

And God Rested— Why?

“On the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made.”

—Genesis 2:2

OUR OPENING TEXT SAYS

that God rested on the “seventh day” of creation. In the New Testament, the Apostle Paul says that God is still resting. (Heb. 4:3-11) As our title asks—Why? Why is God resting when the world is so much in need of his help?

Why does the Bible paint such a picture of God in the midst of a world that seems to have removed itself so far away from its original created state? Logical reasoning would tell us that, now more than ever, if there is a loving God who is interested in the earth and his created beings which dwell here, he should be working to resolve the myriad problems of this present world—not resting.

It is likely unnecessary to remind our readers of the problems rampant in today’s world—problems from which one would suppose that an Almighty, loving God would not be “resting.” However, lest we think differently, it is important to keep before our mind’s eye the abundant evidence which

unmistakably indicates that not only are the world's problems many, but that they have dramatically increased in recent decades. For one to assume otherwise—that man's problems are decreasing, or that they are no more than in past centuries or ages—is to be blind to information readily available and documented by many noted scholars.

HOW MANY PROBLEMS?

One such source of information concerning the world's problems is a monumental work begun more than forty years ago titled *Encyclopedia of World Problems and Human Potential*, published by the Union of International Associations (UIA), under the direction of Anthony Judge. It is available as a three-volume, three-thousand page book, a CD-ROM, and also online. The *Encyclopedia* was started in 1972, with the first edition published in 1976. Since then, updated editions were published in 1986, 1991, 1994-95, and an online edition was published in 2000. A project involving redevelopment and redesign of the online *Encyclopedia* is planned to be launched later in 2013 under the direction of the UIA.

Of particular interest to us, as the various editions of the *Encyclopedia* have been published, is the tremendous increase in the number of identified and documented world problems that have been listed. In the original 1976 edition, 7,444 were identified. In the 2000 online edition, 56,564 world problems were listed—nearly an eight-fold increase in less than twenty-five years. One can only imagine what that number might be today, given the events in the world during the last thirteen years.

The problems listed in the *Encyclopedia* cover the entire gamut of man's current experiences here on earth. Just a mere sampling identifies problems related to war; social injustice; environmental degradation; human suffering; animal suffering; disease—human, animal, and plant; epidemics; viruses; crime; terrorism; threatened species; economy; free trade; weather; labor; nationalism; family; race and ethnic issues; religion; and many, many others. Within all of these are hundreds, if not thousands, of specifically identified problems currently affecting some portion of man's life in this world.

Whether the *Encyclopedia* provides a completely accurate representation, in numbers or by specific description, of the problems facing the world of the twenty-first century, we cannot be sure. Some may claim that these numbers are inflated, while others may claim they are understated. Regardless of the correctness of the numbers, or even the underlying validity of each problem identified, two points cited at the outset of this article are clearly reinforced by the above data. First, the problems in the world today are many and varied, touching nearly every aspect of human existence in some way, shape or form. Second, it is clearly evident that the world's problems are increasing, not decreasing.

Once again, we pose these thought-provoking questions: If we believe in a God who truly cares about the earth, and the human, animal, and plant creation that dwells here, and which the Bible says he created and considered "very good," why does the Bible also say that he has been "resting" for thousands of years? What is meant by these statements of Scripture which say that God is resting?

Does God care about the earth and its inhabitants? What is the earth's, and man's, ultimate fate? To the reasoning mind, these questions deserve answers. To those who desire to maintain their faith in a loving and all-wise God, we must look to his Word and "search the scriptures" to obtain reasonable and satisfactory explanations. It is our hope that sincere students of the Bible will be comforted by, and rejoice in, the discussion of this subject herein presented.

SCRIPTURAL FOUNDATION

Not only do the Scriptures tell us that God ended his creative work on the sixth day—age, or space of time—but that, as already noted, he rested on the seventh day. We cannot conceive of God becoming weary and needing rest. In fact, the Bible declares that he does not: "Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary?" (Isa. 40:28) God's "rest" on the seventh creative day must therefore have some other significance than that of recuperating from weariness.

Hebrews 4:10 reads, "He that is entered into his [God's] rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his." The obvious point of this verse and the surrounding context is that a Christian ceases from all endeavors to attain life through his own efforts and accepts instead the provision of life which has been made for him through Christ. This is God's provision, for he gave his Son to be man's Redeemer with the promise that "whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."—John 3:16

In Isaiah 45:18, we read that God created the earth not in vain but formed it to be inhabited. Plainly, it was not the Creator's purpose that the earth be inhabited by a dying race, but by a living one. Death came upon the race through disobedience to divine law, but this did not thwart the divine purpose in the creation of man. God ceased his own active participation in the creative plan and commissioned his beloved Son to carry it through to completion.

Thus, just as we depend upon Jesus for life, so God has confidently depended upon him to provide life. That is, God has authorized Jesus, his only begotten Son, to carry forward to a glorious morning of perfection his plan to have this planet filled with human beings in his image, worthy of living forever.

When Jesus was on earth, his enemies condemned and persecuted him because he healed the sick on the Sabbath Day. He pointed out to them that works of mercy on the Sabbath Day were allowed under the Law given to the Israelites by God. Concerning this type of work, Jesus said, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." (John 5:17) While the task of restoring the human race was assigned to Jesus by the Creator, nevertheless he is still interested in, and responsible for, the undertaking. Regarding this, Jesus said, "The Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works." (John 14:10) This, however, is not out of harmony with the declaration that God rested on the seventh day. His work on behalf of man, which is being accomplished through Jesus, is a work of mercy. His whole plan for the recovery of the human race reflects his love and mercy. It is, therefore, a work of mercy by God,

but not one of creation, from which he ceased, or rested.

OBEDIENCE DEVELOPED

The Scriptures note the upward, progressive sequence of the creative work during the six days, or ages, and it is but natural to expect that the work of the seventh should be more marvelous than that of its predecessors. The work of the first six days related largely to the creation of material things and earthly beings, while that of the seventh is characterized chiefly by the fact that it represents a development of mind and conscience through a process of education of human beings already created.

Behind every material thing, and responsible for it, is thought and mental vision. Our automobile represents the thoughts of its designer—the universe represents the thoughts of God. The constant obedience of the stars to divine law is the result of God's thoughts which designed the mechanisms and processes that enforce his law.

In the mind of the Creator was the thought to have this earth filled with a race of beings who would obey his law by intelligent choice. These human beings were to be created in his image. They were to have the ability to think matters out for themselves and to reach definite, satisfactory conclusions.

However, reason poses this question. How could the Creator be sure that beings endowed with these powers would reach decisions in keeping with his will unless he arbitrarily controlled their thinking? He knew that this could be accomplished by giving them knowledge—not merely informing them of good and evil, but allowing them to learn by experience,

and by free choice, that his laws are right and just and good.

God foresaw that for a whole race to be thus educated would require the entire period of the seventh creative day. Hence, after creating the first perfect pair, and giving them his law, he rested, while his beloved Son, his appointed representative, was empowered to carry out the divine plan of education through the trial, redemption, and restoration of the fallen race.

THE SEVENTH DAY PLAN

Concerning the six creative days, the Scriptures inform us that it was the Spirit or power of God which operated to accomplish the divine intention concerning them. The same is true of the seventh day. The difference is that during the other six days it was largely the mechanical power of God, while during the seventh day the principal objective is attained by the power or influence of God's thoughts and plans which reflect his will. During the seventh creative day, the plans of God are executed through his Son, Christ Jesus.

The sum total of God's thoughts pertaining to the creation of the human race may properly be called the divine plan. Because that plan involves redemption and also recovery from death, it is a plan of salvation. Thus, after assuring us that the earth was not created in vain, but to be inhabited, God declares, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." (Isa. 45:18,22) God then outlines the conditions upon which salvation from death can be obtained, saying, "I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness,

and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear.”—vs. 23

Here we have emphasized the thought of obedience to God and that the earth is to be inhabited by those who have learned to bow the knee in absolute fidelity to him. It is also made plain that this is achieved by way of salvation—being saved or recovered, from death. While God simply declares that it is his Word which will accomplish his intention, the Apostle Paul, quoting from this passage, shows that his Word will be accomplished through Christ.—Phil. 2:10,11

Only a few verses in the first chapter of Genesis are devoted to the work of the first six days of creation, but the entire Bible, beginning with the second chapter, is devoted to the work of the seventh creative day. In it is outlined the whole plan of God, and, as a background of its every phase, is the expression of divine law. Certain members of the fallen race are invited to cooperate in implementing the plan, but only upon the condition of absolute surrender of their wills to do the will of God.

God declares that this Word has gone forth “in righteousness.” That is true. Every requirement of his is righteous and designed to instill in those who obey not only the principle of obedience, but also the glorious qualities of character possessed by the Almighty Creator whom they obey. This leads the obedient ones to the viewpoint of love in contrast with selfishness. They learn that the secret of true happiness is that of obedience to divine law and that true obedience leads to selflessness, in that the glory of God and the well-being of others come before their own interests.

THE BIBLE HARMONIOUS

The scriptural outline of God's plan for the seventh creative day is consistent and harmonious from first to last. In the opening chapters of the Bible, we are told of the original creation of man, his disobedience to divine law, and the consequent loss of his life. In the closing chapters, we are told of man's recovery upon the basis of obedience to God's law, as symbolized by the open books of Revelation 20:12. Following a reassuring promise that there shall then be no more death, we read, "He that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new."—Rev. 21:4,5

The work of making "all things new" mentioned by John the Revelator is described by Jesus as "regeneration" (Matt. 19:28), and by Peter as "restitution." (Acts 3:19-21) Regardless of the term used, this work will bring about the completion of God's original plan of creation as well as the completion of the work of the seventh creative day.

With few exceptions, people in general have not as yet realized the meaning of the experiences through which they have passed, and will not understand until enlightened during the daylight morning hours of this final creative day. As with the other creative days, the seventh also began with an "evening," dark and obscure, so dark that the prophet refers to it as "night," saying that while "weeping may endure for a night, . . . joy cometh in the morning." (Ps. 30:5) We thank God that there is to be a morning, the completion of the seventh creative day, which will find man fully enlightened concerning the meaning of the long night of weeping through which he has passed.

Death came through Adam, and life comes through Christ, upon the basis of his sacrificial death. Modern critics have scorned the idea of a substitutional—or ransom—sacrifice as being necessary to salvation, but only the lack of careful thought could cause anyone to take this viewpoint. The human mind, which, even in its fallen condition, contains some remnant of the original godlikeness, considers that the greatest example of true nobility of character and of genuine love is willingness to lay down one's life for another.

We glorify those who give their lives for their country. We sing the praises of one who is willing to dive into the ocean, or face other danger, to save a friend at the risk of his own life. We honor those who unselfishly use their time and strength for the betterment of the human race in the fields of science and medicine. Why, then, should we shy away from the greatest exhibition of love of all time and call it bloody and revolting?

Indeed, to give one's life for another exhibits the godlike quality of love. In the divine plan, the Creator gave his Son the opportunity of dying sacrificially, not to save one person alone, but in saving the one to save the whole race. Jesus accepted that opportunity, voluntarily taking upon himself the penalty of death which fell upon Adam. In the scales of divine justice, love thus balances the account, making it possible for all who have died because of Adamic sin to be restored to life through Christ, the "last Adam."—I Cor. 15:45

Consequently, in the "morning" of the seventh creative day, when the darksome shades of the previous "evening" time shall be dispelled, the world

will learn that God, their Creator, loves them, and that he gave his Son to die for them. They will learn also that God's Son willingly sacrificed his life because he, too, loved them.

Of that time, the prophet declares that the knowledge of the glory of God shall fill the earth as the waters cover the sea. (Isa. 11:9; Hab. 2:14) When Adam was created, he knew something of the glory of God. Lacking personal experience, however, he did not possess the depth of knowledge that all mankind will obtain during the morning of the seventh creative day, and the lessons of their six-thousand-year experience with sin and its results. That ocean-deep knowledge of God's plans and purposes will enable all individuals of the human race to make decisions more wisely than did Adam. Then, awakened from the sleep of death, Adam himself will be much better equipped to face the issue of obedience or disobedience.

Peter declares (Acts 3:23) that it will then come to pass that those who will not hear, or obey, will be destroyed from among the people. The reverse is just as true. Those who do obey will not be destroyed, but will continue to live forever. Jesus establishes this fact even more convincingly, declaring that those who then obey divine law shall obtain everlasting life, and also that they shall inherit the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world.—Matt. 25:34,46

Then the divine purpose concerning man will be fully accomplished. Not one man alone, but the whole race created in Adam will be in the image of God and will be kings of the earth. The earth will have been subdued as God directed, and will be a

veritable garden like the sample prepared for man in Eden. If there should be a minority who, in the light of full knowledge, choose to disobey God's law, they will be destroyed—for the earth will be inhabited only by the obedient.

These will be free from sickness and death. All tears will have been wiped away, and unbounded joy will spring forth everywhere. The thousands upon thousands of world problems faced today will be re-solved through the perfect administration of Christ's kingdom, and the entire arrangement of man's salvation and recovery will be seen as having been authored by the great God of the universe. Truly, man will then realize that God has not been weary, nor has he been uninterested in his creation, but that he has been "resting" in confident assurance that his divine plan for man's salvation will be completed in glorious perfection. Then it can be recorded in the eternal record book of God's creative works that "the evening and the morning were the seventh day." ■