

Genesis Ch2v1-3 - Learning To Rest

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[0 : 00] Shortened, focused today. Genesis chapter 2, verses 1 to 3. Let's hear God's word. Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array.

By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing, so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.

Let's pray. Father, we thank you for your word for Genesis, the book of beginnings, teaching us about you, teaching us about the world in which we live, teaching us about your good order and design.

And we pray that as we look at the whole theme of rest today, that you would teach us and instruct us, not only that we would understand with our minds, but that we would actually experience all that you have for us today.

That it would change how we live this coming week. And it would truly give us peace as we enter into a new week.

[1 : 34] Father, help us in Jesus' name. Amen. So how are you? How are you feeling?

Let me guess that a big chunk of your answer, somewhere in all your words, there will be things like busy, tired, exhausted.

I mean, I could just fall asleep right now. And the sad thing is, the solution to our hectic lives is to work longer and do more.

We seem to stuff more and more into our life. So we sign up our kids to more activities. We volunteer at community groups.

We get involved in more ministry. We go to every family birthday and celebration. No wonder we get worn out. We're in a state of restlessness.

[2 : 33] And our desire for rest always seems to evade us. We rush to work. We run to the next appointment. We wrestle with over-commitments.

We're constantly striving to keep up and fit in. frantically trying to reach our own standards while desperately trying to meet everybody else's expectations. We've become a nation of worriers, struggling with mental health, dependent on that drink to settle our worrying minds.

And sadly for some, the only means of escape is to end it all. We are a restless people. But guess what?

That's not how it was at the beginning. Let's look at this short text and see what we learn about rest. Four big things we're going to look at.

First, work is finished. Look at verse 2. By the seventh day, God had finished the work he had been doing. If you could peer back in time before the creation of this world, nothing is there except the self-existing, self-sufficient God.

[3 : 50] And then at God's decree, something begins to happen. Creation, imagined in the mind of God, begins to unfold. The plan and design start to take shape.

God's spoken word enacts it all. Forming the earth, the light and the darkness, the sea and the sky, the land and vegetation, and then with intricate precision, filling those empty voids with the sun and the moon and sea creatures and birds in the sky and animals and mankind.

The master craftsman of the cosmos is at work through his word. Laws to keep the world spinning in just the right speed.

Forces to keep the tides all in place. Plants providing food. Mankind ruling the earth. Creation is one big display of God's never-ending glory.

God's word has done its work. As God spoke through the prophet Isaiah himself telling us what his word is like, here it is.

[5 : 08] So is my word that goes out from my mouth. It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.

God's perfect spoken word bringing creation to its conclusion. Can you picture God? Surveying all that he has done, towering over the universe, creation in its vast array, the infinite universe, the ocean depths, and as God stands back, he declares, it is finished.

The work is done. No more forming or filling. It's complete. Everything is as it should be. No faults and no mistakes. Verse 2, By the seventh day, God had finished the work he had been doing. Now for us, seventh, this seventh day, might be just another number and another day in the sequence of the week. But in the Bible, it's full of symbolism.

[6 : 27] Seven means fullness or completeness. So when God stops his work on the seventh day, he's declaring to us that his work of creation is complete.

It's perfectly finished. No more tweaking or fixing. Everything is as it should be. Now that doesn't mean that God has stopped work altogether.

Scripture reminds us that God continues to sustain the world by his powerful word. God still works, but he has finished the work of creation.

Everything is wonderfully complete by the seventh day. So the work is finished. Second, rest from work.

Let's read verse 2. By the seventh day, God had finished the work he had been doing. So on the seventh day, he rested from all his work.

[7 : 31] When our work is done, or not done as the case is usually, usually the way, we rest, don't we? We sit down, we get a cup of tea, we relax, we rest, because we're tired, we're worn out physically, emotionally, mentally.

Everything is pressing in and squeezing us to death and we just need to rest. Well, God rests too, but not because he's tired.

Keep your finger in Genesis 2 and jump with me to Psalm 121. Psalm 121. Psalm 121.

See what it says? The first few verses, Psalm 121, verse 1. Speaking of our creator God, I lift up my eyes to the mountains.

Where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth. He will not let your foot slip.

[8 : 48] He who watches over you will not slumber. Indeed, he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. Back to Genesis 2.

You see, our creator God does not need sleep. He doesn't get tired or worn out. So, what does it mean when we read in Genesis that God rests?

Well, when the work is finished, there is nothing left to do except enjoy everything that's been done. It's like cooking a meal. All the work has been done and everything's prepared and it's all cooked and it's set before you.

You rest and you just enjoy what's before you. Well, God's rest is delighting in all he has made. You see, the climax of creation is not day six when God created mankind in his image.

The climax of creation is day seven. He creates a day of rest. In other words, rest is the goal of creation. This is what it's all building up to.

[10 : 00] This is the crescendo. This is what it's all about. God has created us so that we might rest and enjoy it with him. Like an artist who paints a picture.

When they finish painting, they put the brushes down and they sit and they just gaze in delight of what they have done. They admire the wonder and the beauty of their work.

But it's not enough for the artist. The artist must take that picture and hang it in the public gallery so that others can come in and sit and enjoy their handiwork and be amazed at what is before them.

And so it is with God. He wonders at the work of creation. Everything in its place. But it's not enough.

God longs to share that creation with us so he makes us so that we could enjoy his works with him.

[11 : 03] He made us so that we would rest with him. In fact, it is an eternal rest.

Did you notice how each day of creation ends? Look back in chapter 1, the end of verse 5. Genesis 1, the end of verse 5, and there was evening and there was morning the first day.

End of verse 8, and there was morning the second evening and there was morning the second day. Verse 13, and there was evening and there was morning the third day.

And on it goes for the first six days of creation. There's a beginning and there's an end. Evening and morning. Now look at the seventh day, chapter 2, verse 2.

We don't have, and there was morning and there was evening on the seventh day. There is no end to the day. That's the point. It's a continuous rest.

[12:16] When God finished his work, it doesn't come to an end, it just goes on for an eternity. God enters into an eternal rest. All of creation fulfilling their role and purpose.

Mankind living as God's image bearers, reflecting God's good and loving rule. You see, when we, his creatures, live according to God's design and order, then we find true rest.

No more striving and no more frustration. Peace, harmony, and contentment with God. There is no restlessness.

So the work is finished. There's rest from work. And then there's remembering the rest.

Look at verse 3. Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.

[13:23] This continuous rest that God had entered was to be remembered and celebrated by God's people. God declared it. This is to be holy.

This time of rest is to be set apart, to be treated as different. It was the beginning of a covenant rest. What we see here is God entering into a relationship with his creation and blessing his creation. God and man in perfect harmony. There's no hint of opposition against God's rule, just humble submission to everything God says.

Mankind enjoying God's rich provision and living to serve the glory of God. What a beautiful picture of covenant rest. There's no fighting.

There's no wars. There's no news channels with the latest crime or flood. No wickedness or evil. No suffering or struggles.

[14:30] No frustrations or striving. It's a world that is truly blessed. Here's true happiness right here.

But rest we do not have, do we? The eternal rest designed by God was broken as mankind rebelled against his rule.

The light and the order of creation turned into darkness and disorder and chaos. The covenant broken, the relationship damaged.

They had fallen for the lie as we'll look at in chapter 3. Living for the lie that you will find a great arrest. Be your own God. You can do it.

rest. It brought restlessness. But God's plan for creation was never derailed because God sought to rescue and redeem mankind from the misery and suffering so that we could be at rest.

[15:42] In fact, God gave us laws, gave his people laws to remember the rest that we were intended to enjoy. have a look with me please in Exodus chapter 20.

Here we see God's laws given through Moses to the people so that they would know the rest that God had come to give.

Exodus chapter 20 which are the Ten Commandments and we'll pick it up in verse 8. So at this stage in the Bible story the rest has been lost.

God brings his good laws, his good rules to remind the people of where they can find rest. And this is what God says in verse 8. Remember the Sabbath day keeping it holy.

Six days you shall labor and do all your work but on the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. Sabbath simply means rest.

[16:56] On it you shall do no work. Neither you nor your son or daughter or your female or male or female servant nor your animals nor any foreigner residing in your towns.

For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth the sea and all that is in them but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

There's three things that would help them to know the rest that God would give that God intended. First that they would be refreshed.

People were to rest from their work. In fact everyone and everything the animals and as we dig into the laws even the land was to be rested. Have a look at Exodus 23 just jump over the page.

Exodus 23 verse 12. Six days do your work but on the seventh day do no work so that your ox and your donkey may rest and so that the slave born in your household and the foreigner living among you may be refreshed.

[18 : 13] God wanted to remind his people of what creation was like. To set this day aside he wanted to give them a taste of what life was like without sin and rebellion.

A life of continual refreshment. Back to chapter 20. chapter 20.

Lord the God God I'm your Redeemer.

I alone give you the promised rest that you long for. But not only redemption, but also relationship.

The day of rest was put in place to remember the covenant relationship with God. Have a look in Exodus chapter 31, so a few chapters on.

[20 : 04] Exodus 31, verses 16 and 17. Exodus 31, verse 16.

The Israelites are to observe the Sabbath, again meaning rest, celebrating it for the generations to come as a lasting covenant. It will be a sign between me and the Israelites forever for in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth and on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed. A day to remember the relationship that they have with God. To bring them back to the creation that was enjoyed at the beginning.

Man and God in perfect harmony, living under his good and gracious rule. You see, God's law isn't harsh. Can you see the heart of God for his restless, broken people?

I alone can refresh you. I alone can redeem you. I alone can give you a relationship with me that will satisfy you and fulfil you. Are you hungry for that kind of rest?

[21 : 26] So how do we get to experience this rest? Are we meant to kind of dig back into Exodus and read through and follow these laws too?

What if I don't have an ox or a donkey? Then what? Or what if my boss tells me I need to work?

Then what? What if I have to go to Dunn's later on and work at the till?

Are we meant to follow all these laws too? Well, the law functioned in two ways. First, the law reminds us of what life is meant to be like.

It kind of gives us a picture, a taste of God's creation rest. God is saying, this is what it's like. But the other way the law functions is it reminds us that we can't actually keep God's law.

No matter how many laws God put in place of the people, they failed to grasp and keep the rest that was on offer. In fact, there was a special time of rest.

[22 : 38] The 49th year, seven times seven. Remember that year, seven being a time of completeness and perfection? It was called the year of Jubilee. When all debts would be cancelled and lands would be handed back and people would be let go and everything would be, it was like a restart button.

Everything would go back the way it was meant to be. God's good law. Do you know how many times they celebrated it? Not once.

Never once do we read in the Bible God's people celebrating Jubilee because they failed to follow God's law. All God's law did was remind them that you failed again.

You failed again. You cannot keep the rest. You see, the laws that God has given speak beyond ourselves to someone else. The laws are all fulfilled in...

They're fulfilled in... Hello? Jesus. They're fulfilled in Jesus.

[23 : 43] Turn with me to Matthew chapter 11. Familiar words.

Matthew chapter 11. And verse 28.

Listen. Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest.

The word that spoke creation into existence, the word that enacted God's eternal rest has become the living word, the incarnate word, the word made flesh.

And the word of Jesus now speaks to us who are restless. Come to me and I will give you rest. In me is where you will find rest.

[25 : 01] Of course, the rest that Jesus offers is not a perpetual holiday, but rest from living life as if we were God, as if we created the universe and we're centre of everything.

It's rest from trying to meet our own standards and rest from trying to meet the expectations of others. It's rest from trying to keep up and fit in. It's rest from seeking to live life apart from God and doing things our own way.

Look at verse 29. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me for I am gentle. I'm not harsh.

What I say to you, what I give to you is not harsh. I'm humble in heart. That is, he's lowly. He's down at our level.

He's accessible. It sounds a contradiction, isn't it? Take my yoke upon you. A yoke was a big wooden heavy beam that went from one ox to the other ox.

[26 : 08] It was a weight. And now Jesus is saying, take my yoke upon you. But here's the thing. What does he say?

Verse 30, my yoke is easy and my burden is light. My yoke is full of kindness and full of grace. It is not harsh. It's not overbearing. Jesus is saying, submit to me.

Surrender your life to me. Come under my yoke. It's really a non-yoke. It's a non-weight. Submit to me.

Live your life under me. Walk with me. Listen to me and you will find rest from all your restlessness. Do you know what qualifies you to experience this rest?

[27 : 15] Do you see it in verse 28? Jesus doesn't say, when you've managed to get rid of all that burden you're carrying, when you've managed to stop having such a wearisome life, when you've sorted it out and got your life in order, come to me and I'll give you rest.

No, pay attention. Come to me, all who are weary and are burdened and can't keep up with this rat race of life and all that's going on and the pressures and the burdens.

Come to me just as you are. no hiding and I will give you rest. Jesus makes it crystal clear, chapter 12, verse 8, just a few verses on.

He declares, for the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath, ruler of the rest. I own rest and I give rest. rest. I am the one who will refresh you. I am the one who will redeem you. I am the one who can restore your relationship with God.

[28 : 38] Apart from me, there is no rest. How could Jesus say this? Well, the answer comes from the final cry of Jesus from the cross.

One last reference for us to look at. John, chapter 19. John's gospel, chapter 19. John's gospel, chapter 19, verse 28.

John's gospel, chapter 19, verse 28. Jesus is on the cross. He's coming to the end of his life.

Verse 28, later knowing that everything had now been finished. All his obedient life, all the work the father gave the son to do is finished.

And so that scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, I am thirsty. Verse 30. When he had received the drink, Jesus said, it is finished.

[30 : 13] finished. With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. What's finished? The work of redemption is finished.

The God who finished the work of creation, the God who brought his creative work to completion so that there was nothing left to do except to enjoy it, is the same God who cries to us from the cross.

I have completed it. I finished the work of salvation for you. Rest. Rest.

I've carried the weight of sin and guilt for you. I lift the load of worry of your constant failing and falling. I've taken your restless sinful life and I give you rest.

My work is finished. Enjoy it. Now and forever more. Let's pray.

[31 : 30] Let's pray. Father, we are amazed to hear afresh your word.

That word spoken at the beginning of time to bring this world into existence, to bring it to a state of perfection and completion.

And that same word speaking to us today into the darkness and chaos and disorder of our own life. It is finished.

Come to me, all you who are wearied and burdened, and I will give you rest. Confess your sin.

Let it all out before him. Cast all your anxiety on him. Give it to the creator and sustainer of the universe who has your life in your hands the very day you were born and the very second you will die.

[33 : 16] Submit to him, surrender to him, walk with him, live under his word, and no rest today.

Thank you, Father. Amen. We're going to sing.