

SESSION 14: THE FINAL DAY OF CREATION, PART THREE

Genesis 1:28-31

January 7, 2024

Genesis 2:1-3

Read Genesis 1:28-31.


Last week we spent a fair amount of time looking at this business of God's blessing on the first man and woman, struggling to understand just what that word (*barek*) means—or at least how it is being used here. Upon re-reading the passage a few more times since, I came away with the image in my mind of a wedding ceremony.

A modern religious marriage ceremony includes someone—a pastor, an elder, or a priest—in a sense standing in for God to “bless” this union of the man and woman. In my mind I see a holy God—Adam and Eve's pastor—standing before the couple, joining them together in wedlock as He bestows His blessing upon them to go forth, to have babies and “fill the earth,” and establish man's dominance over all lower creatures that share it.

In our previous class on the *Last Things* we began that study looking at the sequence of dispensations that proceeds from Creation through to the Eternal State. Here in v28 we have the inauguration of the short-lived first dispensation of Innocence—begun with the blessing of their Creator bestowed upon the sinless first couple. It wouldn't last long; man's Fall would inaugurate the next dispensation.

vv29-30

Then God said, “Behold, I have given to you every plant yielding seed that is on the surface of all the earth, and every tree which has the fruit of the tree yielding seed; it shall be food for you; and to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the sky and to every thing that creeps on the earth which has life, I have given every green plant for food”; and it was so.

In Creation's pristine, sinless state, animals were not killed for food. Man and beast were given the fruit of the trees and the green plants for food. The death of living things did not exist. 

“living things”

Remember: biblically, plants are not considered “living”; only beings that breathe are living.

It is hard for us to imagine such a world, for we have all of us been born into, and been raised from birth in a world *permeated* with death. Animals die, either from old age, accident, killed and consumed by other animals, or slaughtered by man for food. Grandparents die, parents die, and, sadly, even children die. Every one of us knows that there will come a day when *we* die.

We get a pretty clear picture of what a holy God thinks of death near the end of all things in The Revelation.

Read Revelation 20:13-15.

But that was not the world as first created. Death did not exist until after the Fall. The first thing we note after that fateful day is the death of innocence.

Read Genesis 3:7-10.

Next, although man will remain vegetarian, in God's response to their shame we see the first death of an animal—at the hand of Yahweh Himself.

Read Genesis 3:21.

There will now be death on earth, but man will remain vegetarian until God makes His covenant with Noah after the Flood.

Read Genesis 9:2-3.

Back to Chapter One. Don't miss how v29 begins: "Behold, I have given to you..." As the Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew Lexicon explains, "lo" or "behold" introduces "clauses involving prediction," or, with reference to the past or present, "points generally to some truth either newly asserted, or newly recognized." God is saying here, *This is important. Pay attention.* And Leupold explains the strength behind "I have given."

Leupold: The verb [translated] “I have given” (*nathátti*) stands in the perfect tense, the usual construction in ordinances or abiding decrees. The perfect tense gives the impression of a rule firmly fixed and already unwavering.

Way back on Day Three God created everything man and the beasts would need for food. As He had from the earliest moments of Day One, God has assembled all the pieces of His Creation for the benefit, the sustenance, the edification of human-kind. And as to the food, we should keep in mind that just as man was different before the Fall, so was the earth and those things growing from it. I doubt that we can imagine but in our wildest dreams the extravagant, exotic bounty the Lord fashioned for the first couple. Surely that with which *we* are familiar (and think to be so wonderful) is but a mere shadow of what was initially supplied in Eden. 📖

Verse 30 reiterates the giving of the trees and plants for food, this time for the beasts of the earth, et al. Since the animals do not at this point prey upon each other, Leupold *may* be correct that “Rapacious and ferocious wild beasts did not yet exist.” But it could also be true that these wild beasts were originally created herbivores, only to become carnivores after the Fall (or after the Flood), just as Noah and his family.

v31

**And God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good.
And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.**

Three words set this sixth day of Creation apart from the foregoing.

- Previously, after steps in His Creation, it would be stated that “God saw that it was good.” Now the declaration is not just repeated, but is emphasized with, first, “behold,” and the addition of the adjective “very.” Here God declares *everything* He has just made “*very good*.”
- Previously the time marks would be, e.g., “*a fifth day*”; now the definite article is added: “*the sixth day*.”

a groaning earth

One of the advantages we have living in a part of the world with seasonal change is that every year we are offered an illustration of the difference between Eden and the world after the Fall.

In the spring the land bursts forth with burgeoning life, and as we pass into the summer we are surrounded by a landscape bursting with life. The deciduous trees are in full leaf, green and pleasantly shaped.

But come late autumn and early winter the green land has become an ugly brown, and the trees have degenerated into little more than stark, bony skeletons—appearing utterly lifeless.

The contrast is a perfect illustration of the world as God made it, and the world after sin took hold.

Thus in a number of ways the events of this day are marked as the closing creative bookend to the entire week. God declares that everything lying before Him has just been created perfectly, just as He intended: absolutely perfect, without a trace of evil. This is a world as He wants it, sufficiently clean for Him to visit (3:8) and—in time, after it has been recreated to its original pristine state—a world in which He is willing to dwell for eternity (Revelation 21:3).

And now we are presented with one of the clumsiest chapter breaks in all of God’s word. The next three verses should by all rights be in Chapter One, but they have been broken away from the narrative and placed in Chapter Two.

Read Genesis 1:31-2:3. (NASB or NIV)

v1

The official conclusion of God’s Creative pageant occurs in this verse.

Thus the heavens and the earth were completed, and all their hosts.

We tend to read “completed” and think “finished”—which is, indeed, how this word (*ka-LA*) can be translated, and is in the ESV and KJVs. But it can also include the idea “to be complete,” even perfected. So at this point—the end of the sixth day—God was not just done with His work, He was finished with a perfectly *complete* new task. Nothing more needed to be added; the work required no fine tuning after the fact—as is so often the case with human projects. It was done—and done perfectly, an echo of “very good” in v31. And v1 as a whole speaks to this: *everything* in God’s Creation was completed as intended:

- the heavens (*shamayim*): the immediate atmosphere enveloping the earth and the vast universe (space) above that;
- the earth (*eres*): this globe we call home (for now);

- and all their hosts (*saba* [tsa-VAH]): a military term used to describe those stars and planets populating space, including the “hosts” of earth, i.e., our sun and moon (Genesis 1:14-15).

“hosts”

Some posit that this can include or even refer specifically to angels. But there has been no mention in the preceding Creation narrative of the creation of angels, so (although in other passages *saba* may refer to angels (see, for example Psalm 148:2), there is no basis for believing it does here.

Read Deuteronomy 4:19. (not NIVs)



v2

And on the seventh day God completed His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done.

Right away we see that we may have a problem in v2. Verse 1 states that *prior to* Day Seven, the Creation process was “completed” (at the end of Day Six). Yet in about half of our versions, v2 begins “And **on the seventh day** God completed His work...” So those paying attention might say, *Whoa, wait a minute. Which is it? Day Six or Day Seven?* Compounding the confusion (at least on the surface) v2 continues with “and He rested on the seventh day from all His work...”

The more literal translation—as in the LSB, ESV, and KJVs—is “**on** the seventh day.” The not inaccurate, but less literal, translation—as in the NIVs and (sadly) NASB—is “**by** the seventh day.” I’ll not bore you with the explanatory details found in the original Hebrew, but the bottom line is that the verb “completed” or “finished,” is in the *Piel stem*, which is sometimes in the *declarative* sense, which supports Leupold’s translation of v2,

And on the seventh day God declared His work on which He was engaged, finished, and He desisted on the seventh day from all the work on which He had been engaged.

This is not just a matter of getting the words right, but it is important for us to know that Day Seven was different from the six previous days; it was special because it established something very important God chose to communicate to His people, as expressed clearly in v3.

Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because on it He rested from all His work which God had created in making it.

Once again God bestows a blessing—this time on a day: the seventh day of the week. More than that, He “sanctified” the day—He set it apart as a holy, consecrated day. And He did this by “rest”[ing] on this day; the Hebrew is *shabath*, which means at its root to cease, to desist in what one is doing so as to rest from one’s work. This established not, specifically, the Jewish Sabbath, but the “creation Sabbath,” which set the pattern, the concept for that which would be instituted in the Ten Commandments for Israel’s Sabbath.

Read Exodus 20:8-11.

The Sabbath is not only important to Jews, but to Christians as well—just in a different way. Followers of Christ are not *commanded* to “rest” every seventh day, because for us the Sabbath rest has been fulfilled in Christ (Hebrews 4:9-11). And, as David Guzik points out,

Christians do not lose the Sabbath; *every day* is a day of rest in the finished work of Jesus Christ. *Every day* is specially set apart to God.

Nevertheless, there is something to be said for the setting aside of one day a week for devotion, for study, for worship, for contemplation of things holy with fellow believers—as well as for physical cessation of one’s work. Yet for us the practice of resting from work on *our* Sabbath (Sunday) is only one of personal conviction.

Let us finish by pointing out two important truths:

- God did not rest because He was weary. “He rested to show His creating work was done, to give a pattern to man regarding the structure of time (in seven-day weeks), and to give an example of the blessing of rest to man on the seventh day” (Guzik).

- As we were reminded recently in Pastor Jeremy's study of the gospel of John, the Sabbath instituted by God is ultimately for man; God and His Son never stop working (John 5:16-17).

And so ends the first account of God's creation of the universe. I want to close with something Leupold writes about what we have studied in the first thirty-four verses of the Bible.

Leupold: Before leaving this initial account we must yet take definite issue with one problem involved in the account as a whole. On the one hand, is this a strictly factual account, reporting what actually transpired in the manner in which it transpired? Or have we here a picture devised by human ingenuity, which picture seeks to convey truth by its general outlines or by the basic thoughts which are here expressed in terms highly figurative? Though this latter view has come to be held almost universally, it is still by no means true. We have not in this chapter a marvellous product of the religious creative genius of Israel. Such efforts would merely have produced just one more trivial and entirely worthless cosmogony. The account as it stands expects the impartial reader to accept it as entirely literal and historical. The use made of it in the rest of Sacred Scriptures treats every part referred to as sober fact, not as a fancy-picture. Compare on this chapter the dozens of marginal reference passages found in almost any Bible.

SESSION 14

The Final Day of Creation, *part three*

Genesis 1:28-31, 2:1-3

The Absence of Death

In Creation's pristine, sinless state, animals were not killed for food. Man and beast were given the fruit of the trees and the green plants for food. The death of living things did not exist. See **Revelation 20:13-15; Genesis 3:7-10, 21; Genesis 9:2-3.**

Genesis 1:31

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Genesis 2:1 - "Completed," "Finished"

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Leupold's Translation of v2

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Sabbath Rest

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