

Series: Shalom

July 31, 2016

Title: The Seventh Day

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Text: Genesis 2:1-3

Day 7

The Big Day!

At first there was nothing but an empty lot with a For Sale sign on it.

Then one day the sign was gone; a construction company's sign stood in its place. This empty lot was going to be home for some lucky family.

For the next several months construction crews took raw materials and gave them a new purpose. A truckload of concrete became the foundation. Piles of lumber became the walls. Rolls of wire became the electrical system. Copper pipe became a plumbing system. Plywood and shingles became the roof.

Slowly but surely the chaotic mess of a building site became a recognizable structure. Every so often the future inhabitants showed up after working hours to walk through the unfinished rooms and dream of the Big Day when this house would become their home.

And then, finally, the last of the workers packed up his tools. The big dumpster was hauled away from the driveway. The paperwork was finished at the bank. The house was complete, right down to baseboards and cupboards. The power was on; the water was connected. All the place needed was somebody to actually *live in it*. And today that was about to happen.

By evening the new owners had cooked their first meal on the brand new range, had put their groceries in the brand new fridge. The kids had taken their first bath in the brand new bathroom. And everyone slept in brand new bedrooms. The Big Day had arrived.

Day 7

As we have seen, the Genesis Creation Story is the story of God building a place for us and Himself to live in. It is a story that isn't concerned with the

materials which make the world, so much as with how they *function*. As we move through the first 6 days of the story, we see the world become more and more functional as a place to live. But it is only on the last day of the story that the house becomes a home.

Day 7 is the Big Day. It is the day when God Himself moves into the neighborhood!

A Cosmic Temple:

If we try to make the Genesis Creation Story tell us about the material creation of the world, Day 7 is quite anticlimactic! Why? Because on Day 7 *nothing seems to happen*. But to the original readers of the Creation Story, Day 7 was the long-awaited end of the story that made everything else make sense. Without Day 7, the Creation Story would be a story without a purpose, a tale without an ending.

Ancient readers from the time of the writing of the Bible well understood that the ultimate meaning and purpose of the story was to tell how God built the cosmos as a dwelling place for Himself. The cosmos – the heavens and the earth – were created to be His Temple.

Think of what that means for you and me. God didn't just make the world and then leave it to its own resources. He created the world with a purpose and goal in mind. It was to be a place where He Himself would live and exercise His loving care of His creation. And it was to be a place where we could come to know Him and discover our own true purpose.

Resting Place

"Shabbath":

The story of the Seventh Day of Creation reads like this:

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Genesis 2:1-2 NIV

Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished.

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.

The word used to describe God finishing His work and “resting” is the Hebrew word “*shabat*.” “*Shabat*” means to stop, cease, rest. The word “Sabbath” comes from this verb.

So first of all, the Creation Story is telling us that God finished the work of making a functioning world. Like the builders who have finished the last details of building a house, God “signed off” on His world.

But the word “*shabat*” also carries the meaning of “resting.” And while taking a rest might make us think of lounging around on the deck with a glass of iced tea, in this story it means something very different!

Rest:

For the people of biblical times the announcement that God “rested” from the work of Creation did not mean that God was left sitting around with nothing to do. Instead, “rest” was:

...what results when a crisis has been resolved or when stability has been achieved, when things have “settled down.” (Walton, The Lost World of Genesis One, p. 72)

“Rest” meant what it’s like for that family to move into a new house and make it a home. All the “stuff” is put to work, from the furnace and hot water heater to the television and kitchen range. People fill up the space and get down to doing their lives in a safe and stable environment.

So when Genesis 2:2 speaks of God resting, it is saying that He was now established as King of His world.

Resting Place:

We see this spelled out very clearly in one of the Psalms:

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Psalms 132:7-8 NIV

Let us go into His tabernacle; Let us worship at His footstool.

Arise, O LORD, to Your resting place, You and the ark of Your strength.

[Slide 4]

Psalm 132:13-14 NIV

For the LORD has chosen Zion; He has desired it for His dwelling place;

"This is My resting place forever; Here I will dwell, for I have desired it."

Two things to note:

- First, God's "resting place" is the place from which He rules as King. His "footstool" indicates that He is enthroned in power.
- Second, God's "resting place" is His "dwelling place."

The Creation Story is telling us that the whole cosmos is ultimately God's "resting place." It is where He has chosen to dwell.

On Day 7 the world – both the heavens and the earth – go from being a house to a home.

The Seventh Day

A blessed Day!

The last verse in the story of Day 7 tells us one more thing:

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Genesis 2:3 NIV

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

Here is another powerful indication of just how important Day 7 is in understanding God's Creation. It is the *one day* that God blesses, just as He blessed living creatures and humans!

Day 7, you see, brings us up to the "Top of the U." In a sense, the Creation Story begins with God at the Top of the U. But then we encounter chaos and disorder – formlessness, emptiness and darkness. God steps into the Bottom of the U to bring order and function to the world.

And when we arrive at Day 7, the ordering work is complete. God steps into His "rest" as King of an ordered and safe world.

Shalom!

The Top of the U:

God's desire is that we join Him at the "Top of the U" again and again as we journey through life. He is here in our world because it is His dwelling place. He is "resting" in the sense that He rules His world and gives it order and stability. And when we come to Him, we step into His "rest" and find His Shalom.

It is where Jesus' prayer is answered in our daily lives:

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Matthew 6:10 NIV

"Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."

The Seventh Day:

So how do you and I find that "rest," that "Shalom"?

We find rest and peace when we find God and enter into His space, His throne room.

In the Psalms we read:

[Slide 7]

Psalms 119:165 NIV

Great peace have those who love your law, and nothing can make them stumble.

God's law, revealed throughout His Word, the Bible, instructs us on how God ordered His world, and on how He commands that we order ours! When we welcome His rule into our lives, He comes and blesses. He makes out day a part of His Seventh Day. He gives Shalom.

Secondly, we find His peace when we put our trust in Him alone:

[Slide 8]

Isaiah 26:3 NIV

You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in you.

Isaiah was writing these words during a time that was anything but peaceful. Empires were on the march. His own society was riddled with corruption and oppression. He knew that God would soon bring judgment on the entire nation. Nonetheless, he could write these words.

Why? Because he himself had found Shalom. He had found that no matter what was going on around him, it was his job to keep his trust in God – the Creator and Sustainer of the world.

Night is falling for the new family on the block. One by one the lights go out, until it's just mom and dad sitting at the dining room table. In the distance is the rumble of thunder. Lightning flashes at the windows. Before too long a hard rain pounds on the roof.

No matter. This is Day 7. This is the Top of the U. This is Shalom.