

SEPTENARY STRUCTURE OF SCRIPTURE

DIVINELY ESTABLISHED IN GENESIS 1:1-2:3

By Arlen L. Chirwood

God has structured His revelation to man after a particular fashion — a fashion which He set forth in basic, minute form at the very beginning in Gen. 1:1-2:3. A complete sequence of events surrounding four things is set forth in these verses:

- 1) *Creation (1:1).*
- 2) *Ruin (1:2a).*
- 3) *Restoration (1:2b-25).*
- 4) *Rest (2:1-3).*

And God, through beginning His Word after this fashion, established a framework for the whole of that which He would subsequently reveal.

To show this septenary structure in subsequent Scripture is quite simple. And to do so, three different, related areas of Scripture will be considered — *The Sabbath given to Israel, John's Gospel, and Peter's second epistle.*

The Sign of the Sabbath

The Sabbath was given to Israel as *a sign*, and the Sabbath was to be observed by the Jewish people “throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant” (Ex. 31:16). In this respect, God stated concerning the Sabbath,

“It is a sign between me and the children of Israel forever: for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed” (Ex. 31:17).

When giving the Sabbath to Israel (*cf.* Ex. 20:11) or

referring to the Sabbath rest awaiting the people of God in the Book of Hebrews (Heb. 4:4-9), in each instance, *for a very good reason*, God called attention to that which had occurred in Genesis chapters one and two.

There is a latter work of restoration, followed by rest, which is based on a former work of restoration, followed by rest; and the Sabbath was given to the Jewish people to keep this thought ever before them.

That is, though the sign of the Sabbath concerned a present work and future rest, it was *based* on a past work and rest. God worked six days to restore a ruined creation in the opening chapter of Genesis; and on the sixth day, along with the completion of His work of restoration, He brought man into existence to rule over the restored material creation (Gen. 1:26-28). Then God rested on the seventh day.

But *a ruin* ensued once again. Man, an entirely new creation in the universe, fell; and, as a result, the restored material creation was brought under a curse (Gen. 3:17), leaving God with two ruined creations: *man*, and *the material creation*.

With that in mind, how did God, in the Genesis account, set about to restore these two ruined creations? The answer is not only clearly revealed but it is also very simple.

According to Scripture, God set about to restore the subsequent ruined creations *in exactly the same manner* which He had used to restore the former ruined creation in the opening chapter of Genesis. God set about to restore the two subsequent ruined creations over a six-day period (in keeping with Gen. 1:2b-25); and, in keeping with Gen. 2:2, 3, following His restorative work, God would then rest on the seventh day.

The latter restoration must occur in complete keeping with the former restoration. A Divinely-designed pattern had been set in the former restoration — a pattern set perfect in the beginning, which, accordingly, could never change.

Thus, the latter restoration *must* occur over a six-day period. And this six-day period of restorative work *must*, as the former, be followed by a day of rest.

From a Biblical standpoint, it is not possible for the matter to occur in any other manner. And the Sabbath, following six days of work, was given to Israel to keep the thought ever before the Jewish people that,

in accord with the opening verses of Genesis, God was going to once again rest for one day following six days of work to effect the restoration of that which is presently in a ruined state (both man and the material creation).

The Sabbath was a “sign,” and *a sign* in Scripture points to something beyond itself. This “sign,” the Sabbath, points to *a seventh-day rest which God will enter into with His people (“the people of God” in Heb. 4:9) following six previous days of restorative work.*

Each day in the former restoration and rest was twenty-four hours in length, but each day in the latter restoration and rest is revealed to be one thousand years in length (II Peter 1:16-18; 3:3-8; *cf.* Matt. 16:28-17:5). Based on the pattern set forth in Genesis chapters one and two, God is going to work for six thousand years during the present restoration and then rest the seventh one-thousand-year period.

Scripture begins by laying the foundational basis for this septenary arrangement of time in the opening verses (Gen. 1:1-2:3). Then, accordingly, this is something seen or alluded to throughout Scripture (Ex. 31:13-17; Num. 19:12; Hosea 5:15-6:2; Jonah 1:17; Matt. 17:1; Luke 24:21; John 1:29, 35, 43; 2:1; 5:9; 9:14; 11:6, 7; Heb. 4:1, 4, 9). And the matter is then brought to a conclusion in Revelation chapter twenty, where the 1,000-year Messianic Era is mentioned six times (vv. 2-7), immediately prior to the eternal ages which are seen to follow (chs. 21, 22).

Scripture deals with 7,000 years of time — time extending *from* the restoration of the earth and the creation of man *to* the end of the Messianic Kingdom. Scripture has very little to say about that which occurred prior to these 7,000 years, and it also has very little to say about that which will occur following these 7,000 years. Scripture is built on this septenary arrangement of time, which is based on the opening two chapters of Genesis; and *this is an evident fact which must be recognized if one would correctly understand God's redemptive plans and purposes which He has revealed in His Word.*

The Structure of John's Gospel

The Gospel of John is built around eight signs; and, as in the sign of the Sabbath, the signs in this gospel point to things beyond the signs themselves.

It is the Jew who requires a sign (I Cor. 1:22); and these signs, taken from numerous signs which Jesus performed during His earthly ministry, are directed (as was His ministry in that day) to the Jewish people.

Jesus performed signs of this nature for *one central purpose*:

“...that ye [the Jewish people] might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name [‘life’ having to do with the subject at hand, the proffered kingdom, not eternal life]” (John 20:30, 31; cf. John 2:11; 5:46, 47; 6:14, 21; 11:45).

Seven of the eight signs in John’s gospel were performed in connection with particular days, all in perfect keeping with one another, all in perfect keeping with the sign of the Sabbath, and all in perfect keeping with the septenary arrangement of Scripture. And all of the signs refer, after different fashions, to the same thing. They all refer to things surrounding Israel’s coming salvation and restoration, which will occur after six days (after 6,000 years), in the seventh day (in the seventh 1,000-year period).

But note the structure of John’s gospel as a whole. The gospel is not only built around eight signs, which are all in keeping with the septenary arrangement of Scripture, but the complete gospel is built around this structure. John’s gospel, in the opening two chapters, begins *exactly* as Genesis begins in the opening two chapters.

The gospel, as Genesis, opens with the words, “In the beginning [*lit.*, ‘In beginning,’ in both Genesis (Hebrew text) and John (Greek text)].” Then, John’s gospel continues to parallel Genesis. In the opening two chapters of each, there is *a creation, a ruin of the creation, a restoration of the ruined creation over six days, and a seventh day of rest*.

Genesis deals with the preceding in relation to *the ruined material creation*, but John’s gospel deals with the matter in relation to *ruined man*.

In John chapter one, note “creation” in verse three and a “ruin” and beginning “restoration” in verse five. Then most of the remainder of the chapter deals with the One Who would bring about the restoration of ruined man (vv. 6ff), with *this restoration occurring over six days time, followed by events of the seventh day —*

events foreshadowing those occurring in the coming Sabbath of rest (cf. 1:29, 35, 43, 2:1ff).

Then, from that point, the remainder of John’s gospel *continues to parallel Genesis, with the same subject matter dealt with throughout in both books*. Genesis deals with the subject matter through the use of *types*, and John deals with the subject matter through the use of *signs*.

And whether dealing with the types in Genesis or the signs in John’s gospel, *the end of the matter is the same as set forth in the first two chapters of each — that which will occur in the seventh day, the seventh 1,000-year period*.

(Note in the preceding respect that John’s gospel should be set at the beginning of the New Testament, the first of the four gospels, as Genesis is set at the beginning of the Old Testament, the first of the five books of Moses. Genesis tells the reader what the Old Testament is about, and John’s gospel tells the reader what the New Testament is about, *with both Testaments relating exactly the same central message*.)

For additional information on Moses and John, see the author’s books, HAD YE BELIEVED MOSES and SIGNS IN JOHN’S GOSPEL. Also see the author’s pamphlet, *Genesis and John*.)

The Structure of II Peter

II Peter parallels Jude in the sense that both deal with the *Word of the Kingdom* and *apostasy* after a similar fashion.

Both epistles begin the same way. The first chapter of II Peter is taken up with that which is stated in one verse in Jude (v. 3). Then the matter of apostasy is dealt with throughout most of the remainder of both epistles. However, there are things dealt with in the first and third chapters of II Peter, showing the septenary structure of the epistle, which are not dealt with at all in Jude.

Peter exhorts his readers to make their “calling [pertaining to the kingdom] and election [‘selection’ for a position of power and authority in the kingdom] sure” (1:1-15); and Jude states the same thing in Jude 3 when he exhorts his readers to “earnestly contend for [‘earnestly strive (Gk., *epagonizomai*, meaning to earnestly strain every muscle of one’s being) with respect

to’] the faith” (cf. I Tim. 6:12; II Tim. 4:7, 8). Then the thought of *apostasy* relative to “the faith” comes into view in both epistles.

However, Peter does something which Jude does not do. Before beginning his dissertation on apostasy he calls attention to that which occurred on the Mount in Matt. 17:1-8 (II Peter 1:16-18), which has to do with the Son of Man coming in His kingdom, *after six days, on the seventh day* (cf. Matt. 16:28-17:1).

Then toward the end of his epistle, Peter, unlike Jude, moves from thoughts surrounding apostasy to thoughts surrounding the existence and subsequent destruction of the heavens and the earth at *two different times*.

1) At a time following *the creation of the heavens and the earth* (“the heavens...of old,” and “the world that then was [the world existing at the time of ‘the heavens...of old’ (in Gen. 1:1, not during the days of Noah)]” [II Peter 3:5, 6]).

2) At a time following *the restoration of the heavens and the earth* (“the heavens and the earth which are now,” existing since the restoration in Gen. 1:2b-25 [II Peter 3:7]).

The destruction of the former is seen in Gen. 1:2a (“But the earth had become without form, and void; and darkness [the sun had ceased to give its light] was upon the face of the deep [‘the raging waters’]”), and the destruction of the latter — a destruction by fire — is seen in succeeding verses in II Peter (3:10ff).

Peter then draws the entire matter to a climax by stating that “one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day” (3:8). Understood contextually (vv. 3-7), the verse is self-explanatory. “The heavens and the earth, which are now” (v. 7) *must cover the entire septenary period from chapter one* (vv. 16-18), else II Peter 3:8 would be meaningless. And each day in this period is revealed to be *one thousand years in length — six millenniums of work, followed by one millennium of rest, based on the opening verses of Genesis*.

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