

Study Notes for [Genesis 2:1-3](#)

THE SEVENTH DAY

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Setting:

At the end of six days of creation, God's victory over chaos, he rests. This is the climax of creation; it is the only day of all seven days that is called "holy." The Sabbath day was part of creation just like all other physical parts of the universe. Because the seventh day is so unique and special it makes it even more important in our understand of who we are and our relationship to God had his creation. As Waltke states, by resting, Israel experienced the world of untarnished blessing and we see that "the critical moments are not the ones spent building, possessing, and controlling, but the times set apart for quiet reflection, meditation and worship" (Waltke, *Genesis*, 71).

God's rest is his delight in his creation. Atkinson observes, "Our Sabbath rest is the opportunity God gives us to share his delight. Human life is meant to include more than labour, more than struggle for the appropriate stewardship of the world, more than the reforming of society. The six plus one alternation of work and rest is not the rhythm of work plus recovery so as to be able to go back to work. it is a rhythm of engagement with the world in work, and then thankful enjoyment of the world in worship. By 'worship' we do not mean simply – or even primarily – 'church activity.' Worship is our offering back to God, for him to enjoy, our enjoyment of his world. The climax of the creation is Man the Worshiper: *Homo Adorans*." (Atkinson, 48)

As we see at the end of seven days nothing was created by man, it was all of God. In the same way Gage states that "the new creation is none of man and, in truth, to be a new creation is to cease from our own works of "righteousness," and to rest in God's work of redemption on our behalf (cf. 2 Cor 5:17). Such is the sabbath blessing of the saint who enters into Christ's rest (Heb 4:9), for truly his rest is glorious, and his yoke is easy (Isa 11:10; Matt 11:30)." (Gage, 85).

Creation Summary (2:1):

This verse is a summary statement of all of Chapter 1 as well as introducing the epilogue¹ to creation – Sabbath Rest.

2:1 "the heavens and the earth" refer to the first three days of creation, while "all the host of them" ("in all their vast array", NIV), refers to all the created things within the spheres created in the first three days; sun, moon, birds, fish, "creepy-crawlies," animals and man.

This reference to all of creation can again be seen as a polemic against the pagan religions which demanded the worship of these created things:

And beware lest you raise your eyes to heaven, and when you see the sun and the moon and the stars, all the host of heaven, you be drawn away and bow down to them and serve them, things that the LORD your God has allotted to all the peoples under the whole heaven. (Deuteronomy 4:19, ESV)

¹ The term often used for such a verse is "janus" which means it acts as summary for what has gone before and introduces what is ahead.

Sabbath Rest (2:2-3):

This epilogue is not the same as the other six days. It gives a new perspective on creation. The seventh day is the climax to creation: it is the only day God blesses and the only day without an evening (Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology*, 187).

2:2 God's work was completed on the sixth day² and so he rested on the seventh day. He did not rest because he was tired but because his creative work was complete. His work did not have to be revised or updated, no new versions of it were required. God looked upon it and said it was "very good"; so there was nothing left to do (Kidner, 53).

This day is clearly different from all the rest. It is a day that God Himself set aside for Himself as a day in which he did not work. This is the meaning of the word "rest," to end or to stop or to desist from doing work. What followed from this was that those who are created in his image should also desist from work on the Sabbath (Exodus 20:8-11). As well, the Sabbath was every seven days and did not correspond to lunar cycles. Since the pagan religions would worship on certain days depending on the lunar cycle this too was a polemic against them (Wenham, 34).

Although the regulation for observing the Sabbath was not placed into Law until the Ten Commandments were given (Exodus 20:8-11; Nehemiah 9:13-14), the concept of a Sabbath days rest is as old as creation itself. Even before the Law was given the Israelites were told to gather the manna for six days but not on the Sabbath day (Exodus 16:22-26).

2:3 Although the seventh Day is not called the Sabbath³ in this verse, God blessed it and made it holy ("sanctified it," NASB). This blessing is different from God's blessing before when he blessed the fish, the birds, the animals and humans. In that case, the blessing meant that he gave them all that was necessary for them to be fruitful and multiply. In what sense is the seventh day blessed? Wenham states that "Partly the Sabbath is blessed by being 'hallowed' but there is also the suggestion that those who observe the Sabbath will enjoy divine blessing in their lives" (Wenham, 35). Notice too that there is no formula stating "there was evening and there was morning, the seventh day" – there is no evening to end it – implying that the concept of a seventh day rest continues on as Scripture attests to (Kidner, 53, Waltke, *Genesis*, 186).

"made holy" means that the seventh day is set apart from the other days; that God made this day different. Within the context of the mosaic law, "holy" means that the day belonged to God. God is holy. It is the essence of his character. Anything else in Scripture that is described as holy obtains its holiness from being chosen by God. The seventh day is the first thing to be made holy in Scripture receiving a status that belongs to God.

In the sixth day, God created man in his image and on the seventh he created the Sabbath day for man. There is hardly a greater reflection of God's image than the correct observance of the Sabbath.

² There is no need to read "finished" to imply that God had some remaining work to do on the seventh day.

³ However the origin of the word Sabbath comes from the word "rested."

References

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