the summary statement, "Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array [or "and all their hosts" as in some translations]."

The point is that the once unorganized world is now organized which great complexity and marvel. Talk about a building project! What God set out to "build" was now completed. Verse 2, "By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing [the English words "completed" in verse 1 and "finished" in verse 2 come from the same Hebrew root].

The skeptic cries out at this point, "Prove it! Prove that God created this world." To which I respond: the evidence is abundant, and it all points to a Designer. But in the end it boils down to *faith*. I cannot prove that God created this universe any more than the skeptic can *disprove* it. Why not? Neither one of us were there when it happened (or *didn't* happen, as the skeptic asserts).

It's a matter of faith, isn't it? That's what Hebrews 11:3 affirms, "By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible." By faith we know two things. One, the universe was formed at God's command, not by random acts of chance. And two, what is seen did not originate from that which is visible--that is, God created out of nothing *everything* that exists.

My friend, if you want to find meaning and purpose in life, you must affirm the truthfulness of Genesis. When God gave us Genesis, He gave us the "Owners Manual" for life.

At Christmas we received a nifty appliance as a gift, a gas-powered blower. The blower came with a very important document known as the Owner's Manual. The question came up, "What kind of gas/oil mixture does this engine require?" The answer was right there--in the manual. When you get out the Owner's Manual you can see in black and white what the manufacturer says about how his product will function best. He made it so he knows.

Beloved, God made us. If we ignore His Owner's Manual, we do so to our own harm, our *eternal* harm.

In Genesis 2 the Owner's Manual presents a series of very important "firsts." We see the first day of rest, the first man, the first marriage, the first sin, the first excuse for sin, the first sacrifice, and then the first children.

Are you facing problems today? The answers--*God's* answers--are rooted in Genesis. Yes, we need Genesis. We need to come to grips with what God did as recorded in Genesis, and for our purposes today, what He did on Day 7. First, He finished His creative work. That's more, a second accomplishment...

II. On Day 7, God rested from His creative work (2b).

"So on the seventh day he rested from all his work." What does that mean? First, let's talk about what it does *not* mean.

A. It doesn't mean God was tired. God is omnipotent. There is no limit to His power as Isaiah exclaimed in Isaiah 40:28, "The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom."

Making the universe would be a "big" task to us--there's an understatement! But not to God. He is totally self-

sufficient. He does not need to replenish energy for His power is infinite. So to say that He rested does not imply that He was tired.

B. Nor does it mean that God ceased from **all** work. He did not move from a state of activity to total *inactivity*. If He had the universe would have collapsed.

Answer this. What is it that keeps the electrons from breaking rank and flying off into space? What keeps the planets in orbit? Why does your heart beat again and again and again?

In our "enlightened" age we explain it all in terms of the "laws of science." But wait. Who made the laws of science? Realize this. If God ceased to care for this universe for just one split second, this universe would cease to exist.

But He will never do that--we have His word. Listen to Colossians 1:16-17, "For by him [speaking of Christ] all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things *hold together* ["consist" in the KJV].

Don't miss that. The second person of the Godhead *holds the world together*. He sustains this universe twenty-four hours a day.

On Day 7 God didn't cease from all work, but from a specific work. Which one? The text indicates He rested from His work of *creating*. Talbot calls it the "rest of achievement (p. 20)."

Commentator G. Aalders explains (p. 76), "The text makes it clear that this 'rest' stands opposed to the work of creation only. God rested on the seventh day 'from all the work He had done in creating'... 'Resting' simply says 'not creating.'"

For that reason there's no conflict between this verse and the words of Jesus in John 5:17, "My Father is always at work to this very day, and I, too, am working."

God never stopped sustaining and governing what He created. We call this "God's providence." So to say God rested doesn't mean He ceased from *all* work. What's the point then?ho

C. It indicates that God entered into a different type of activity. For six days God engaged in one type of activity, but then on the seventh day He entered into a different type of activity. For six days He formed and filled, but on day seven He stopped forming and filling. He entered into a qualitatively different kind of activity. He rested.

But why? If He wasn't tired, and if He didn't cease from all activity, why did God tell us He rested on the seventh day? The answer is, He did it for *our benefit*. You say, "How so? How was God's resting on Day 7 designed to benefit us?" We find the answer when we consider God's third accomplishment which is presented in verse 3.

III. On Day 7, God gave mankind an example to follow (3).

"And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done."

In whose image does Genesis 1:27 say we've been made? God's. Who determines how we are to live? God does. Whose actions give meaning to our actions? God's actions do.

Don't miss this. On Day 7 God gave mankind a pattern, an example. You'll notice two important verbs in

verse 3. God is the subject of both. First...

A. He blessed the seventh day. That's interesting. How do you *bless* a day? Does the sun shine brighter on the seventh day because God blessed it? Is the grass greener? No.

The Hebrew word for bless is *barak*. In its most basic sense the word means "to kneel" (in the noun form *berek* is the knee). When a king would bless his subjects, they would *kneel* before him. Here the King of the universe gives a blessing to His creation. He *blessed* the seventh day.

The seventh day has a special, God-given purpose. God gave it that purpose at creation. What's so special about the seventh day? The seventh day has two special purposes indicated here.

1. *It's a day for rest.* "And God blessed the seventh day...because on it he *rested* from all the work of creating that he had done."

The word "sabbath" does not appear in our text, at least not quite. The word for "rested" here comes from the Hebrew *sabat*, which is the root of "sabbath." On the seventh day, God rested. Again, His rest was the rest of achievement, not inactivity (as Derek Kidner states, p. 53).

On Day 7 God broke the cycle. On Day 1, He worked. On Day 2, He worked. On Day 3, He worked. Work, work, work. Then on Day 7, He stopped His creative work. He entered into a type of activity that is qualitatively different from the one He'd been doing the previous six days.

And why? He was giving mankind a pattern to follow. God is not restricted to time. He is above time. He created time. And He uses time for the good of His people.

You'll notice the word "work" appears three times in verses 2-3. Moses emphasizes and reemphasizes that God ceased His *work*. Interestingly, the Hebrew word (*malacha*) is the ordinary word for human work. "It may be," as Gordon Wenham writes (p. 35), "that this word has been deliberately chosen to hint that man should stop his daily work on the seventh day."

Why do we have a seven day week? Because God fashioned the calendar week. And He structured right into the week a day designed for rest. Why? Because though work is good, there's more to life than work.

A man once challenged another man to an all-day wood chopping contest. The challenger worked very hard, stopping only for a brief lunch break. The other man had a leisurely lunch and took several breaks during the day. At the end of the day, the challenger was surprised and annoyed to find that the other fellow had chopped substantially more wood than he had.

"I don't get it," he said. "Every time I checked, you were taking a rest, yet you chopped more wood than I did."

"But you didn't notice," said the winning woodsman, "that I was sharpening my ax when I sat down to rest."

Some of us have "dull axes," and the reason is because we're not taking seriously what God did on Day 7. God blessed the seventh day and by His actions declared it to be a day of rest. But the second day has a second, special purpose. It's a day for rest and...

2. *It's a day for worship.* Day 7 was Adam's first full day of life, right? God created him on Day 6. When Adam woke up on Day 7, what happened? What happened on Adam's first full day of life? God taught Adam a lesson. Do you know what it was? Don't miss it. On Adam's first full day of existence, he worshiped God.

Is work good? Yes. Is family good? Yes. Is it okay to enjoy recreation? Yes. But God never intended for life

to revolve around work, or family, and certainly not around leisure. We were created *for Him*. And He blessed one day out of seven to be a continual reminder.

God blessed the seventh day. That's not all He did. Notice the second verb...

B. He sanctified the seventh day. The NIV says He "made it holy." The Hebrew word is *qodesh*. It means to be distinct, set apart, *other* than. It's the opposite of common or commonplace.

The seventh day is the very first thing to be hallowed in the Bible. The fact that God sanctified this day offers us an important twofold reminder.

1. *It reminds us that there's more to life than work.* God's pattern is clear. Here it is. Work, then work the next day, then the next, and the next. Work six days. Work is a God-given assignment. "If a man shall not work, he shall not eat (2 Thes 3:10)." Work is good.

But there's more to life than work. We were created to worship God, not our work nor anything else. And by stopping work one day a week, we're forced to decide who we're living for.

I remember watching farmers wrestle with this when I was growing up. I'd see a neighbor cut his hay on Wednesday, intending to let it dry out and then bale it on Thursday. But then it rained on Thursday. And again on Friday. And on Saturday. Then on Sunday the sun came out, and the weather was perfect for baling hay. It was also a perfect day for the farmer to find out how much he really trusted God. "If I don't bale the hay today, it may mold and I may lose my crop. Will God take care of me if that happens? Is obeying God more important to me than getting my hay in the barn (or having a cash reserve in the bank)?"

Yes, there's the ox-in-the-ditch clause that Jesus talked about in Luke 14:5--if your ox falls in a ditch on the sabbath, it's okay to get it out. There are emergencies. But that's the point--they are *emergencies*, exceptions. The fact that God sanctified the seventh day reminds us that there's more to life than work. It also involves a second reminder...

2. *It reminds us that we're not here to "do our own thing."* We're so prone to forget *who* we are and *whose* we are. When God sanctified the seventh day, He put this weekly reminder into our schedules. We belong to God.

Let this sink in. Too often we treat as common what God declares to be holy. Specifically, too often we treat the Lord's day as a *common*, ordinary day. But God *sanctified* it.

What does that mean? Later in the Pentateuch God gave the Israelites some very specific instructions about the sabbath.

Exodus 20:8-11 -- "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work... For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy."

Exodus 34:21 -- "Six days you shall labor, but on the seventh day you shall rest; even during the plowing season and harvest you must rest."

Exodus 35:1-3 -- "Moses assembled the whole Israelite community and said to them, 'These are the things the LORD has commanded you to do: For six days, work is to be done, but the seventh day shall be your holy day, a Sabbath of rest to the LORD. Whoever does any work on it must be put to death. Do not light a fire in any of your dwellings on the Sabbath day.'

You haven't asked me yet, but I can hear the question coming. "Pastor, are we supposed to keep the Sabbath today? Here's my answer--no *and* yes.

Let me explain. First, *no*. The verses we read in Exodus were intended for Israel. Israel was a theocracy, a nation ruled directly by God. The whole nation shut down every seventh day, and God protected it from harm when it did.

For instance, God gave the Israelites twice as much manna as they needed every Friday. Why? So they wouldn't need to work on Saturday. Indeed, they were *forbidden* to work on the Sabbath, and the crime was punishable by death.

Is that true today? Are we supposed to punish sabbath violators by executing them? No. Why not? We are not the covenant nation of Israel. We are a related, yet different covenant community. We are the *Church*. The church is not tied to a particular land, as Israel was. We do not live in a theocracy, as Israel did.

So is the Sabbath for us? No. But the *sabbath principle* is. The sabbath principle preceded Israel. It goes back to the seventh day of our planet's history. God blessed that day.

Follow me. The idea of *sabbath* precedes the Law. It's rooted in creation. It's as old as creation itself. For Israel, the sabbath principle was spelled out to mean no work on Saturday, with violation punishable by death. It was the *Law*, God's Law.

But what did Christ do? He *fulfilled* the Law, right? In Matthew 5:17 He clearly stated He did not come to abolish the Law, but to fulfill it. In Colossians 2:16-17 Paul says, "Do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a *Sabbath day*. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ."

In my opinion, that's why we worship on Sunday rather than Saturday. The early church met for worship on the *Lord's Day*, to celebrate the fact that Christ conquered death on the first day of the week. Christ fulfilled the Sabbath. Indeed, Christ fulfilled the entire Law as the book of Hebrews substantiates.

In a very real sense, if we are in Christ, *every day is sacred*. *Every day is a day of rest*.

It's significant that Hebrews 4:4 actually quotes Genesis 2:2. In Hebrews 4:9 the writer states, "There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God." Why? Verse 10, "For anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his." And verse 11 concludes, "Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest."

What rest? The rest available in Christ.

Let me speak frankly. I think there are a lot of frazzled, unfulfilled people today whose root problem is right here--they're ignoring the significance of what God did on Day 7.

I believe the sabbath principle applies to us because it's rooted in creation. We need a day each week devoted to rest and worship. Not simply a family day, and certainly not a day to catch up on work we couldn't get down around the house because we were consumed with work at the office the other six days. The *Lord's Day* is intended to be just that--the *Lord's Day*--a day for rest and worship.

Implications: We can learn three lessons from Day 7...

1. *God is the giver of rest*. Rest comes from God. He created the world. He also established rest. He gave rest on Day 7, and Hebrews 4:7 indicates He gives rest *today* through His Son, Jesus Christ. Indeed, every week the *Lord's Day* gives us a very practical reminder that we need God to do for us what we could never

do for ourselves.

Are you tired of the rat-race of life? Do you want to experience God's rest? Then look to Christ.

Dear friend, how is a person saved? It's not by working to reach God. It has nothing to do with our production. To be saved we must stop, cease the futile attempt to appease God by our works, and admit our sinfulness and inability to reach Him.

Then we must *rest* in Christ. We must place our faith in Christ and *His* work--for on the cross He merited salvation for us, and three days later He proved His work was sufficient by rising from the dead.

Know this about God. He finishes what He starts. He rests only when His work is finished. Remember what Jesus prayed in John 17:4, "I have brought you glory on earth by *completing the work* you gave me to do." And the very next day, while hanging on the Cross, Jesus cried out these final words, "It is *finished* (John 19:30)."

If you want to experience the *rest* of God today, you can. Place your faith in Christ.

We have double reason to worship the Lord on His day. First, because He's our Creator. And second, because He's our Redeemer.

2. *Nothing is to be more important in our lives than God.* Is that true in your life? The fact is this, what we do with the Lord's Day is a revealer of our priorities.

We can say that we believe in Christ all we want, but every week we have a day when we can demonstrate our allegiance. True, a person can go to church regularly and not know Christ. But according to God's Word, it's inconceivable for a person to profess Christ and not *want* to worship Him regularly (see Heb 10:25).

So ask yourself: Am I giving the Lord first place in my life?

3. *We were created to worship God.* As Romans 11:36 states, "For from Him and to Him and through Him are all things. To Him be glory forever. Amen."