

Osaka International Church

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Series: Beginnings #6

Title: The First Holy Thing

Scripture: Genesis 2:1-4a

I. Introduction

Good morning! I thought you might enjoy this. This Reverend Fun cartoon shows a man sleeping in a church pew, laying across two women's laps. One woman says to the other, "I'm terribly sorry about that... It's just that Bill was really moved during last week's "The Seventh Day is the Day of Rest" sermon." This cartoon is a nice introduction to our topic for today. So let's go ahead and read about the seventh day, the day of rest in Genesis 2:1-4a.



II. Scripture: Genesis 2:1-4a (NIV)

[1] Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array. [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.

[3] And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done. [4a] This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created.

III. Teaching

Chapter and verse numbers are very helpful when we want to find a particular Scripture. However, we need to remember that there weren't any chapter and verse numbers in the original text. In fact, the numbering systems we use are comparatively recent, perhaps dating only from about the 13th century for the chapter numbers and about the 16th century for the verse numbers.

I mention this because, as you may have noticed, I ended today's passage in the middle of verse 4. Many Bibles place a break here to signal that this may be an important division, signaling the conclusion of the creation week. If so, then the story of the creation week begins in **Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."** And, concludes with **Genesis 2:4a, "This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created."** There is a sort of symmetry between the two verses, like bookends that enclose the passage. This type of symmetry is fairly common in the Old Testament. And, in this case, it prevents us from making the mistake of thinking that the Garden of Eden story is a second creation story, when actually it is a more detailed description of Day #6.

Genesis 2:1-2, tell us, **"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."** God created the heavens and the earth and everything in them. Even time and space are the work of God's hand, created along with matter and energy and all things. God created this world from nothing at all, solely by His divine will and His spoken word. Notice also that God finished His work. The heavens and the earth are complete, lacking nothing necessary to the whole.

When I was in junior high school, I took a course in woodworking. The focus of the course was on making furniture, and we were each supposed to make something. My project was a walnut bookcase. At the time, I was interested in learning, but a bit lazy about doing. So I learned how to make the bookcase, but once I knew how, I lost interest in actually doing it. I got a poor grade, because I never finished the project. How about you? Have you ever left a project half-done and never finished? Maybe this has happened to most of us.



God isn't like that. God always finishes what He starts. In Genesis 1:1, God began to create, and by Genesis 2:1, God had finished. When we look around this world, we see many beautiful things. We see the moon and the starry sky, beautiful sunrises and sunsets, and amazing animals and gorgeous flowers. God created all of these wonderful things and many more. And God finished His work of creating the heavens and the earth.



But this doesn't mean that God is sort of sitting around and not doing anything anymore. On the contrary, God is still working. In John 5, some of the Jews persecuted Jesus because He healed a paralyzed man on the Sabbath day. **(John 5:17)** But, **“Jesus said to them, “My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working.”**” It was the Sabbath day, and God the Father, and God the Son were both working. And I am sure that the Holy Spirit was also working. But God's work as Creator was unique. And that work was declared complete in Genesis 2:1.

Genesis 2:3 tells us this also, **“And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.”** God rested, ceasing His creative activity. We often rest because we get tired, but God does not get tired. God rested for a different reason; God rested because the work of creating the heavens and the earth was finished. And God's rest from His work as Creator seems to be continuing still today, which makes sense because creation was completed.

This verse also says, **“God blessed the seventh day and made it holy”**. This is the first time that the word, “holy,” appears and we should take a moment to consider what it means. Throughout Scripture, when something is made holy, it has the meaning of being set aside for God's special purposes. So here, the seventh day is declared to be special, and it is set aside for God's purposes. Later in Scripture, God gives the Sabbath day command, but the principle is already revealed here. The Sabbath day is a pattern which God established for our benefit. We should take time for a holy observance each week to focus on the things of God and to rest in His presence. We don't want to be legalistic about it, but we should not ignore it either.

The idea of holiness is essential to what it means to be the people of God. Notice the words of **Hebrews 12:14**, **“Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.”** As Christians, we need to consider ourselves as set aside for God's purposes. But we are not able to do this by our own efforts. Rather, it is God working within us. And, just as God finished His work of creating, we can be sure that God will finish His work in us as well. Paul speaks of this in **Philippians 1:6**, saying, **“being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.”** I mentioned a moment ago that Genesis 2:3 is the first time that the word, “holy,” appears in Scripture. But later in Scripture it is revealed that God chose to make us holy before He even began to create the heavens and the earth. **Ephesians 1:4a** reveals this saying, **“For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.”** When we follow Jesus we can have peace in our hearts, because we know that God always finishes what He starts.

Well, I promised to speak a little more about interpretations of the Genesis week today, so let's begin with a short review. We talked about the Gap Theory, which proposes that there is a long gap of time between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2. This doesn't deal directly with the six days, so the Gap Theory is often combined with other interpretations. We also talked about the Framework View, which interprets the six days as a literary framework designed to focus our attention on theological truth.

After that, we discussed the Day-Age Theory, which sees the six days as representing six long periods of time. And last week we took a look at four versions of the Literal-Day Theory, which argue for six normal 24-hour days.

Supporters of each of these views have written numerous articles and books explaining why they think that own theory is the best. Gap Theory people point out that

The collage contains the following text:

- Gap Theory 間隔論** Genesis (創世記) 1:1
Gap in Time (時間の格差)
Genesis (創世記) 1:2
- Framework View 構成論**
The six days of creation are like six picture frames 創造の六日は、六つの枠のようです
- Day-Age Theory 長期間説**
Six Long Days 六日間の長い日
- Four Literal 24-Hour Day Theories**
 1. Six Days of Visions
 2. Six Days with gaps in between
 3. Six Days of Restoration
 4. Six Consecutive Days

四つの文字通り24時間の日の考え方

 1. 六日間の幻
 2. 六つの日、その間に間隔がある
 3. 六日間の回復
 4. 連続の六日間

their approach explains when Satan fell and why the earth was formless and void in Genesis 1:2. Framework View supporters say their viewpoint reveals deep theological truths, and frees us from the need to reconcile Genesis with science theory. Day-Age Theory supporters stress that God is the author of both nature and the Bible, and that therefore all apparent disagreements should be resolved. Literal Day supporters emphasize the absolute power and goodness of God and say that we should accept the plain words of the text.



There are also other interpretations which I have not mentioned. So there are lots of choices. But which one is correct? Truth cannot be divided; so there must be one correct interpretation. But which one is it? Is it one of these, or is it something we have not even thought of? Let me tell you very simply, I don't know. I don't know for sure. And, pardon me, but you don't know either. We have opinions, but none of us has special knowledge that would allow us to say for certain which interpretation is correct. Personally, I think the evidence for the Day-Age Theory is strongest over all. But that is just my opinion. If you disagree that is okay.

The Bible clearly reveals that God, starting with nothing, created the heavens and the earth with a plan and a purpose. The details of how God did this are mostly unknown but we know that God did it, and that is the most important thing. If we have faith in God, we can leave the details to Him.

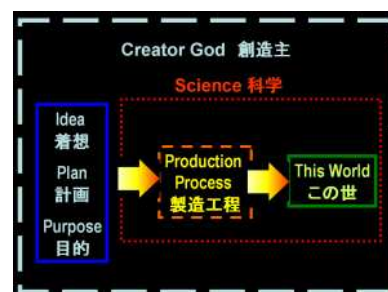


But when we share with others, we should remember that most people believe the Big Bang Theory and the Theory of Evolution as taught in the schools. And regardless of our own opinions about those theories, when you are trying to share about Jesus, arguing about science rarely helps. So sometimes it is better to focus first on the questions that science cannot answer. After the person becomes a Christian, then there may be time for arguing about science if you still want to.

Take a look at this slide. By the way, I would like to say thank you to Reverend Ralph Cox, a fifty-five-year missionary in Takamatsu for the basic approach I am sharing here. Anyway, whenever we make something new, we begin with an idea. Next, the idea is developed into a plan to fulfill a purpose. But after that, a production process has to happen in order to turn the idea into a finished product. So, for example, if someone wants to make a new cell phone, they begin with the idea and then they develop a plan to achieve the desired purpose. After that, some kind of production process is started, and the new product is finished. If the result is good, it fulfills its purpose. Every product you can name, and especially every complex system, began as an idea, went through a production process, and then became a finished product. In all of human experience, every time we have been able to observe from the beginning how something new was made, we see these steps.



Now look at this slide. The Creator God had an idea, made a plan with a purpose, and established a process to produce an amazing product, this world in which we live. But science cannot see the whole picture. Science sees only the finished product, and from this finished product science develops theories about the production process. Even if we assume for the moment that the Big Bang Theory, Evolutionary Theory, and other modern scientific theories are all correct, we are still only talking about the production process for how the world was made. Science cannot see back before the beginning of the production process. Therefore, science cannot answer questions about the plan and the purpose for the world.



Yet as human beings, we want to know the Idea Man who had the idea for making this world. We also want to know whether or not we are fulfilling our purpose as human beings. We want to know God and His will for our lives. But science cannot help us much with these questions. To answer these questions, we need to open the Bible. Science might be able to help us with the, "when, what, and how," of the world, but

science cannot explain, “why, or what for.” If you want to know why the world exists and what we are here for, you will need to hear the gospel and read the Bible.

IV. Closing

Genesis 2:2, “By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work.” God finished the work of creation, and rested. This verse reminds me of **John 19:30**, where it tells us that just before He dies, Jesus said, **“It is finished.”** On the cross on that day, Jesus finished paying for the sins of the world. Therefore, when we trust in Jesus, we can rest. We have peace in the knowledge that Jesus has finished all the work that was necessary for our salvation. Let’s close with **Hebrews 4:9-10, “There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God’s rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his.”**



V. Closing Prayer