The Beginnings of a Biblical WORK ETHIC

Genesis 2:1-17

10/19/97

Introduction: An overview of verses 1-17:

> Genesis 2:15 And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.

**** We need to look at work from a Biblical (Genesis) Perspective:***

Note five implicit principles regarding work from Genesis 2:1-17:

I. Work must include a day of <u>PHYSICAL REST</u> every week

II. Work was instituted by God <u>BEFORE THE FALL</u> of man

III. Work involves <u>FAITHFUL STEWARDSHIP</u> over the resources God has given us

IV. Work should be viewed as a <u>SPIRITUAL SERVICE</u> as unto God

V. Work (outside of the domestic realm) is primarily the <u>MAN'S RESPONSIBLITY</u>

The Beginnings of a Biblical WORK ETHIC

Genesis 2:1-17

10/19/97

Introduction: An overview of verses 1-17:

v. 1

"Finished" - Completed. Nothing remained undone. All of God's creative activity was completely finished after the sixth day.

Such a statement does not allow for a "theistic evolution," which falsely assumes that God "got the ball rolling" and then allowed the natural evolutionary process to take over and shape and mold and create the various life forms evident today.

"All the host of them" - Some view the "host" as a reference to the stars (Neh. 9:6); others, to angels (I Ki. 22:19).

It is best understood as a reference to all of the details of creation: the vast array of created things and beings. As in Psalm 146:6, "Which made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that therein is" (cp. Acts 4:24).

v. 2

"God ended His work" - God completely finisehd or ceased working after day 6, so as to rest on day 7 in order to establish a pattern for Israel to follow.

God could have created it all in six seconds, or six months, or six centuries, etc., but He chose to do it in six literal days so as to establish a pattern for man: Rest one in seven.

"Rested" - lit. ceased. The word does not imply that God got tired or weary and needed to relax after the hard work. God, being omnipotent, did not work up a sweat. The word refers to a cessation or work.

"On the seventh day" - Saturday, the Sabbath day ("Shabbat")

v. 3

In commemoration of God's resting on the Sabbath, He set this day apart as a "holy day," a day which was later given "to Israel as a time of cessation from normal actvities." (Ryrie note).

v. 4

"These are the generations" - This is the account; these are the details of what happened.

In Genesis 2, Moses fills in some of the details of God's creative work (particularly His work on Day 6).

In good journalism, a writer will often paint a general picture of an event to grab attention and to give a broad overview and then will back track and fill in the details of what happened. This is what Moses does in chapter 2 in describing the creation of Adam and Eve.

Since verse divisions are not inspired, the first sentence in verse 4 would probably end with the word "created." Then the thought of verse 5 would start with: "in the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens, before any plant of the field was in the earth…"

Perhaps the phrase "in the day" refers to the first day of God's creation (Gen. 1:1), when He made the heaven and the earth.

Or, as Ryrie states: **"In the day" -** "The creation week is not specific as a single day by this phrase; rather, iwthout the article "the," it means "at the time"." (Ryrie note).

Such an interpretation views Moses as summarizing certain details of the six days of creation.

v. 5

Since God had created vegetation on the third day (1:11-12), the plans and herbs mentioned here were those which needed cultivation. Such plant life required a man to till (cultivate) the soil before any new plant life of this type could grow.

"The Lord God had not caused it to rain" - prior to the Noaic flood, rain (and the water cycle as we know it) did not exist.

v. 6

"A mist" - a flow of water came up out of the ground; springs of water underneath the earth's surface would flow (cp. Gen. 7:11 - "the fountains of the great deep"). Also, daily evaporation and condensation due to a change in temperature between day time and night time would provide moisture for plant life.

v. 7

“of the dust” - “Adam” was made from the “Adamah.” (ground)

Man’s body contains the same elements as are found in the earht. This would be important because if man had different elements, this would produce toxins when man was turned back to dust upon death (3:19), which would harm the earth.

[Have you ever noticed how much more boys are attracted tot he dirt than girls are? Maybe this is in part due to the fact that the male species was created from the dirt; whereas the female favors relationships because she was made from man’s side.]!!

Without God’s Spirit breathing into man the breath (spirit) of life, man would have been like a lifeless clump of molded clay, lying helpless and worthlessly on the ground.

[Note: The longevity of our physical life, and the attainment of our spiritual (eternal) life also comes from God; without Him we are “spiritually dead.”]

v. 8

“God planted a garden” - God was the first gardener.

“<u>Eastward</u> in Eden” - East of where? All directions in the Bible are in relation to the land of Israel (Canaan). East of this would be modern-day Iraq (previously Babylon).

“Eden” - “delight”; this garden was the most delightful spot on the earth; utopia! Paradise! Better than any vacation spot ever dreamed of.

v. 9

Having planted the trees on day 3, and now having a man to take care of them, God causes them to grow and bear fruit.

“The tree of life. . . the tree of the knowledge of good and evil” - two actual, literal trees which God made to symbolize life and death.

The tree of life was geographically located in the <u>middle</u> of the garden, just as the <u>springs of water</u> flowed from this central spot (“water” is a term also used as symbolic of lfie - Ps. 65:9f; Rev. 22:17).

The name of the tree of knowledge of good and evil implies that evil had already existed. Satan had evidently already rebelled and fallen.

v. 10

Before the structural changes that the earth underwent at the great flood, the garden of Eden (a place then above sea level) was the source of a spring of water which fed four major rivers (two of which still remain today - "The Euphrates and Tigris" (Hiddekel) – but today (post-flood) flow from a different direction).

v. 16-17

These verses lay a foundation for chapter 3. God gives both permission (v. 16) and prohibition (v. 17).

v. 17

"Thou shalt not eat of it" - It wasn't the juice from the fruit that would produce death, but the disobedience to God's Word.

The clear emphasis in Gen. 2:1-17 is on the fact that God created man with a purpose. Part of that purpose was <u>work</u>.

Note: v. 5b - "Not a man to <u>till</u> the ground."

V. 8 - "God planted a garden…(and) there He put the man"

> Genesis 2:15 And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.

Our sinful nature does not want to work. By nature we tend toward ease, leisure, and luxury without earning it. We are afraid of work. This four-letter word is practically a curse word in the 20th century. What do you say when you leave someone? "Don't work too hard!"

America once believed in "earning your bread."

Today America's philosophy is centered around putting in less and less time for more and more money.

Our nation will sooner or later pay for this attitude. No one wants to invest. Everyone wants to take, take, take.

Work was part of God's plan from creation (Gen. 2:15 - Adam was put into the Garden of Eden to dress [cultivate] it and to keep it); then after the fall, man was still to work, only this time it would not be as easy (Gen. 3:18-19).

** We need to look at work from a Biblical (Genesis) Perspective:*

Note five implicit principles regarding work from Genesis 2:1-17:

I. Work must include a day of PHYSICAL REST every week

v. 3

You are wise not to be a "workaholic." We work our job to live; we don't work live to work our job.

There's more to life than your career.

Regular times of rest and relaxation are beneficial to your productivity on the job.

v. 2-3

We live in an action-oriented world! For many, there seems to be more to do than time to do it. Often we wish for more hours in a day or more days in a week. If we would learn to rest one day in seven, we would be more productive.

Moses would eventually legislate that the land needed one year in seven to rest. Such would make it more fruitful.

Rest is good, but beware of the danger of laziness (don't take a good thing to a bad extreme).

Scriptures regarding laziness - Prov. 6 - "Go to the ant, thou sluggard…"

> Pr 6:9 How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep?
> Pr 13:4 ¶ The soul of the sluggard desireth, and *hath* nothing: but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat.
> Pr 19:15 ¶ Slothfulness casteth into a deep sleep; and an idle soul shall suffer hunger.
> Pr 19:24 ¶ A slothful *man* hideth his hand in *his* bosom, and will not so much as bring it to his mouth again.
> Pr 20:4 ¶ The sluggard will not plow by reason of the cold; *therefore* shall he beg in harvest, and *have* nothing.
> Pr 21:25 ¶ The desire of the slothful killeth him; for his hands refuse to labour.
> Pr 22:13 ¶ The slothful *man* saith, *There is* a lion without, I shall be slain in the streets.
> Pr 24:30 ¶ I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding;

Pr 24:31 And, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, *and* nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down.
Pr 24:32 Then I saw, *and* considered *it* well: I looked upon *it, and* received instruction.
Pr 24:33 *Yet* a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep:
Pr 24:34 So shall thy poverty come *as* one that travelleth; and thy want as an armed man.
Pr 26:14 ¶ *As* the door turneth upon his hinges, so *doth* the slothful upon his bed.
Pr 26:16 ¶ The sluggard *is* wiser in his own conceit than seven men that can render a reason.

Ro 12:11 Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord;

v. 3

What about Sabbath keeping? Are Christians bound to keep the Sabbath?

Opinions differ. While we are wise to follow God's plan of resting one day in seven, there is not one New Testament command for the believer to keep the Sabbath.

7th Day Adventists make the Saturday Sabbath of extreme importance in their plan of salvation

Their name "Seventh Day" shows the importance of this command to their religion.

--The Sabbath was only for the **nation of Israel**
Ex. 31:12-18 -

12 ¶ And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,
13 Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the LORD that doth sanctify you.
14 Ye shall keep the sabbath therefore; for it is holy unto you: every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death: for whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people.
15 Six days may work be done; but in the seventh is the sabbath of rest, holy to the LORD: whosoever doeth any work in the sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death.
16 Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the sabbath, to observe the sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant.
17 It is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever: for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed.

And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and *that* the LORD thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm: therefore the LORD thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day. (Deuteronomy 5:15 AV)

Moreover also I gave them my sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I *am* the LORD that sanctify them. (Ezekiel 20:12 AV)

--The Sabbath was only a shadow of the reality which is in Christ

> Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath *days*: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body *is* of Christ. (Colossians 2:16-17 AV)

--The Sabbath was not an issue over which Christians should judge one another

> Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand. One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day *alike*. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth *it* unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard *it*. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks. (Romans 14:4-6 AV)

--Man was not made for the Sabbath's benefit, but the Sabbath for man; Therefore, it need not be legalistically idolized.

> Mark 2:27-28 - And he said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath: Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath.

--Paul seriously questioned the salvation of those who depended on keeping of Sabbaths and holidays for salvation

> But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain. (Galatians 4:9-11 AV)

Technically, the Sabbath was not a day of Worship; rather, it was a day of rest.

--The early church did meet on Sunday, evidently in commemoration of the Lord's resurrection

And upon the first *day* of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight. (Acts 20:7 AV)

I Cor. 16:2 - Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.

--There is <u>no</u> command for New Testament Christians to keep the Saturday Sabbath.

(Paul omits the sabbath requirement in Romans 13:9 - For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if *there be* any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.)

If we are required to keep the Sabbath, then we must keep it exactly as God commanded

--no fire kindled in your house (Exod. 35:3)
--no baking or boiling done (Exod. 16:23)
--no burden to be borne (Jer. 17:21)
--no work at all (Exod. 31:14)
--no departure from your house (Exod. 16:29)
--<u>stoning</u> for violation (Num. 15:32-36)

If Adventists keep the seventh day, why not also keep the seventh year (the Year of Jubilee)? (Lev. 25:1-22).

Christians would all have to live in warm climates if we strictly kept the Sabbath (Exod. 35:3).

A Christian should not look down upon someone whose ignorant conscience is bound on Sabbath observation.

The problem comes when the Sabbath observer makes keeping the Sabbath a requirement for salvation or an evidence of salvation.

Paul viewed esteeming "one day above another" a matter of Christian liberty for the saints at Rome (Rom. 14:5-6 - One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day *alike*. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. 6 He that regardeth the day, regardeth *it* unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard *it*. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks.)

II. Work was instituted by God BEFORE THE FALL of man

"Physical labor is not a consequence of sin. Work enters the picture before sin does, and if man had never sinned he still would be working." (Hamilton, p. 171).

"The original earth presented sinless man not with thorns and frustrations, but with a real and healthy challenge to tame it and to bring it ot its inherent potential." (New bible Companion, Hughs & Laney, p. 12).

Before the Fall, the ground would yield her fruit willingly, after the fall it would be difficult (SEE: Gen. 3:17-19).

Before, no thorns, thistles, weeds, pesty devouring insects, etc.

Yet work itself was part of God's plan for man right from the beginning.

III. Work involves FAITHFUL STEWARDSHIP over the resources God has given us

v. 15

"To dress and keep it" - To cultivate it and manage it; to till it and tend it; to work it and take good care of it.

This is stewardship.

Gardens cannot look after themselves; they are not self-perpetuating. Man is placed there to "dress and keep it." The word dress is "*abad*" meaning to serve; work is service oriented. (Hamilton, p. 171).

Man does not own the earth. "The earth is the Lord's." However, part of man's responsibility in his "dominion" over the earth (Gen. 1:28) is to be a good steward (manager) over the plants, animals, material resources that God has given us.

IV. Work should be viewed as a SPIRITUAL SERVICE as unto God

Working a job should not be viewed as secular (separated from connection to the spiritual).

All work should be done as unto the Lord (Eph. 6:6-7 - "Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men)

V. Work (outside of the domestic realm) is primarily the MAN'S RESPONSIBLITY

v. 15

“God took the man” -

God gave commandment to the man (not the woman) to till the ground. After the fall, it is said, “Unto Adam He said…Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life.”

God ordained that the man be the “bread winner” for the family even before the creation of Eve.

CONCLUSION:

Working diligently is good for mind and body.

"Your body, mind, and emotions were designed for hard work, and will break down without it" ("Last Days" Journal, 1986, p. 25). The phrase "Use it or lose it" is true!

EX: of people who don't have a job. They have energy that isn't being used, so they are restless (an honest day's work gives you a good night's sleep), tense, flustered, in a tempest - going this way and then that, but accomplishing nothing!

Work is God's invention. It's good for you!

"Salt from the sweat of work preserves the soul" ("Last Days" p. 27).

I am miserable (depressed, etc.) when I don't get things done.

~~Man needs a sense of accomplishment.~~

The happiest people in a church are those that serve the most.

If you want something to get done, give it to someone who is already busy (If you give it to someone who isn't doing anything, chances are he won't get at what you give him to do).

Working hard has great therapeutic value for those of you who are "sick" all the time. Work is really a great healer!

--You get your mind off yourself
--You use muscles and tone them (lose weight)
--You get circulation going
--You have a sense of accomplishment

There is great satisfaction to know you honestly worked for the bread you are eating.

Those who live off of food stamps and welfare checks do not appreciate the food they eat, like those who worked for it.

The Bible gives two practical reasons we should work:

II Thessalonians 3:10-11
***Christians must have a Biblical work ethic!**

1. When you don't work, you don't <u>DESERVE</u> to eat (v. 10)

For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.

Those who cannot work (the elderly and disabled) should be provided for; but not those who can but won't work.

Every adult is to work! Married women are to work also! Their place of employment is at home! God commands them to be *"keepers [workers] at home"* (Tit. 2:5). They are to *"guide the house"* (I Tim. 5:14).

God gives an order: If anyone is unwilling to work. . . do not feed him! By feeding him, you are reinforcing his laziness, and will do more harm to him than good.

Most if not all of the homeless people in NYC are not innocent victims of circumstances, but are suffering the consequences of their own sin (usually drugs and alcohol).

The panhandlers of our city do not all suffer from lack of employment opportunities (for anyone who is legally a citizen here can make an opportunity if none exist); rather, they are all "self-inflicted paupers."

2. When you don't work, you have idle time to get into <u>TROUBLE</u> (v. 11)

For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies.

They did not work, but worked around at meddling and obnoxious, troublesome behavior.

"Idle hands are the devil's workshop."

That which turned Sodom to homosexuality was "*abundance of idleness"* (Ezek. 16:49).

"Almost every culture has its saying about idleness. The Romans said, "By doing nothing, men learn to do evil." The Jewish rabbis taught, "He who does not teach his son a trade teaches him to be a thief." (Wiersbe, p. 169).

Eph.4:28 Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.

A major problem with our city is we have too many busybodies. People wouldn't have time to get into so much trouble if they were busy working a consistent job.

How to work:

I Thes. 4:11-12

And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you; That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing.

How should we work?

1) Enthusiastically David says in I Chron. 29:2, "I have prepared with all my might for the house of God"

2) Cheerfully - Col. 3:23 - "And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men."

3) Be thorough - finish the job

4) Go the extra mile = Do it right! We are ambassadors for Christ! You will really shock the unsaved world! (leave things cleaner when you are finished with them than when you started)

Now is the time to work for Jesus. Our time to rest will come later! (Heb. 4).

Jesus said, “I must work the works of Him that sent me while it is day for the night cometh when no man can work.”

Paul said we are not saved by our works but unto good works (Eph. 2:8-10).