

**Scripture Reading: Genesis 2:1-3**

**“1 Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished. 2 And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. 3 Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.”**

# **"And God Rested"**

**Our text is short & simple this morning, but I trust we will learn a bit more about how central rest is to our salvation and how it is something we should demonstrate in our lives!**

- In large part because rest & contentment are certainly much in need in our modern world!**
- So, we will consider what it means for God to rest, what it means for us to rest and of course how all of this relates to Jesus and our walk with Him!**

**Chapter two of the Book of Beginnings opens with “thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished.” In verse three we read that “God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.”**

**We have before us one of those places where we need to remember that the chapters & verses that we use in the Scriptures are not inspired: They have come down to us as very useful tools for studying & sharing God’s Word. There has been a lot of discussion about where this first chapter break was placed:**

**These first three verses of chapter two complete the discussion begun in chapter one about the seven days of creation and so many have argued that the chapter break should have come after them. We know that the seven days are important because they establish the week which is the only unit of time NOT regulated by the heavenly bodies Seven is the number of completion and is very prominent in all of the Scriptures.**

**However, I think the originators of the chapters & verses had some solid reasons or arguments for the choice they made: These verses talk of God’s rest as opposed to God’s work and thus can be separated. This seems to be confirmed in verse three when God blessed this day and sanctified it or set it apart. This also seems to be confirmed by the Scriptures when we read of the six days in which God created the heavens and the earth, like in Exodus chapter twenty.**

- So it is proper to talk of the six days of creation & the creation week!**

**So let’s consider God’s rest on the seventh day and what it means for us today. We should begin with a very simple question: What does it mean for God to rest?**

- Was He tired?**
- We could certainly understand His being tired from a human stand point, but we know that God does not tire!**

**We also know from our studies of Jesus as the Creator that He not only brought forth all things, but that by Him all things hold together or consist. God did not set the creation in motion and then sit back and watch it work. Just as you would soon cease to exist if you stopped breathing on the Lord’s Day as part of your ‘rest,’ so the universe would cease to exist if God for an instant stopped caring for it.**

**So God was not tired and He did not stop His work of sustaining...**

**So what is involved in this day of rest?**

**Our text says that God “rested from all His work which God had created and made.” so it is proper to say that this rest was a cessation of His creative actions and that the work of creation was complete. Remember, He declared at the end of the Sixth Day that everything was very good.**

- **This does not mean that the creation was in its final state because man had not yet filled the earth or taken dominion which we will discuss much more in our further study of chapter 2.**

**We get another insight into this rest in the discussion of the Law of God in Exodus where God tells the people of Israel that keeping His Sabbaths is so important that the violation of it brings death: He then tells Moses in verse 16 of chapter 31:**

**Exodus 31:16 “Therefore the people of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, observing the Sabbath throughout their generations, as a covenant forever. 17 It is a sign forever between me and the people of Israel that in six days Jehovah made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed.”**

**As with all the sacrifices of the Old Testament, these Sabbaths were also pointing to the work of Christ and to the rest that would follow. There is a flow in history & it is important for us to remember this flow: Here before the fall on the 7th Day we have God’s work completed and He is at rest. I think Gary North rightly points out something that the early church fathers saw: Man’s first complete day in God’s creation would rightly have been a day of rest.**

**Had they been faithful, Adam and Eve would then have proceeded to do the work that God had ordained them to do in filling the earth and taking the example of the Garden that God planted as their work of dominion throughout the whole world. Man was not faithful and instead strove to work on his own, desiring and partaking of the forbidden fruit. Man is lost and the creation is ruined and it would have remained so had not God promised the coming of His Son Jesus to bring forth a new heavens and a new earth. And yes there would be a rest for the people of God that would follow His work once again.**

**It is important that we see that our rest is not the temporary rest commanded in the Old Testament, just as those sacrifices that were commanded were not able to take away our sin. Jesus did come at His appointed time, and His work was finished when He gave Himself as the sacrifice for sin and cried “it is finished.”**

- **Jesus rested with the Father on the seventh day, Saturday & was raised in victory on the First Day of the Week: Our renewed Day of Rest.**

**All of the sacrifices and Sabbaths of the Old Testament are perfectly fulfilled in the person and work of Jesus and we are never to go back to them!The Apostle Paul makes this abundantly clear in his letter to the Saints at Colossi:**

**Colossians 2: “9 For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; 10 and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power. 11 In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, 12 buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. 13 And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, 14 having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. 15 Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it. 16 So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, 17 which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ. ... 20 Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations-- 21 "Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle," 22 which all concern things which perish with the using--according to the commandments and doctrines of men? 23 These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.”**

- So if all of this was nailed to the cross why do we focus on keeping the Lord's Day in our member covenant and why did we spend an entire family camp two years ago focusing on what we should or should not do on the Lord's Day?

The short answer is that just as the sacrifices of the Old Testament inform our worship today as God renews His covenant with us, so the principles regarding the Sabbaths & feasts should also inform our lives today. John Calvin certainly understood this as he commented on the rest found in the creation week:

“Therefore when we hear that the Sabbath was abrogated by the coming of Christ, we must distinguish between what belongs to the perpetual government of human life, and what properly belongs to the ancient figures, the use of which was abolished when the truth was fulfilled. Spiritual rest is the mortification of the flesh; so that the sons of God should no longer live unto themselves, or indulge their own inclination. So far as the Sabbath was a figure of this rest, I say, it was but for a season; but inasmuch as it was commanded to men from the beginning that they might employ themselves in the worship of God, it is right that it should continue to the end of the world.”

- So how do we distinguish what is abrogated and what is eternal?

By remembering the flow of history:

- God graciously provided a world that He proclaimed was very good and invites Adam & Eve to rest in the work that He has done before they go forth to do their ordained work.
- Man rebels and turns to his own work which brings death & destruction.
- God calls out Abraham and established His people so His Son can come & save His people from their sins.

- For a time, God institutes sacrifices and Sabbaths which always point to the work of Jesus.

Thus the Fourth Commandment in the Law of God reflects the Creation pattern of God's work: Six days of labor and then a day of rest. Jesus comes and completes the work He is ordained to do and establishes a new day of rest that reflects the pattern God had intended for man in the old creation: We rest on the first Day of the Week, the Lord's Day, resting in the completed work of Jesus before we are sent forth to do the works that we were created in Christ Jesus to walk in.

When we understand this we see how using the Sabbath principles in the Old Testament is just as beneficial as using the principles of the sacrifices are in our worship where we see the sin offering at our time of confession, the ascension offering in our time of instruction and the peace offering at this Table.

Pastor Tuuri spent almost eight hours just scratching the surface of what we can learn and I would commend their study to all of you. *[mention tapes & sermon audio]*

It is always dangerous to speculate about what would have happened if man had not fallen, but in this case I think what we are promised in the future is in principle what would have taken place: Without the fall, man would have rested with God on His first day and then worked six and rested again on the first day of his second week. If they had partaken of the Tree of Life they would have lived obediently forever and when the work of filling the earth was completed there would have come an eternal rest.

Lest you think I am WAY out on the skinny branches by talking of such things I want you to keep this historical flow and my speculations in mind as we hear the writer of Hebrews talk about rest for the people of God...

We see Jesus as the Son of God superior to the angels in chapter one and His great salvation in chapter two & then we come to chapter three w/ a sometimes perplexing discussion of rest:

“1 Therefore, holy brothers,...

- Remember to ask, ‘what is that word there for? Because our Creator & Savior Jesus has wrought such a great salvation!

“Therefore, holy brothers, you who share in a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession, 2 who was faithful to him who appointed him, just as Moses also was faithful in all God's house. 3 For Jesus has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses--as much more glory as the builder of a house has more honor than the house itself. 4 (For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God.) 5 Now Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant, to testify to the things that were to be spoken later,”

- The rituals of the Old Testament always point forward to Jesus!

6 “but Christ is faithful over God's house as a son. And we are his house if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope. 7 Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, "Today, if you hear his voice, 8 do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, on the day of testing in the wilderness, 9 where your fathers put me to the test and saw my works for forty years. 10 Therefore I was provoked with that generation, and said, 'They always go astray in their heart; they have not known my ways.' 11 As I swore in my wrath, 'They shall not enter my rest.'”

- The author has quoted at length from Psalm 95
- Now it might seem strange for the writer to quote this Psalm as a warning here in the New Testament, but he does so again and again as a warning: A warning that is not just hypothetical!

12 “Take care, brothers...

- He is talking to God’s covenant people!

“Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. 13 But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. 14 For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end. 15 As it is said, "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion." 16 For who were those who heard and yet rebelled? Was it not all those who left Egypt led by Moses? 17 And with whom was he provoked for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness? 18 And to whom did he swear that they would not enter his rest, but to those who were disobedient? 19 So we see that they were unable to enter because of unbelief.”

Hebrews 4: “1 Therefore, while the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us fear lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it. 2 For good news came to us just as to them, but the message they heard did not benefit them, because they were not united by faith with those who listened. 3 For we who have believed enter that rest, as he has said, "As I swore in my wrath, 'They shall not enter my rest,'" although his works were finished from the foundation of the world.”

- We must not miss the central point here: Entering God’s rest is a matter of faith not of works!
- And now the writer relates all of this back to the creation we are studying...

4 “For he has somewhere spoken of the seventh day in this way: "And God rested on the seventh day from all his works." 5 And again in this passage he said, "They shall not enter my rest." 6 Since therefore it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly received the good news failed to enter because of disobedience, 7 again he appoints a certain day, "Today," saying through David so long afterward, in the words already quoted, "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts." 8 For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken of another day later on. 9 So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, 10 for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his. 11 Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience. 12 For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to

the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. 13 And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account. 14 Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. 15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”

- Now of course the concept of “striving for rest” might seem to be counter-productive.
- But not when we understand it to mean that we strive to leave our works behind and trust fully in the work of Jesus...

Not striving to do our own thing as Adam did in the garden! And sadly many of God’s people down through the ages have chosen Adam’s path rather than following the command of Jesus... If we strive in our work for six days and then hope for rest we will be no better off than those in the wilderness.

- No, the Christian Sabbath or the Lord’s Day is the first day of the week where we strive to rest in the completed work of Jesus.

The writer of the Hebrews stressed the fact that those striving in their own works did NOT enter God’s rest and we see this in the life of Jesus when He calls the same judgment down upon the unfaithful of His own day:

Matthew 11: “20 Then [Jesus] began to rebuke the cities in which most of His mighty works had been done, because they did not repent: 21 “Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. 22 But I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you. 23 And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades; for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. 24 But I say to you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you.”

- Jesus then turns from those with hardened hearts to those who have been granted the gift of faith...

25 “At that time Jesus answered and said, “I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes. 26 Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight. 27 All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him. 28 Come to Me, all you 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.”

- May we always be those who strive to enter God’s rest!

Communion Meditation: Isaiah 30

“18 Therefore Jehovah will wait, that He may be gracious to you; And therefore He will be exalted, that He may have mercy on you. For Jehovah is a God of justice; Blessed are all those who wait for Him. 19 For the people shall dwell in Zion at Jerusalem; You shall weep no more. He will be very gracious to you at the sound of your cry; When He hears it, He will answer you.

20 And though Jehovah gives you The bread of adversity and the water of affliction, Yet your teachers will not be moved into a corner anymore, But your eyes shall see your teachers. 21 Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, “This is the way, walk in it,” Whenever you turn to the right hand Or whenever you turn to the left.”