

Beginnings

Rest

Genesis 2:1-3

February 25, 2018 am

HDBC

This morning as we continue to work our way through the early chapters of Genesis we come to chapter two. Chapter 1 offers step-by-step accounting of the creative acts of God. So far, we have seen six days of creative activity. What will God do next? Let's read the text and see.

Read the Text: Genesis 2:1-3

In chapter one we saw action, movement, change. God spoke repeatedly and things appeared each time He spoke. He placed things where He wanted them. He set things in motion. In chapter one we saw action and result. Cause and effects.

Chapter two introduces us to the seventh day, which is remarkably different from all the previous days. Four quick observations that set it apart.

1. There is not introductory phrase, ***then God said***
2. It does not have the usual closing, ***and there was evening and morning***
3. It is the only day ***blessed*** and made ***holy***
4. Unlike the other days, the number of this day is mentioned repeatedly.

On Day 7 are introduced to something brand new in the creation narrative: **REST**

We use the word in all kinds of ways.

I rest my case. *No rest for the weary.* *Put your mind at rest.*
Give it a rest. *A Rest Home.* *I need a rest room.*

This is the first of 521 times the word is found in the Bible. 434 in O.T and 87 in N.T.

Used of **physical** rest. Resting the body from work and activity.

Used of **mental and emotional** rest. Rest as the opposite of turmoil and fear.

Used of **spiritual rest** in the sense of salvation. Resting from condemnation of sin.

Used of **ultimate rest** in Heaven. When we leave this life.

Note three things:

1. The Definition of Rest (1)

This is not a technical definition. But there is a sense in which **Rest** is defined by what we read. Note what it says.

Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done.

Verse one should have been included in chapter one, rather than in chapter two. It makes more sense because it is a concluding statement to all that happened in chapter one. It is the other bookend to 1:1.

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. 1:1.

Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. 2:1

Stephanus, the 16th century printer/ who introduced the verse divisions chose the wrong place to start a new chapter. Reading 2:1 as the conclusion of chapter one just makes good sense.

In verse indicates that God had completed His work of creation. Rest involves the completion of work or the suspension of work. Rest and work do not happen at the same time. When God was working He was not resting. His rest came after His work. At elementary level, rest involves not working (mental, physical)

2. The Demonstration of Rest (2b)

God rested on the seventh day. He did not need to rest. Omnipotence needs no rest for there is not possibility of fatigue. He rested as an example to us. **Jesus** also did things as an example for us:

Baptism – He was baptized as an example for us.

Prayer – He prayed to show its importance.

I want to point out that the phrase in verse two, *And on the seventh day God finished his work . . .* can be a little misleading in this translation. The Hebrew is pretty vague. Can just as easily be translated *God had finished*. There should be no confusion here. God completed his work in six days. There was no work on the seventh. Verse 3 makes that clear.

3. The Declaration of Rest (3)

God declared two things about this seventh day, this day of rest.

A. Blessed

Twice in the creation account God pronounced blessings. Each time it was tied to new life. End of days five & six. ***Be fruitful and multiply.*** Each time the blessing anticipated renewal of life. In a similar way our rest is life-giving.

This day would be special, unlike the other days, for it would be a day when people could be refreshed, renewed and reenergized. The days of work would consume our energy. The days of rest would renew and replace it.

B. Holy

This seventh day, the day of rest was the **first thing declared holy** by God. That elevates it above all other days as special and uniquely dedicated to God. Later the Jews would set aside this particular day as a day of rest and worship. It would be an important part of their law and of how they leaved from week to week. But that will come later.

The New Testament would make it clear that the particular day of rest and worship was not important. Followers of Christ chose the first day of the week, in honor of the resurrection of Jesus that occurred on that day. The acts of rest and worship are more important than a particular day.

From the beginning, we learn that rest is important to God. So important that He has declared it Holy, set apart for His glory. Rest is just as important to God as work. Rest is important for us!

So, in these verses we find . . .

A definition of rest – cessation of work

A demonstration of rest – God rested.

A declaration of rest – It is blessed and it is holy

This passage . . .

1. Establishes a pattern for our rest

The six day work week of creation followed by a one day of rest was designed to demonstrate the pattern that we are to follow.

God deliberately took six days for creation followed by one day of rest to setup up a pattern for our lives. He makes it clear that we are not simply to move from one day to the next in a long succession of days until we get to the end of our lives.

We are meant to live our lives around repeated seven-day weeks. These seven-day periods will help us mark time, anticipate the future, remember the past, and most importantly provide regular times of work and rest.

Some of you are out of balance. Some of you are workaholics. You never stop to rest. Others are lazy. All you want to do is rest. Stop it!

2. Points to the spiritual rest we find in Christ

Matthew 11:26-28 is quoted often but is also often misused.

Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

Many people fail to understand the context of that statement by Jesus. He was not simply speaking of encouragement when you are down, or picking you up when you are discouraged. He was speaking to people who had been trying to earn their salvation through their works.

They were weary and discouraged because the burden of earning your own salvation was so great that no one who bear it. So Jesus says . . .

Come to me and I will give you Rest. He is equating rest with salvation. When you trust Jesus for your salvation you can finally lay down the struggle of trying to be good enough for God . . . a struggle that was going to forever be futile. In Christ we have rest because we have what our work could never have brought us.

This does not mean we become spiritually lazy. The focus of our work changes. Before we were working to get right with God. Now we are working to bring glory and honor to God through spiritual disciplines and service.

Some of you are failing to enjoy the rest you have in Christ.

Rest in his promises, his power, his provision.

Rest in his grace, his mercy, his forgiveness.

Rest in his love, his acceptance, his assurance.

This passage establishes a pattern of work and rest

This passage to the spiritual rest we find in Christ

3. Anticipates the ultimate rest we experience in Heaven

Rest is also used in the Bible to refer to the time when we will leave this world and enter Heaven. So, there is a sense in which Heaven will be rest. Rest from pain, suffering, heartache, disappointments, and all other negative effects of the fall into sin.

Hebrews 4:9-10

So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, ¹⁰for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his.

The writer has written prior to these two verses about the rest under Joshua which referred to the Jewish people entering into the promised land. He acknowledges that rest, but then says there as another rest. This rest will only be experienced when we are able to rest from our works. That will only happen when we exit this life.

Revelation 14:13 reinforces this truth.

And I heard a voice from heaven saying, “Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.” “Blessed indeed,” says the Spirit, “that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!”

There is a future rest for believers. Not in this life, but in the life to come.

Don't buy into the stereotype of Heaven that is fabricated from the imaginations of men. Floating on clouds, just lying around. In heaven there will be movement, activity, work, accomplishment, discovery and so much more, but without the negative effects of the fall into sin.