

Genesis in Biblical Perspective  
The Gospel of Christ from Genesis  
The Sabbath: God's Most Neglected Gift to Man – Genesis 2:1-3

This is the word of God. Genesis 2:1-3.

**1** Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. **2** And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. **3** So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.

May God bless this His Word to the heart of His people.

It is such an important issue for the Sabbath to be understood, embraced, and experienced in terms of how God has designed it for His people. The best way to talk about this gift from the Lord is to start by telling this story. There was a young man who became a minister of the Gospel. He did not have such a great beginning in his life yet the Lord blessed him by allowing him to be born in the home of a couple who were missionaries. Because of physical concerns they had to move back to the US from the mission field and his father became a pastor. This young boy was very much put upon of the expectations of being a pastor's son. The young man became embittered about it and somewhat rebellious. This young man got to the end of his high school years and headed off to college. His father, the pastor, was a faithful servant and the congregation bought him a car. It was such a nice car that the young man wanted his father's car and he told his dad, "Daddy I'd love to have that car. I want a car just like that. Daddy I'm graduating pretty soon." Sure enough his graduation did come and the young man was taken out for a graduation luncheon. His father handed him a gift that was wrapped in a box. He opened the card which read "Happy Graduation, I'm proud of what you have done and look forward to what you will do. I believe this gift is needed and appropriate for you." He untied the ribbon and opened the box. Inside of the box was a Bible, with his name inscribed on it." The card went on to say, "May the Word of God allow you to know and serve the God of the Word. Congratulation!" Bibles had been around the young man's house all his life and he looked at it and his rebellion just spewed out. He looked at his father, took the gift, stood up and walked out. He hardly talked to his dad the rest of that summer and he went off to college. He would never see his dad again but the Lord was not through with that young man. This story will be concluded at the end of this study.

With that in mind and as this study begins look at Genesis 2:1 because it ties back to the first chapter of Genesis that has already been studied about the creation week. Genesis 2:1; "*Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them.*" In the first study of Genesis 1 a truth was established. The transforming truth of Genesis 1 was God's agenda in creation which was He made a home and then a people for that home all for His glory and when man, male and female, sinned He then made a new work which was God's agenda for redemption which is the reverse where He is making a people and then a home

for those people, all for His glory. Through Jesus Christ He created all the worlds and then made a people for that world. Now, after the fall of man, God is making a people and then through this same Christ who is creating a new people by His grace is preparing a home for those peoples. John 14:2, "*In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you.*"

To recap the creation week God starts by creating the heavens and the earth. With His spoken Word He brings everything into existence and in its initial form in Genesis 1 it is *tohu, bohu*, unformed and unfilled. In the first three days of creation God goes about forming up that home, that world. On the first day He separates the light and dark. On the second He separates the waters to the sky above and waters beneath. On the third day He gathers the waters together and creates the land. After doing the work of forming where the earth is no longer unformed, He now begins to fill it and on the fourth day He fills what He made on the first day with the sun, moon and stars. On the fifth day He fills what He formed on the second day with the birds of the air and the swarms of sea creatures which all begin to reproduce. Then on the sixth day He fills what He formed on the third day with animals that are reproducing and then He pauses in Divine consultation and says, "*Let us make man in our image, after our likeness*" (Genesis 1:26) and man, male and female, was created on this day also. After man was created the Divine commandment, stating three things, was given to them; "subdue the earth, be fruitful and multiply, and rule over My creation." This creation was not humanity crawling up by gas heaps of explosions and mutations but it was the hand of God that made man, male and female, and put them in charge of His creation. Then it was morning and evening the sixth day. God stops and this time He does not say "It is good," this time He reaches for the lyrical word of Hebrew, *me'od* and says "It was very good" which means He literally sings over His creation.

**Day 7** - Now God arrives at the seventh day and another transforming truth is revealed that will transform one's life. On this day God establishes the Creation Law of the Sabbath that reveals both the majesty of God and the providence of God for His people. The Sabbath is not a uniquely Christian observance. There is a Christian Sabbath which will be studied later but the Sabbath is a creation ordinance. It is the way man is to live, 6 and 1, work 6 rest 1. As God establishes this Creation Law called the Sabbath it now reveals two things; the majesty of God and the kindness, the providence of God. This day is not unique because God uses more words to talk about it, it is unique because of the choice of words.

Genesis 2:1-3, **1** "Thus the heavens and the earth were **finished**, and all the host of them. **2** And on the seventh day God **finished** his work that he had done, and he *rested* on the seventh day from **all his work that he had done**. **3** So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God *rested* from **all his work that he had done** in creation."

The first way God sets up the seventh day is four times in the three verses of Genesis 2:1-3 God tells the reader that He has finished His work of creation.

His work of creation has come to an end. It is completed, finished with excellence and He sings and rejoices over it.

The second way He sets up the seventh day is three times He uses the phrase "*the seventh day.*" He is indicating the uniqueness of this day. At no other time does He repeat Himself like this. He says normative, the comparative and the superlative. Three times He makes it clear that the seventh day is the day that He acknowledges "I have finished My work and I've rested."

Then two times He tells the reader what He does on the seventh day; three times with fullness and two times with repetition what He does on that day. In Hebrew, He "*shavath,*" rested from all the work He has done. The verb "rested" He will later use as a noun and call it the Sabbath. Right now it is a verb that describes what God does on this day.

A fourth thing that makes this day unique is that He *blesses* the seventh day which He does not do with any of the other six days. The only other thing that He has blessed has been man, male and female, made in His image. Here He is not blessing an aspect of creation and He is not blessing a theological truth but He is blessing a day. Then for the first time in the Bible He imparts His attribute of all attributes. The attribute that governs all of God's attributes is "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty." Here on the seventh day He imparts the attribute of attributes and makes it holy. Holy means unique, separated, to separate for elevation. Clearly in this passage God is elevating this day, the seventh day. He says, "Rest, rest. I've finished, finished, finished, finished. Don't miss this day that I put now before you! This day is holy!" This day is unique. This day is different. This day is elevated.

This day will then begin to pervade the Scriptures. It is also seen here how this is anticipated because He does not end this day with "morning and evening." For this day will then move all the way through time into eternity in its significance. This day will be pointed out when God puts together His loving statement and direction of how to love the Lord God with all one's heart, soul and mind for He will give His people four commandments. How does one love their neighbor as oneself? God will give His people six commandments. He will give His people Ten Commandments first to direct them in love to the Lord and then to direct them in love to one another. In the midst of all of that all of the ten are given in the prohibitive, the negative except for two; the fifth one (Exodus 20:12), "honor your father and your mother..." and the fourth one that directs one on how to love the Lord God (Exodus 20:8), "Remember the Sabbath day..."

The creation Sabbath is built right into the Law of God in Exodus 20 that is given to His people. Exodus 20:8-11; **8** "*Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. 9 Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, 10 but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. 11 For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.*" God blessed the Sabbath, set it aside, and made it unique.

Someone asked me “Harry how long did God rest?” It could not have been long because it was not long until man, male and female, sinned and then God had to start another work. Creation is done yet when it says God rested it does not mean God took a nap. It does not mean He got disconnected or disinterested in what He had done. It means He rested from the work of creation. All His creation is finished. The world is made. “I have filled it, I sing over it and it is good.” He rested from that work just as He calls us to labor and from all the work that He has given us we are to praise His name six days a week. Then He tells us to rest from that. Can it include rest from physical work? Yes but it is another kind of work. It is the very ministry of worship and delighting in Him as we rest from the six days of labor to the glorious privilege of praise to Him.

The Lord had not finished working because now starts another work. That is the work of redemption. When Jesus made that clear to the Jews of His day He almost got killed for it. In John 5 Jesus does a work of grace on the Sabbath. Jesus healed somebody. The people say “You can’t do a work of grace on the Sabbath.” Jesus begins to correct their theology of what it means to rest and the fact that while God has rested from creation He is doing some work. What work is He now doing? John 5:16, 17; **16** *And this was why the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because he was doing these things on the Sabbath. 17 But Jesus answered them, “My Father is working until now, and I am working.”* Here Jesus is doing acts of grace on the Sabbath. God is not working on creation but He is doing grace work, redemption work and Jesus is doing the work of redemption also. One can also see this in Mark 2:27, 28, **27** *And he said to them, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. 28 So the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath.”*

At this point in the study one sees that God has made the creation account unique. He sets it aside, blesses it, calls it “Holy,” three times calls it “the seventh day,” four times says He has finished His work, and two times He says He has rested from it. Now as the Scriptures unfold He takes that and embeds that into His Law and it has the same impact as the other commandments like do not commit adultery, do not murder, do not steal plus it has the same beneficial intent. That is why then the Lord tells His people what He says in Mark 2; “I didn’t make you for the Sabbath but I made the Sabbath for you. I designed it as a gift for you.” Then the Lord takes the Sabbath and uses it as a sign and a type of His work of redemption that He will do through Jesus Christ who is not only the Lord of creation but will be the Lord of one’s redemption, the Lord of the Sabbath. So Jesus Christ comes into this world and He becomes our Sabbath for the rest upon our souls. He takes away the restlessness of our souls. He goes to a cross, pays for all of our sins so that one might sing, “Jesus I am resting, resting in the joy of what Thou art...”

This does not mean one is not working yet one does no work for one’s salvation. A person is to rest in their Savior. What work one does is for their Savior and the work one does is the work He is doing in that one. But He has become the Lord of the Sabbath and as He comes into this world and does the work He goes to a cross and pays for one’s sins and on the sixth day He makes an atonement. On a seventh day He rests in a grave and on the first day He

comes forward. Now in the New Covenant the Sabbath day has changed but even though the day has changed the pattern has not changed. It is still 6 and 1.

The Lord Himself is the one who changes the day for us. He is resurrected on the first day of the week and He assembles the disciples around Him and they worship. Then one week later on the first day of the week by His command and His example they assemble around Him and worship. Then a third week later by His command and example they assemble around Him. They go up to the Sea of Galilee on the first day of the week and they assemble around Him. The apostles then take this message forward and say, "Set aside the tithes and the offerings on the first day of the week. Come into the Lord's house on the Lord's day." So they would assemble on the first day of the week and now the Christian's Sabbath maintains the pattern but the Christian Sabbath now proclaims not only has creation work been done but redemption work has been done. Now we rest in the Lord who, created the heavens and the earth, rested. Now He has redeemed His people and is making a home for them. His people now rest in Him in a day that declares it to a watching world. By the command and example of Christ, the example and command of the apostles, the Christian Sabbath is the first day. Now the Sabbath is more than just resting from one's physical labor but now one has full rest from one's spiritual anguish. Christ is my Savior!

The 18<sup>th</sup> century skeptic Vultair writing in one of his essays claimed that he set in place an intellectual movement that would eradicate Christianity within his prediction of 100 years. This is a statement Vultair made in his essay, "Christianity will be eradicated in 100 years." That was in the 18<sup>th</sup> century so he failed on that prediction for it is now the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. However it was interesting what he wrote right after that, almost as an afterthought, in his essay; "But first we must do away with the Christian Sabbath for as long as that day is sacred it will embolden them and affect this world." The Christian Sabbath is the fulfillment of the creation Sabbath and now with the added dimension of the fulfillment of redemption in Jesus Christ.

There are two things that the Sabbath proclaims. The first is it the Sabbath declares the majesty of God and the second is the Sabbath declares the providence of God before a watching world. Looking at the Sabbath and the majesty of God first I want to present a picture for one to see this more clearly. Here the Lord has labored six days; He forms, He fills a home and a people all for His glory. He looks and says, "It's very good" and then He rests. The Sabbath is not that God went and took a nap but it is that God looked at all of His excellence and was satisfied. Now He sits upon His creation, enthroned upon it. I have searched for a good illustration on this and this still is not a good one but for now it is the one I have. One goes to work and gets their work done all week. One wants to do it well as unto the Lord and then one comes home. Then one has "home" work. On Saturday there is that list, that "home" work to do. The garden is fixed, the grass is cut, things are repaired and finally the day begins to draw to a conclusion. Things are done. One goes to that patio seat to sit and rest from one's work. One looks upon one's work and it is good. Please take that illustration from the trivial to the sublime.

God has done a majestic work. Look at the billions of stars He flung in the sky, the moon and the intricacies of His creation. He has created it all. Look at the home He has filled with man made in His image. He has put man over His creation in a covenant creation and He looks and says, "It is very good!" He sits enthroned upon His creation in majesty and then He invites His people, "Come and sit with Me and delight in My work." Stop. Sit. Look and worship.

Then He embarks upon a new work, that same Christ who created everything. That work is to make a people for whom He will make a home and that Savior does the work on the cross. He goes to a grave. He is risen and He ascends to glory, the Lord of the Sabbath. He says to His people, "*Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 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,*" (Matthew 11:28, 29). Enthroned in glory Jesus invites His people now to come, sit and rejoice with Him on the Lord's Day. Look at what He has done! He is saving a people by grace for His own glory. Will one not call the day that He gives one, in kindness and providence, holy, elevated, set apart, unique in which one delights in Him?

The takeaway from this study is to simply read the Lord's commanding invitation to His people. Isaiah the Prophet tells the reader how God's invitation is given through the command of the Lord and how His people neglect it at their own peril. Isaiah 58:13, 14; **13** "*If you turn back your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on my holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight and the holy day of the LORD honorable; if you honor it, not going your own ways, or seeking your own pleasure, or talking idly; 14 then you shall take delight in the LORD, and I will make you ride on the heights of the earth; I will feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.*" In the book of Revelations it is called the Lord's Day. In 1 Corinthians 16 it is referred to as the first day of the week. It is the day of commemoration, not only the pattern of creation Sabbath but now it is the triumph of a redemption Sabbath in Jesus Christ. He invites His people to it. Not to keep it as a merit for grace because the merits have all been secured in Jesus Christ but as a means of grace. In Isaiah He says, "If you will make this day a delight then you will delight in the Lord." He now sets it before us as an invitation to come and sit with Him enthroned in glory and as we delight in His day He says "Watch what I will do with your life." Does one want to see what will happen with the other six days? He says in Isaiah, "I will lift you up and you will soar upon the heights of the earth as if upon the wings of an eagle."

The world will call one to profane this day and it will offer one enticing pleasures that will only distort and destroy. The Lord calls one to this day. All who come to Him and call this day a delight, He will bless. He did not make man, male and female for this day, He made this day for man, male and female, as a gift. All the ceremonial Sabbaths have been fulfilled in the Redeemer and in this study only the Christian Sabbath is being given. This day should be the delight of the believer. It should be a day unto the Lord and for the Lord, unique and holy, set apart, celebrating and rejoicing over what He has done not only in creation but also in redemption. Everyone is invited to the uniqueness of this

day. Everyone is invited to a Saturday night in which the anticipation is for the Lord's Day. Everyone is invited to an evening in which the Scriptures are opened so that one sleeps upon the Word and one awakes with a heart to worship the Lord. Everyone is invited to a morning when one awakes to a Lord's Day and there perhaps like no other time, the music and hymns, spiritual songs and Psalms fill the home, heart and life. Then one's heart is prepared.

Prayer for the believer: "O Lord, bless us as we assemble in the house of the Lord. Give us a delight in the day and a delight in giving You praise. This is a unique day. This is not a day in which you do work as usual. In fact I'll make sure all my husband-work, all my business-work, all my mother-work, all my father-work, all my wife-work, all my child-work, all my school work, all my other work is completed on six days. Now I come into Your presence to rejoice, delight, and reflect in You. I hear the call of what You will do with all of my days when this day is a delight. I want to be ready!"

God has given some wonderful gifts in these days. The crock-pot and microwave are a precious gift on the Sabbath for it allows for very little work that has to be done for meals on that day. Just let the meals crock and wave and then sit down at a table with one's children or friends. What is the Lord doing in your life? How have the blessings of the Lord been manifested in one's life? Stop and rest in Him. As in the words of Oatman's hymn, "Count your blessings, name them one by one." The Lord's day morning and evening sacrifices of praise are glorious where one fixes their eyes on Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath. God has put this into His commandment and it is just as beneficial as marital purity; do not commit adultery. It is just as beneficial as integrity; do not lie. It is just as beneficial as honoring a father and mother. In the midst of God's commandments it is there as a beneficial gift of God and we neglect to our own peril.

Benjamin Franklin in his autobiography records the edict of Charles the first that was sent out to be read in all the churches. Charles the first despising the work of the awakening of the Gospel throughout England sent his edict out and in it he said, "This day forevermore, the king declares throughout his realm, the Sunday is a day of recreation and sporting pleasure and it shall be good for my citizens." That edict went out through all the land. In a section of Franklin's autobiography where he deals with leadership he records this one because the edict went out and one of the great Puritan pastors, Thomas Watson, is given the responsibility to read it. Watson, on a Sunday, read that edict from the pulpit and everyone out of horror were amazed at what it said. When Watson finished reading it he turned to Exodus 20 and read, "Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy. In six days you shall do all your labor, the seventh is holy unto the Lord for in it the Lord created the heavens and the earth and the seas and all that is within them but He blessed this day and made it holy." Then the preacher said to his people, "The king of the realm has spoken and commanded. The Lord your God has commanded. Whom will you obey?"

The invitation and command of the Lord to sit upon His throne and rejoice are the restlessness of an age. What is it that keeps the Sabbath from one's heart, soul and life? Is it one's job? Could it be the idolatry of professionalism

and one is not resting in Jesus? Could it be the idolatry of amusement, consumption? All of those idols will fall and break their arms just like Dagon but the One who invites us into His arms to rest is the Lord of the Sabbath, Jesus Christ. He says this is not a burden but it is a delight.

To continue the opening story of this study, the young man in his fourth year of college heard his father was dying. He speedily came home to the father whom he had not spoken to in four years because of his bitterness and anger that was culminating from the “graduation gift” where his father paid no attention to his car request but gave him a Bible. His heart was broken when he heard his father was dying. This one to become a preacher, records in his journal what happens next. The young man got there too late. His father had died. He walked into the receiving room where his father had been laid before many for the reception. His heart broke and in the midst of his tears he ran from the room back to his house into his bedroom. He ripped open the drawer that was at the bottom of his closet. He quickly pulled out the Bible he had flung in there the day of his high school graduation. He opened it, saw his name and the card again that his father gave him with the Bible. He noticed that the Bible did not close well. He opened it further and there was another card. It said, “My son I give you the Word of God that you will know the God of the Word. This is the greatest gift I can give to you.” On the other side of the card was taped the keys to his car that was also given to him. A gift neglected can hold so many joys.

God has given you a gift, Jesus Christ. Rest in Him. Rejoice with Him over His creation and in His redemption. And He promises you that this gift will raise you up and you will soar from the heights of the earth.

Prayer:

Father, thank you for the moments together in Your Word. Dear friend, spend just a few moments in silent prayer. Perhaps the Lord is speaking to you. The first step is not to the Sabbath but to the Lord of the Sabbath, Jesus Christ. He is the One to rest in. Perhaps you have already put your trust in Christ and the Lord is asking you to embrace the Sabbath in His glory and majesty through joy and reverence. Spend a few moments in prayer with Him now. “Jesus, Jesus I am resting in the joy of who thou art. I am finding O the glories upon glories that you impart.” I pray Father that You will work in our hearts and lives for Jesus sake. Amen.