Congregation of the Lord Jesus Christ,

It was only in the 13th century A.D. that chapters were proposed for the Bible. And it was the system devised by a Cardinal Stephen Langton that is still used today. And while most chapter divisions are entirely logical and sensible, there are some that are much debated and even regretted. And where Genesis chapter 2 begins is one example. Most Bible scholars are of the opinion that the chapter should have begun at verse 4. Verse 4 begins the rest of Genesis. It uses a very specific Hebrew phrase that will appear nine more times, so ten in total, in the rest of Genesis. But verses 1-3 bring to an end what began in 1:1 – creation week. And we don’t know why Langton put the beginning of chapter 2 where he did, but it maybe because **how the seventh day is described is quite different from the first six days**. In our journey through the first six days, we have seen the same elements used to describe the activity of each day – the announcement, the command, the result, the activity, the declaration, the approval, and the numbering formula. And we don’t see these in relation to the seventh day. But despite this, the account of the seventh day still forms a natural conclusion to creation week.

And if you were here last week, you may remember that one of the ways that God ‘highlighted’ the sixth day of creation as especially significant was by calling it day THE sixth. The previous days were day second and day third, etc, but God referred to the sixth day as day THE sixth. Well, the seventh day is also referred to as day THE seventh in these verses. So, it too is significant and important. And we are going to see why that is so and what that means for us, today.

And we will do this using the same headings that we used with the other days, but with a slight change. We will begin with a **creation explanation**, but then we will consider the **gospel explanation** before we conclude with the **gospel and creation implications**.

1. So, let’s begin with the **Creation Explanation** of day THE seventh.
   1. Chapter 1:1 told us about the *beginning* of the creation of the heavens and the earth, and chapter 2:1 tells us about **the *finish* of the creation of the heavens and the earth**. The phrase, “*all the host of them*” simply means every part of creation that God spoke into existence over the previous six days.
      1. Now, verse 2 begins by saying that “*on the seventh day God finished His work that He had done*.” But that does not mean that God did the last bits of creation on the seventh day. It is past tense language that is explaining that *as the seventh day began*, God had *already* finished the work of creating everything.
         1. So, light and darkness, the stretching of the universe out from the earth, the gathering of the waters on earth into one place so that dry land appeared, the creation of plants and trees, the creation of the sun, moon, and stars, the creation of water and flying creatures, and the creation of the animals and human beings, was finished by the end of the sixth day. That is what verses 1 and 2a explain in summary form.
   2. What God did do on the seventh day is what we read in the rest of verses 2: “*He* ***rested*** *… from all His work that He had done in creation*.”
      1. And you may have noticed in our earlier Exodus 31 reading that it said that on this day “*God rested and was refreshed*.” But that language is used for our benefit and to set us an example. We must not in any way think that God was tired and that He *needed* a rest, like it is with us. You and I need to rest one day out of seven. And we will say more about this in a later point. But all the way back through human history, the pattern is six days of work and a day of rest. And there have been many attempts to change this. And a part of the desire to do this was often because of the religious connotations of the day of rest. But none have worked, and those countries that tried a five-day week or a ten-day week all went back to a seven-day week. And that is because God has made us so that we need to rest one day out of seven. But God does not!
      2. We have often referred to **Psalms 104** **and 147** in connection with the account of creation. They praise God for creation but also for the work of **providence**. Lord’s Day 10 of the **Heidelberg Catechism** explains providence as *“*the almighty and ever present power of God by which He upholds, as with His hand, Heaven and earth and all creatures, and … rules them.” And Lord’s Day 9 says of our Almighty Father in heaven that “He created heaven and earth and everything in them [and] still upholds and rules them by His eternal counsel and providence.” And that began on Day one of creation and has continued ever since, including on the seventh day. For if God stopped the work of providence for even a moment, the universe would cease to exist.
      3. So, God’s resting on the seventh day is about Him **setting a pattern for us to follow**. And this is exactly what He tells us in Exodus 20 and the fourth commandment: “*Six days you shall labour, and … you shall not do any work [on the Sabbath] … For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day*.” And again, we will come back to this point later.
   3. But we see in verse 3 that God also “***blessed the seventh day and made it holy***.” Boys and girls, as you look back through the first six days of creation, did God bless any of them? No, He did not. He did bless the fish and the birds, and He did bless human beings, but the seventh day is the only day that He blessed. And what this means is connected to His making it holy. And this is the first thing in all creation that God makes holy.
      1. And before anything else, **holy means reflecting God**, who is holy. People love to say that God is love. And He is! But two times in Scripture God is described as “*holy, holy, holy*.” And so, anything holy has to do with the essence of who God is.
      2. But in relation to earthly things, to make something holy means to **set it apart from what is common** **and to give it a special purpose**. When the tabernacle was built, for example, all sorts of utensils, like spoons and forks, were made holy. So, they were no longer used for ordinary meals in ordinary homes; they were used, exclusively, in the Tabernacle, for the ceremonies and feasts and sacrifices.
      3. So, as we put this all together, this day was set apart from the other days for a special use. It is the day where man was to rest, physically, and to be spiritually refreshed in the worship of God. And it was as mankind observed this holy day that they would enjoy God’s blessing.
2. And this is where we must head into our second major point, which is the **Gospel Explanation** of this day.
   1. When we began this sermon series, I told you that Genesis 1 begins the story of salvation, that it has many implications for how we live, and that it foreshadows the life that believers will enjoy in the new heavens and new earth when Christ returns. And one word that kind of draws all these things together is **kingdom**.
      1. The ultimate King is God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He is the Almighty Creator – the owner and ruler of Creation.
      2. But as we saw last week, He made man in His image to be His vice-regents, or little-kings, on earth. They are to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth, just as God did in creation week. And they are to subdue and to have dominion over all things, just as God does. And so, we might think of this as the kingdom of nature. And it was described at the end of verse 31 as “*very good*.”
      3. So, you would expect man to get busy, now. All was in readiness for his work in this kingdom to begin. But that is not what happened, is it. No, the first full day that man enjoyed in this new kingdom was this day of rest. Have you considered that before? They didn’t do their first 6 days of work and then get a much-needed and well-deserved rest, no, they rested before beginning their work. And we will return to this point when we discuss why *we* observe a Sabbath on the first day of the week and not the seventh! So, hold that thought. But this is a picture of God’s amazing grace, already, here at the dawn of creation. The first full day enjoyed by the man and the woman was the day of rest!
   2. Now, after that first ‘unearned’ rest day, **the normal pattern in this kingdom** **became working for six days and then a day of rest**, as per God’s example and God’s command. And the seventh day of creation week was a regular day, just like the first six. But notice that we don’t see the numbering formula that we see in the first six days; we don’t read, And there was evening and there was morning, the seventh day. And this is surely because the seventh day is a foretaste or a pre-figure of *eternal* life in the new heavens and new earth.
      1. And we read about this eternal rest in **Hebrews 4**, which talks about the “*Sabbath rest that remains for the people of God*.”
      2. And if you know the Gospels, you will know that how to observe the Sabbath day was a common point of contention between Jesus and the Jewish rulers. And do you remember what the circumstances were of many of those run-ins? It was Jesus healing the sick on the Sabbath. And this was quite intentional by Jesus because these healings pointed forward to the new heavens and new earth where there will no longer be disease or disability or dysfunction or decay or death.
      3. And so, from the dawn of creation all the way through to when Jesus returns is like the six days of work, and then will come the seventh day, the eternal rest, where we enter the heavenly joy of fellowship with Christ and with each other.
      4. And it is pre-figured or foreshadowed in the pattern of creation week – six days of work and then the day of rest.
   3. And this is a good place for us to consider **why Sunday, the first day of the week, is the Christian Sabbath?** If God worked six days, then rested on the seventh, and if that is what the fourth commandment requires, why is Sunday our Sabbath?
      1. Well, to begin with, the core principle of Sabbath is six days of work and a day of rest, which continues even if Sunday is our Sabbath.
      2. And we have already seen that the man and woman enjoyed a day of rest before they began their first work week. So, that was a kind of proto-type for how it is with New Testament believers.
      3. But congregation, the main reason why Sunday is the Christian Sabbath is **the resurrection of Jesus**. For He rose on Sunday. And in so doing, He reset the ‘salvation calendar.’
         1. You see, the sixth day of creation week was Friday. And it was on that day that God finished His work, as we have seen. And Jesus was crucified on a Friday. And do you remember His final words on the cross? “*It is finished*.”
         2. And it was on the seventh day, Saturday, that God rested from all His creation work. And it was on the seventh day that Jesus ‘rested’ in the tomb.
         3. And it was on the first day of creation, Sunday, that the work of creation began. And it was on the eighth day of creation, Sunday, that Adam and Eve’s work began. And it was on a Sunday that Jesus, the new Adam, rose from the grave.
            1. And if you read the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus speaks, repeatedly, about the coming of **the kingdom of heaven**. And that kingdom came as He rose from the dead. For it was on that day that King Jesus began the work of gathering the citizens of this kingdom and subduing all His enemies, which will conclude when He comes again.
         4. And as we continue in the Scripture, we see that it was later that Sunday that Jesus first appeared to the women and the two on the road to Emmaus and the disciples, and explained to them how He His death and resurrection was necessary to fulfil the Scriptures and secure salvation.
         5. And it was a few weeks later, again on a Sunday, that the Holy Spirit was poured out on the disciples to establish the church of Christ.
         6. And then in **Acts 20:7**, we read that it was on the first day of the week, Sunday, that the church was gathered to break bread and to hear Paul preach.
         7. And in **1 Corinthians 16:2** Paul gave instructions that believers were to take up an offering on the first day of the week.
         8. And in **Revelation 1:10**, Sunday is called “*the Lord’s Day*.”
         9. And in terms of salvation, when a person receives Christ and believes in Him for the forgiveness of their sins, Scripture uses language like becoming a new creation, and moving from light into darkness, and being separated from the world. And we find all that language used in connection with the first day of creation. And that day was Sunday.
      4. And so, even though there is no explicit command in the New Testament that the Sabbath day change from the seventh to the first, it is the resurrection of King Jesus that signals this change of day, and it is the change of day that testifies that Jesus is the King of kings and Lord of lords, and that the kingdom of heaven had begun!

1. And this brings us to the third and last part of the sermon, which is the **Gospel and Creation implications**.
   1. We have spoken about Genesis 1 beginning the story of salvation. We have spoken about the gospel essence of the day of rest. And we have seen how the resurrection of Jesus reset the calendar of salvation. It is no wonder then that when Jesus was on earth, He said, “***Come to me, all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you* (what?) *rest*. *Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find* (what?) *rest for your souls***.”
      1. Life is hard, isn’t it congregation. We must deal with many disappointments and heartaches in life. We have the burden of guilt from our own failures and evils. There are all sorts of hurts that arise within our relationships. And there are also the incredibly sad troubles and turmoils of the world, like war and disaster and tragedy and disease and death. And it can be crushing at times. By God’s grace, we can enjoy short or long periods of stability and confidence and hope, but inevitably there come times of depression and hardship and pain, of one sort or another.
      2. Well, Jesus knows this because He was made like us in every way, except for sin. He experienced much sadness and pain. And He is standing before you, right now, offering to take away your burden and to give you rest. And that does not mean no pain and constant happiness and success; it means peace, the removal of guilt, and the removal of any notion you have that you need to earn His favour, and a confidence about your eternal destiny. Please, take hold of Him today, if you have not done so already. He is a most beautiful Saviour! He is the best King to serve! And there is no other name under heaven by which we can be saved.

* 1. And finally, I trust you can see from all that we have considered that **we too must observe a day of rest**.
     1. It is the *pattern* that God Himself set for us.
     2. It is what He *commanded* in the fourth commandment, which applies to all people in every age.
     3. And we need it, *physically*; we need to rest from our labours.
     4. But we also need it, *spiritually*. We are creatures who were created to worship our Creator. Adam and Eve needed this, before the Fall. And as we have seen, the entry of sin into the world has made our need to know God and to worship Him even greater.
        1. We have noted this before but the fourth commandment in Deuteronomy does not refer to creation as the reason for why the people of Israel were to observe the Sabbath. The reason for the commandment there is rescue from slavery in Egypt and the hope of life in the Promised Land. And this was a foreshadowing of the much greater redemption that comes through faith in Christ. For we have been set free from slavery to sin and welcomed into the kingdom of heaven. And we are waiting for the new heavens and new earth.
           1. So, we need this day to remind us, again and again, that we have been set free from slavery to sin and that our guilt has been taken away.
           2. We need this day so that we can have the certain hope of the new heavens and new earth set before us, again and again.
           3. We need this day to be reminded again and again that we are citizens of Christ’s kingdom, and to be instructed about how we are to function in our relationships and our work and our recreations.
           4. And we need this day to be reminded of our calling to go into the world and make disciples of King Jesus.

And that is why it so sad that much of the Christian world rejects the very notion of observing a Sabbath! It has its **origins** in creation. It has its **essence** in Jesus Christ. And it **points forward to and prepares us for** the new heavens and new earth that He shall bring when He comes again. O Beloved Christians, may we be those who *love* the Sabbath, who *observe* the Sabbath, and who, in so doing, enjoy the blessing of God. Amen.