

Walking the Old Paths, Episode 10 transcript

Out in the Black Hills of South Dakota, and there is a place called Black Elk Peak, formerly known as Harney Peak. It is the highest point in South Dakota, and actually is the highest point east of the Rockies, all the way to the Swiss Alps at 7244ft elevation.

To get to the top of Black Elk Peak, there is a three and a half mile trail that begins at Sylvan Lake. That point where hikers begin their ascent at Sylvan Lake is called the trailhead. It is the starting point. Well, today we are finally going to take our first steps on the old paths. And the trailhead is Genesis 1:1.

We have spent the last nine weeks preparing for this, friends. We have been gathering our gear for this hike, making all the necessary preparations to navigate this long journey through this God breathed book. How long will it be, you might ask? That is a good question and one honestly, I cannot answer.

I have hiked the Black Elk Peak Trail many times and in all sorts of conditions. I've done it on sunny days, cloudy days, rainy days, foggy days, and even in snow. Many factors determine how quickly or how slowly the ascent takes.

There are many unknown factors that lie ahead for us as to how quickly or slowly we will go on the old paths. At some points, we may be able to pick up the pace and move faster, and others we will want to slow down and even stop to consider some important verse or word that we come across.

We will have different terrains to navigate. Lovely rolling hills, lush valleys, beautiful streams and picturesque mountain peaks to climb. But each step we

take will be one closer to the conclusion of the Word of God. Are you ready?
Okay, here we go.

[Genesis 1:1](#). In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth. The very first verse in the Bible begins with the origin of our universe. What we notice from this opening verse is that it is a direct statement of fact.

In contrast to other cultures, civilizations or religions, the Bible is the only document from antiquity that is worthy of any serious considerations when it comes to the origins of our universe. Take, for example, the Egyptian myth that said there was a primeval ocean upon which appeared an egg.

The Greeks: they pictured a mythical giant named Atlas standing at the borders of the earth, upholding the wide heavens on his head and arms.

Or take, for instance, the Hindus, who taught that the world rested on the backs of three elephants, which in turn stood on the back of a giant turtle who swam around in a cosmic sea. What a contrast that is to the Bible, where God simply tells us in the beginning he created it all.

Now let's take a closer look at the sentence and make some observations.

“In the beginning”, this is the first Hebrew word here in the Bible re'shiyth, meaning the first in place, time, order or rank. The first word of the Bible denotes the beginning of time.

“God”: this is the first occurrence of the divine name and is the Hebrew word Elohim. Elohim occurs over 2600 times in the Old Testament.

Now, if you remember our study on the first mentioned principle, where the first mention of a word or a theme gives its definition that is carried out throughout Scripture. We see here that Elohim, in its first occurrence, connects it with creation and gives it its essential meaning as the creator.

Now, something else that is interesting about the Hebrew word Elohim is the “im” ending, which is the Hebrew plural ending. What that means is that the word Elohim can mean gods, and is actually at times translated as such. Take for example [Psalm 96:5](#), which says, For all the gods of the nations are idols: but the Lord made the heavens.

So while the form Elohim is plural, it is frequently used as if it were singular. Therefore, we see Elohim is a plural name with a singular meaning, demonstrating that God is one and yet more than one. In other words, we have the beginning of the idea of the Triune God that is 3 in 1 in the name Elohim. We will see this name used all throughout Genesis chapter one.

Next we have “created”. The Hebrew word used here is bara. This verb means to create and is only used of God in his creative work. It carries with it the idea of an instantaneous, miraculous creation.

Only God can create something out of nothing. Man can make things with materials already present, but he cannot create something out of nothing.

Now, during the fall and winter months, I like to go down to the university here in Lincoln to talk and witness to students. Some years ago, I ran into a college student who was majoring in biochemistry. He was an atheist who believed in the Big Bang theory and evolutionary development. And we got into a debate over our origins in evolution versus special creation. He remarked how he had proof

that there is no God because they had created an artificial protein, or something of the sort in their lab at school. He was very impressed with this achievement. When I when he was done talking, I simply pointed out the fact that they did not actually create anything because they used materials that were already here.

Now, if you can create that artificial protein out of nothing, then you would have something to impress me with. And this is the problem that all atheists face is where did all this matter and energy come from? It cannot create itself, so it had to come from somewhere.

On a side note, this last year when I was down on the campus witnessing, I was impressed with the amount of young people that I talked with that believed our universe had to have been specially created. Most didn't have an answer to what or who had created it, but at least they recognized it wasn't possible for it to create itself.

Now, of course, I showed them who that someone was. Re'shiyth Elohim bara. In the beginning, God created.

Our next word we see in the verse is “heaven”. This is the word shâmayim, a masculine noun meaning sky, heaven, abode, firmament, air, stars. Although the word is plural in form, it can be translated in English as singular or plural, depending on the context.

And then we have “earth”. This is the word erets, referring to the component of matter in the universe. Now, since the creation of the sun, moon and stars did not take place until day four, and the fact that in verse two the earth was without form. But this is speaking to the basic elements of matter which God then took and used in the forming of the earth.

In this single verse or universe, we observe a trinity of space, time and matter. In the beginning equals time. Heaven is space and earth is matter. These three coexist and have to come into existence at the same time to have any real meaning. You can't have matter without having somewhere to put it, or a time in which it is put. Space is only measurable by matter contained in it and the interactions of the matter. So you need both matter and time to identify space. And the same goes for time. It needs matter and space for it to be observed.

Everything we know is defined by these three things. Everything has a beginning and an end for us. At any given time we interact with matter and we interact with it within space. Which is why to us finite creatures who exist inside of this space time matter continuum are unable to understand God who exists outside of space, time and matter. Our brains are just unable to comprehend this. But then how can the finite understand the infinite?

Experiment with this and see. When you are without distraction think about how God has always existed in eternity past with no beginning, and see how your brain reacts when it tries to comprehend this paradox.

Next, we observe that not only do we see space, time and matter coming into existence in Genesis 1:1, but we have the source and the power that started it all in the beginning. God is both the source and the power that brought it all into existence, and by his wisdom, he formed it.

[Psalms 136:5](#) tells us “To him that by wisdom made the heavens: for his mercy endureth for ever.” And [Proverbs 3:19](#) “The Lord by wisdom hath founded the earth; by understanding hath he established the heavens.”

Why don't you try and strike up a conversation with someone this week and ask them, where did all this matter and energy come from? You might be surprised how that question might just open up a spiritual conversation for you.

All right. The next logical question then is when did God created the heaven and the earth? This question has some difficulties in answering, and it shows by the fact that those that have attempted to answer it through Bible chronology are unable to agree with each other as to the actual age of the earth.

I want to just insert here an observation in regards to some of these difficulties we have, and coming to agreement on certain topics in the Bible. God certainly would have known we would have these problems, and if he wanted, he certainly would have included some definitive statement to clear up any problems we have. But in many instances, he does not.

The question then is why didn't he? It is my belief that these cloudy issues or supposed contradictions that we find in the Bible, are meant to test our faith in him and in His Word.

Second, I believe it is because he wants us to wrestle with these questions and to study to show ourselves approved unto him. Many things that are not clear in the Bible are that way for a reason. Perhaps we just need to listen to each other's ideas and come to the conclusion that we may have to wait for the answer from him who sitteth in the heavens.

We don't need to make everything into a battle of who is right and who is wrong. Some things are just hard to be understood. Or perhaps we just don't have the mental capacity to understand certain great issues in life, or God just hasn't given us the light yet to see what we cannot comprehend.

I recognize my limitations, whether it be because I'm just not smart enough or God has not yet revealed it to my heart. But that doesn't stop me from filing certain difficult ideas away in my brain for a later time when God might reveal it to me.

I have had several of these conversations with my pastor, certain teachings that my church holds that I have not been able to reconcile in the scriptures. It just isn't clear to me, and I let them know that. And so I file it away, keeping it in mind. And as I go through scripture, perhaps one day God will give me insight and peace one way or another.

I try to do that with everything that I don't completely understand. If I just toss it out as not being true because I can't understand it at the moment, then I might have just lost an opportunity for growth later down the road. Remember friends, it is good to keep in ever learning spirit within you. Never think you have come to the place where you think you know it all and have all the answers. That is prideful and arrogant. A man like that, he can't be taught anything.

At the same time never take anything as being truth without first testing it against the Bible. Discernment is something that we as Christians ought to be asking God for regularly.

But back to some of these difficulties we see in determining the age of the Earth by chronology in the Bible. I want to list a couple here for you.

There is an uncertainty as to the length of the ancient calendar year. Was it the same as ours or was it different? Then there's also the possibility of missing generations in the genealogies of the Old Testament.

Outside of Scripture, we have an unsatisfactory secular chronologies from Egypt and Babylonia, And also we have unreliable and contradictory results from radiocarbon dating.

I have a book on my shelf, *Radioisotopes and the Age of The Earth*, that was put together by six leading scientists in the field of geology, geochemistry and physics. They examined the radioisotope dating theory and discuss its problems in why dating methods don't agree. It's a very technical book, but worth it if you want to research this topic. I don't think it is in print anymore, but it can be read or downloaded for free www.icr.org. [Download a [PDF of the first book](#) or view the [second book here](#).]

So how do we come to any sort of a date when it comes to the age of the Earth? Well, what source do we go to when we want factual, truthful information? The Bible, of course. It is the only reliable historical record we have. And since neither you or I were at there at the beginning, and most of the extra biblical sources are contradictory. We need to go to the book.

Now, while we can't derive an actual date that the creation happened. We can approximate it by the chronological records of Scripture from the following criteria.

First of all, Genesis chapter one gives us the time from creation of the universe to the creation of man. Genesis chapter five contains chronological data from the time of Adam to the Great Flood. Genesis chapter 11 summarizes the chronology from the flood to Abraham.

The historical books of the Old Testament contain the chronological data of the nation of Israel from Abraham to the time of their captivity. And then we also have the Prophetical books, which contain chronology of the captivity and restoration.

The best known chronological system that was produced was by Archbishop James Usher, who lived from 1581 to 1656. His work on Bible chronology produced a date of creation at 4004 B.C. some others, to name a few, have placed the date of creation as follows. The Jewish one is 3760 BC. Josephus has it at 5555 BC. Kepler has it at 3993 BC, and Luther put it at 3961 BC.

Now, many writers argue that one or more gaps of an unknown amount of time exist in the genealogical lines, but to insert gaps totaling more than 5000 years would render the Bible's chronology irrelevant. The Bible simply cannot support a date for creation of man earlier than about 10,000 B.C. So given some of these possible difficulties with determining an exact age of Earth, we can say it is somewhere between 6000 and 10,000 years old according to Bible chronology.

But how does this line up with some other chronologies of ancient nations? Colin Renfrew, who was a professor at archaeology at the University of Southampton, said on page 25 of his book *Before Civilization* and I quote, "Until the discovery of radiocarbon dating, therefore, there was really only one reliable way of dating events in European prehistory. This was by the early records of the great civilizations, which extended in some cases as far back as 3000 BC. The Egyptian king lists go back to the First Dynasty of Egypt a little before 3000 BC. Before that, there were no written records anywhere." End quote.

Thus, we see that the ancient historical accounts support the biblical chronology of the human race. Now for more information on this subject, I would recommend the book *Scientific Creationism* by Henry Morris.

In our introduction to Genesis, I mentioned that Genesis is the foundational book of the Bible. Now within Genesis, we see that the first 11 chapters of the primeval history of Genesis are foundational to the patriarchal history in chapters 12 through 50. And within the first 11 chapters of Genesis, chapter one is foundation foundational to our primitive history.

And if we go one step further, we see that verse one is the foundation of chapter one. Therefore, Genesis 1:1 is the foundational verse of the Bible. It may very well be the most important verse in Scripture.

Now, quite naturally, when we pick up a book for the first time, we start it at the beginning. It makes sense. It is how the author intends us for us to begin. Most people who have ever picked up the Bible intending to read it, whether they finish it or not, have started in Genesis 1:1. Therefore, this is probably the most read words in history.

Someone once said that if a person truly believes Genesis 1:1, then he will have no difficulty believing anything else in the Bible. Genesis 1:1 opens with that definitive statement with such force and power to it, that the reader is immediately faced with a decision to either believe God exists and he created all things, or to forsake it, and the rest of the book along with it.

If God really created all things, then by that same power he also controls all things and it all belongs to him.

We will notice that God does not attempt to prove he that he exists, or that he created everything in this universe. The first verse stands out as an axiom, a self-evident truth that he is and that he is the creator. In this one verse, we see that

all of man's false philosophies concerning the origin and meaning of the world are destroyed under this direct statement to the existence of the Creator God.

Take for instance, atheism is crushed by the assertion that God exists. Polytheism is obliterated by the declaration that God has one. Pantheism is annihilated by the separation of God from matter, and evolution is demolished because God created all things.

It is my intention and will always be my intention, that all are welcome to walk with me on the old paths. I don't care what denomination you belong to or if any at all. I don't care if you are a Muslim, a Buddhist, a Hindu or an atheist. I don't care if you are red or yellow or black or white. I don't care if you're short or tall, thin or fat, rich or poor. You are always welcome to walk with me. But friends, please understand that this book is not just any book and we will be challenged to make decisions concerning it as we walk in it.

Remember our theme verse on this podcast? [Jeremiah 6:16](#) “Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein.”

Here we are, standing in the ways, asking for the old paths. Where is the good way? And we see that God created all things. The first thing you need to realize is that God exists and he created all things. And because he is the creator, he is the sustainer of all things, and all things belong to him and for him. Friend, you belong to him. Your life belongs to him. You can choose to ignore this truth. God gives you that freedom.

Remember? But they said we will not walk therein. But just know that some day you will stand before him and give an account. God doesn't need to explain that he is. He doesn't even attempt to prove it. He simply says, the fool hath said in his heart, there is no God. Indeed, how foolish it would be to look around at everything that is so full of complexity, order, and beauty, and say there is no God all of this happened by time and chance.

Well, friends, we made our first steps onto the old paths of Scripture. Join me back next week as we take a look at verse two and we'll discuss the gap theory.

Until then, walk in wisdom toward them that are without redeeming the time. Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt. That ye may know how you ought to answer every man.