



When you hear the word “time,” what do you think? There are many phrases people use to talk about time. Many times, we talk about time like a cruel taskmaster. We say “time goes by so fast,” and “if you don’t enjoy the moments, they’ll pass you by before you know it.” The Bible quotes people saying, “Eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow you die.” Time seems to be an enemy to us. The earth keeps revolving and going around the sun, so we experience days, weeks, months and years. And we just can’t stop time, rewind time, change the past, or fast forward through the present. What do we do when time feels like a taskmaster? How do we live? Is this how God originally made us to live? We just completed chapter 1, and the six days of creation. After the creation of Adam and Eve, we then hear that it’s all very beautiful and good. But then did God give us all of this to always feel like we’re missing out? I think we all know the answer is “no,” but how do we know that? That’s where Day 7 comes in.

Day 7 is literally set apart from every other day of creation. So, let’s go back to the beginning of chapter 1. Creation begins with a formless void with darkness and waters – all symbolizing chaos and disorder and lifelessness. This speaks to the original audience, the Israelites who are wandering in the wilderness, that God is over all apparent chaos and disarray. From the very beginning of creation, God revealed that he is the redeeming God, who brings order and beauty from chaos. Now, as we enter into the days of creation, we see God emphasizing space and matter. Of course, with each day, God is also talking about time. But the emphasis of each day is the matter and space that is being ordered in those days. But then we enter Day 7. If you were a Hebrew reader, you’d understand **that this day is particularly special** for a couple of reasons: 1) **Moses repeats the phrase “seventh day.”** It is used three times. In the Hebrew, there is no punctuation. To emphasize something, Hebrew authors would restate something. If they wanted to emphasize something to the ultimate degree, they would state it three times. So, while we may look at Day 7 as somewhat of an afterthought in the days of creation, and while we might want to gloss over three short verses, Moses is using the Hebrew language to emphasize our need to ponder these words and understand their importance! 2) **God made the day holy.** In the previous days of creation, we see God blessing creatures and humans, but in 2:3, we read that God blessed the seventh day and made it holy. The blessing is actually that God made it holy. Now, what does “holy” mean? The word “Holy” has two general meanings. One is a very narrow definition, meaning “sinless.” That can’t be what this means here because there was no sin in creation. The other definition is a much bigger definition that means “set apart” and “otherly.”

Now, what does it mean that God made the seventh day “holy?” It means that he set it apart for a special purpose. Something unique took place on the seventh day that should always be remembered. In all of this that I’m saying, do you see how this 7th day doesn’t focus on matter and space. It focuses on how the day itself is treated – how *time* is treated? If you don’t see it yet, hopefully you will as we move forward. Let me now share with you the main idea of the sermon today: **God created to grant humanity blessing from chaos and to lead people to celebrate God’s completed work.**

As in previous weeks, I'm going to break down this main idea into smaller points, but before we do that, let's read verses 1-3 together: **Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. ²And 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. ³So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.**¹

1. God created. . . (vv. 1-3).

I'm not going to spend too much time talking on this point because we've spoken on this over the last few weeks, but notice that the initial creation narrative begins in 1:1 with "In the beginning, God created," and then in verses 1-3, we read "the heavens and earth were finished," and "God finished his work that he had done," and then finally in the final verse, we read "God rested from all his work that he had done in creation." The narrative begins and ends saying God created. If you mark in your Bibles, you might want to circle that in verse 1 and circle that in 2:3. God created all of this!

Remember that the Hebrew word for create in this text is only ever used of something God can do. We cannot create like him. Sure, we can make things, but we cannot bring things to being. Life and existence does not flow out of us. Everything we make is simply made from things that God created by his power. And what we've seen over the last few weeks as well is that this creation narrative confronted the cultures surrounding the wandering Israelites. Whereas the other cultures would have emphasized creatures, stars, planets, sea creatures as beings at the level of divinity; the Genesis narrative states that the One True God created all of this. Creation is not worthy of worship. The Creator alone is worthy of our worship.

If we truly understood who God is, then we'd worship him and our lives would be changed and transformed in order to show his glory to others. We were made for him. Apart from him, we only have chaos. But with him, we have life and beauty. That's why after every day of creation, we read, "And it was beautiful." So, God created. But for what purposes?

2. . . .to bring blessing from chaos. . . (vv. 2-3).

We're told in verse 2 that God finished his work, God blessed and God made holy. Did he accomplish the work he set out to do? Yes! But let's ask again what he was seeking to accomplish. Was he *only* wanting to communicate that he owns everything? No. While that's extremely important, he wants to show *how* he controls everything. Think of it this way. You can have a Ruler who is a despot and you can have a Ruler who brings peace. Both are rulers, but one has proved himself worthy of your trust. As we continue in the book of Genesis, we see that trust and believe in God is an essential theme. And, even in Genesis 1:2, we discover that God is revealing what kind of ruler he is. **He's a ruler who intends to bring order and beauty from chaos. He intends to show that he's a Redeeming Ruler, a Rescuing Ruler. And the question comes to the Israelites in the wilderness, "Will they trust God even when life feels chaotic?"** This same question comes to us today as well. Are you experiencing chaos in your life? I know I am. The temptation is to think that God doesn't care or that none of this matters or that we should just ignore it and move on.

If you feel like your days are marching on and the chaos is winning. When you feel like you're just in the rat race of life, and time is a relentless enemy. Look to Day 7 of creation because we're told that time

¹ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ge 2:1-3.

itself is in God's hand, and he brought beauty and order from chaos. God designs to show us in the creation narrative, and in Day 7, that he is over all of this and he is good. He is the redeemer and rescuer! Will you and I trust him? **When we look at the glories of this beautiful creation, we ought to say that if he can bring beauty from that chaos, then certainly, he can finish what he began in me. He can bring beauty from chaos in my life!** So, we see that God created to bring humans blessing from chaos. Now, we move to the final part of the main idea.

3. . . .to lead people to celebrate God's completed work (vv. 2-3).

The reason I use the word "celebrate" is because this idea is embedded in the word "rest." Before I explain how rest and celebration connect together, let me explain this word a little bit. This word for "rest" is connected to the Israelite practice of Sabbath rest. Meaning, on the 7th day, the Jewish people set apart the 7th day to rest on it and to cease from certain activities. The practice continues this day, and there are even Christians, maybe some here, who believe that in the New Testament time period, Sunday is now the Sabbath instead of Saturday.

Some of you might say, "Who cares about what this word for rest means?!" Take a moment to remember God's emphasis of the importance of the seventh day. He's essentially put multiple exclamation points here to say we really need to get that Day 7 speaks to the majesty of God and his sanctifying of time!

Now that we have a little context to the word "rest," what does it have to do with celebrating? Well, the idea of celebration is embedded in the Hebrew word for "rest." One theologian by the name of Allen Ross says that the Hebrew word "means 'cease,' more than 'rest' as understood today. **It is not a word that refers to remedying exhaustion after a tiring week of work. Rather, it describes the enjoyment of accomplishment, the celebration of completion**" (Ross, *Creation & Blessing*, pp. 113-14).

Did you hear that? The original Hebrew word does not refer to remedying our exhaustion after a tiring week. I think that's how most people I know have used it. I've heard Christians talk about Sundays saying, "It's the least restful day of the week for me." And so, they may say, "Well, I'm going to scale back serving Christians because I need to cease from activity." Now, I do believe there are people who overwork and are just busybodies, but don't use the term for Sabbath rest to give you justification to *not serve*. If you do, you're using the term in modern English terms, not original Hebrew terms. And, as I'll explain later, I think you're misunderstanding the point of the Sabbath rest. So, let's take a moment to scan the Old Testament Scriptures to see what the purpose of Sabbath rest was:

To reveal that God completes the work he begins. This is clearly the emphasis here in Genesis 2. Look at how many times, Moses repeats that God finished his work. Verse one says "Thus the heavens and earth were finished." Verse 2 says on "the seventh day God finished his work." Side note, that might make it sound like God was still creating on the 7th day, but the Hebrew tense usage is emphasizing it was finished by the 7th day. Then we read he rested from the work he had done. And just in case you want to know what he specifically rested from, verse 3 says he rested from the work he had done in creation. This doesn't mean God didn't do *anything* on the seventh day. The Bible says that he holds everything together and that all things get their continued life from him (Col. 1:17; Ps. 145:6). The emphasis is that God rested from the creative work that only he could have done – and he completed it! Another reality behind Sabbath is

To reveal God is Lord. Interestingly, in one ancient creation narrative contemporary with Israel has the gods resting after creating, but the gods are exhausted. So, they give the task of work to humans so that the gods can be removed from menial administrative earthly tasks. But that's not how this narrative describes God. He's not, even in the slightest, tired. And he doesn't create man and woman to do his dirty work. No. Instead, humanity is raised to the highest privilege, and then God rests to get everyone to stop and see the beauty of who he is! Who is this Being who can create? Who is this Being that can perform such glorious wonders? Who is this Being? This is Elohim. This is the same God who brought Israel out of Egypt and revealed his name as the I AM. Will Israel stop and take time to ponder Elohim's beauty and glory? Will they confess he and he alone is Lord?

To reveal that God loves creation. Elsewhere, when Jesus speaks of Sabbath, he says that "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath."² In other words, God didn't take Sabbath rest and then call his people to follow this 7-day pattern in order to bind them, but in order to help them. Day 7 is an act of love.

To set Israel apart from other nations. In Exodus 31:17, we read, "It is a sign forever between me and the people of Israel that in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed." ³ Notice, this is not a sign God has between the people of Egypt or Canaan. It's a sign to set Israel apart from other nations to point to the fact that Yahweh is the Creator who is worthy of all worship. One more point of the Sabbath from the Old Testament perspective is

To remind Israel of their redemption from Egypt. In Deuteronomy 5:15, we read, "⁴**You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the Lord your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day.**" ⁴ Because God set them free from Egypt, they should keep the Sabbath? What does Egypt have to do with the Creator celebrating his creative work? Well, if you think of the context of Genesis, you remember that this is written to wandering Israelites who are doubting the Creator's intentions towards them. Is he a redeeming and good God? Yes! From the very beginning. And just as he brought beauty from chaos in creation, he is doing that in Israel. So, if Israel could look at their rescue from Egypt, they would know that he who began that work will be faithful to complete it!

Now, these are principles of why Israel celebrated Sabbath in the Old Testament. What does this have to do for us? Are we commanded now to set apart one day a week for particular celebration of God? Is Sunday the new Sabbath? Should we not play with our kids outside on Sundays? Are we just supposed to go to church and take naps at home and make sure we don't make any food on Sunday?

I personally don't believe so. Now, if you disagree with me, I want to affirm what Paul says in the New Testament: **One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind.**⁵ Paul believes we as Christians ought to remain unified even if we disagree on this. Having said that, Paul does seem to state his view of the Sabbath in Colossians 2:16-17: **¹⁶Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. ¹⁷These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.**⁶

² [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Mk 2:27.

³ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ex 31:17.

⁴ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Dt 5:15.

⁵ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ro 14:5.

⁶ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Col 2:16-17.

Jesus has fulfilled the Sabbath, so don't let anyone judge you if you do not celebrate Sabbath in the same Old Testament forms. Jesus said of himself, **“²⁸ 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.”** ⁷ Then, in Hebrews, we read, **“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.”** ⁸

All these Scriptures would be shocking claims to make in the 1st century. Even the practice of the early church would have been surprising to other Jews. Why are Christians celebrating together on Sunday – the first day? God gave us a pattern of work and then rest. But Jesus gave us a new pattern. Jesus, the New Adam, did not rise from the dead on the 7th day. He rose from the dead on the 8th day. Or, we could say, “The eternal first day.” Jesus lived the perfect life none of us has lived. As the New Adam, he became a new representative for all who would turn from their sin and turn to him. Then, on the cross, he took the punishment sinners deserved. And in rising from the dead, he reveals that there's a new creation. And in that new creation, there's resting from our work. Do you see that?

You won't find eternal rest by working hard and spinning your wheels. God won't accept you if you're good enough! No. Jesus proves that he has done all the work. And so, the new creation starts with grace. Grace to give life and grace then to empower us to obey and live for God's glory! This is rest. This is eternal rest for our souls! This all fits even with the way the 10 commandments are written. The sabbath command connects us with the commands of loving God and loving others. How are we going to honor God as he deserves and love others as God commands? Only Jesus can fulfill this! We need resurrection life. We need new life! So, the early church set a new pattern. And now, the great majority of Christians over the past 2,000 years have gathered together on Sunday to remind themselves that Jesus has fulfilled the Sabbath and has given us grace and forgiveness so that we can obey in a new creation – a new creation that we someday will perfectly experience.

And now, because you have been given Sabbath rest, you don't just set apart one day to celebrate, you honor everyday as holy to the Lord because he has set you free. The seventh day points us to eternal life in Jesus! And, Sabbath rest in Jesus changes everything, and it ought to change how we view time! In Jesus, time is not your enemy. Instead, now time can be stewarded for God's glory. How do I know that? Because Jesus gives us eternal life, and by God's power at work in us, even our works done here in faith can matter for eternity. Death can't even stop it!

So, if you feel nothing you do matters. If you feel you're just spinning your wheels, look to Jesus. Stop. Breathe. Focus your attention on the reality that Jesus is Lord. Be reminded that both now and forever, you are given the promise that **he who began a good work is faithful to complete it. That means that you are eternally reminded of God's love for you. That means you are set apart to God. That means that you are always reminded not of the rescue in Egypt, but you are always reminded of your rescue by Jesus through his cross-death and resurrection.**

God created to grant humanity blessing from chaos and to lead people to celebrate God's completed work. Through Jesus, we find rest and can be convinced that God will complete his saving work in and through us. What a blessed celebration God gives us in creation and in new creation.

⁷ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Mt 11:28–30.

⁸ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Heb 4:9–10.