

Walking the Old Paths, Episode 11 transcript

Summary

In this week's episode JP takes a close look at Genesis 1:2 and discusses the problems with the "gap theory", which tries to reconcile geological ages with the creation account in Genesis by proposing a cataclysmic event between verses 1 and 2. JP also explains how the "gap theory" contradicts the Biblical account of death entering the world through sin.

Transcription

Just as that original creation was in a state of darkness, so too are we born into this world. We are born in spiritual darkness, separated from God. Our natural state of darkness must be changed by the light of the gospel shed abroad in our hearts. In our natural state, we walk in darkness, we are covered in sin, and we must come to the light in order to be saved.

Welcome to the Walking the Old Paths podcast. I'm JP, your host on this journey through the Bible. Each week we embark on a systematic study of the scriptures from Genesis to Revelation.

When I was younger, English was probably my least liked subject. At the time, I didn't understand the importance of language. It wasn't until I really started studying the Bible that I began to have a greater appreciation for language.

And I hope that as you walk with me, you too will develop a love for language. In order for us to have an accurate grammatical interpretation of Scripture, we will need to study the meaning of words, the form of words, the function of words, and the relationship of words.

Now, something I want to introduce you to today is the use of figures of speech in the Bible. And they are everywhere. And in order for us to properly interpret Scripture, we need to recognize them when we see them in order to understand what the Holy Spirit is teaching us.

So what is a figure of speech? A figure of speech is a word or phrase that is used to communicate something other than its literal, natural meaning. I say all that because as we come to verse two in Genesis one, I want to point out something that you probably have already noticed.

And that is the frequency which you will see the word "and" in this chapter. Every verse except for verse one and verse 27 begins with "and". Not only that, but we

see it frequently used throughout the verses in the chapter. In fact, it is used over 90 times in chapter one.

This is actually a figure of speech that we see employed quite frequently in the Hebrew language. It is called a polysyndeton and means many ands. The Holy Spirit employs this figure of speech here to slow us down and to consider each point. God wants us to weigh them and their significance and not rush through what he is showing us.

But before we get into the meat of verse two, we need to discuss a problem that we have when we come to the scriptures. All of us come to the Bible with already formed ideas and theories in our minds.

Where we grew up, how we grew up, our education, our environment, our friends, our teachers, our parents, our church - they all contribute to our worldview. That is how we see the world largely depends on what we have been taught and the experiences we have inside of it.

This applies to me just as much as it applies to anyone else. I have glasses and I am practically blind without them. I need them to see and interact within this world. If we think of our worldview in terms of a pair of glasses, then that is how we view the world around us.

In the same manner, when we come to the Bible, we tend to look at it through the lens of our worldview. We interpret what we see based on that. And now you probably recognize that that won't work because each of us sees it differently based on those factors that shaped our worldview.

We have talked extensively about how God's Word doesn't mean multiple things to multiple people. It means specifically what the author God wrote for us. The problem is, we try and make the Bible fit our worldview because rather than viewing our worldview through the lens of the Bible, we do the opposite and view the Bible through the lens of our worldview.

Well, that very thing happened when the theory of evolution was popularized and started being taught as truth, and not as the rotten theory that it is. Men, good men, scholarly men even panicked at this terrible theory and tried to find a way to make it fit with the creation account in Genesis. Therefore, they proposed that the creation of heaven and earth in Genesis 1:1 happened billions of years ago, and there was a time gap between verse one and two.

So when we come to verse two and we read that the earth was without form and void, they say that there was a great cataclysmic event that happened from that original creation in verse one, to make it what it was in verse two that is without form and void. They believe that this cataclysmic event occurred because of the rebellion of Satan. Then, following this formless and void earth, God recreated it in six literal days in Genesis chapter one. This theory has become known as the gap theory.

Many good Bible expositors have fallen into believing this terrible theory, many of whom I like to read their notes and comments on the Bible, but I disagree with their position on this matter.

Now I can see the challenge of placing the particular time that Satan and his angels rebelled against God and were kicked out of heaven. But it is a far stretch of the imagination to put it in between verses one and two. And as we will see, by using some logic, logic and reasoning, the gap theory is simply not possible scientifically or theologically.

I have on my shelf the old Scofield Reference Bible. It has a good background information on each book of the Bible. It has good scripture references and some good footnotes, but even it contains a footnotes footnote on Genesis 1:2 that alludes to the gap theory.

So what does the gap theory really try and do then? Well, its main purpose was to harmonize the geological ages during those supposed billions of years that the Earth has existed with the chronology of the Bible.

Those of us who grew up in public school know that the geological ages are identified and dated by the fossils that are found within them. Therefore, the geological age system is synonymous with the evolutionary system.

Here is the problem, however. The geological system and the evolutionary system are based on the assumption of uniformitarianism. That is the belief that all of our physical processes that function today have always been that way in the past, which means that it does not believe in any sort of cataclysmic event that destroyed the Earth.

So while the Christian who believes in the gap theory tries to reconcile it with the geological ages through a cataclysmic event between verses one and two, the

geologist who does not believe in the gap theory because it believes in a cataclysmic event that destroyed the Earth.

The geological system has to depend on the evolutionary system to place the fossils in a successive order within the sedimentary rocks of the Earth's crust. Thus, it leads to a second problem, because if the gap theory accepts the geological system, it has to identify with the fossils that define those geological ages.

If there are fossils before the creation of man, then that means we have death before man came on the scene, which means death came before sin entered the world.

Well, that is a problem now, because the Bible tells us quite plainly how death came into the world. [Romans 5:12](#) tells us, "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:"

And in first Corinthians chapter 15, verses 21 and 22. "For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." [\[1 Corinthians 15:21-22\]](#)

So we see from the Bible that death did not enter into this world until sin entered into the world.

So you see how come into the Bible with preconceived thoughts causes us to try and reconcile the but the Bible to our way of thinking. How much better would be to allow the Bible to say what it says, and then wrestle with whatever challenges our way of thinking and change our worldview to match that of the Bible.

What we as Bible believers do know is that there was a cataclysmic event that happened, but it happened during the life of Noah in the worldwide flood. This flood changed the way the earth looked from before to how it is today.

The Bible refers to the time before the flood as the world that then was in Second Peter chapter three and six and seven we read "Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men." [\[2 Peter 3:6-7\]](#)

The world then, was judged by a flood. The world that is now will one day be judged by fire. It is the same world as defined by the created space time matter from Genesis 1:1, but is distinctive in its operation before and after the flood, which we will get to in Genesis chapter six.

But getting back to Genesis 1:2, we once again are going to look at the individual words that make up the sentence. Now don't worry, I won't do that with the entire Bible. I would have to live as long as Methuselah if I did that. But these foundational verses are so important that I believe giving them extra attention is worth our time in understanding what God is saying here.

Once again, I want to draw your attention to the conjunction “and” we see here in the start of verse two. These many ands connect each preceding statement back to verse one. And the great object of that verse, God, Elohim, the Creator God stands out in Scripture as the great power and sustainer of our universe.

We that as humans are the object of his affection. Everything that he created was created for us to inhabit and enjoy, and it was created for us to enjoy with him. Every creative act that we see going forward points back to the Elohim of verse one.

And so we read, “And the earth”. First of all, we notice that only the earth is mentioned here in verse two. Notice it doesn't say the heaven and the earth, just earth. It is the object of verse two. The conjunction “and”, as we noted, connects what was just created with the current state of the creation.

A normal rendering of these verses does not naturally allow for any sort of gap in time. It is merely telling us what the state of matter and energy was in when God created it. But before God started his creative work of forming it into a habitable state.

The next thing I want to point out here to you is this verb “was”. It is interesting that we have to look sometimes even at the smallest of words. This verb is very important. The verb translated as “was” means to exist and indicates the state of the matter and energy are in: that is, without form and void.

Now, those who hold to the gap theory say that this is incorrectly translated and should be “became”, thereby indicating a change in the original creation of verse one to what it is in verse two.

And while grammatically it could be translated as “became”, the translators correctly translated it as “was”, the context indicates how it should be translated.

And since there is nothing in the context itself to indicate that it should be translated as “became”, therefore “was” is the appropriate translation.

Now, out of curiosity, I checked the other translations, a few other translations to see how they translated the word, and all of them I checked. I checked the ESV, the NIV, the NASB and the LSB. And they all translated it as “was” not one of them translated it as “became”.

Let me give you an example in Scripture of the same word that was translated as “became”, that demonstrates how context defines how a word is translated.

In Genesis 19, we see the story of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. The angels of the Lord delivered Lot and his wife and two daughters from the destruction that was about to take place, with instructions to not look back. But as they fled the city, we see Lot's wife look back. In [Genesis 19:26](#), “But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt.”

Notice that the text says she became a pillar of salt. Same word Hebrew word translated as “became”. It does not say she was a pillar of salt. This means that there was a change in her original condition, as implied by the text of Scripture, as a result of the event in the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Moving on. We see the words “without form, and void” in verse two. These words in the Hebrew are tohu wa-bohu.

The word tohu means to lie waste. It represents chaos, confusion, and disorder. It is used 20 times in the Bible and it is translated 11 different ways. And when you study each of them, you will see that once again, context determines the translation.

The next word, bohu, means empty. The word only occurs three times in the scripture and is translated twice as void and once as emptiness. Interestingly, the ancient Hebrew pictograph of this word means an empty space needing to be filled. And I'll come back to that here in just a moment.

Now again, we see the proponents for the gap theory declaring that this should have been translated differently as ruined and desolate. Once again trying to force upon the text a change that has occurred.

They justify this by saying God would not create the universe in a chaotic state, but it had to have become that way as judgement against Satan. They justify the position by using Isaiah 45:18, where the word *tohu* is translated as vain, saying God did not create it in vain, but formed it to be inhabited.

And it reads, “For thus saith the Lord that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited: I am the Lord; and there is none else.” [\[Isaiah 45:18\]](#)

And once again we see the problem of forcing an interpretation upon a text, because we want it to fit our worldview. The context of Isaiah 45:18 nowhere indicates such a cataclysm between the original creation and the forming of it to be inhabited.

God simply is saying he didn't do it in vain. It wasn't meant to be left in that state. He created the matter and energy to be formed into a habitable environment.

So when we read the earth was without form and void, God is saying to us, the earth was a waste, it was empty, it had no inhabitants. And since I - God - did not create it in vain just for the sake of creating it, but rather I created it with man in mind. My intention was for it to be a suitable environment, for man to enjoy the blessing of God and have fellowship with him.

Next we see that “darkness was on upon the face of the deep”. First of all, we see the first reference here to darkness. This is the natural state when God created the heaven and the earth. It was in darkness. It isn't until verse three that we see light the opposite of darkness.

The Bible tells us that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. But to define light, we need to know what darkness is and vice versa. Just as that original creation was in a state of darkness, so too are we born into this world. We are born in spiritual darkness, separated from God. Our natural state of darkness must be changed by the light of the gospel shed abroad in our hearts. In our natural state, we walk in darkness, we are covered in sin, and we must come to the light in order to be saved.

Now, just as the nighttime creatures love the cover of darkness, so to man in his natural state and rebellion against God loves the darkness. John chapter three, verses 16 through 21. Familiar words at least in John 3:16. But we need to read all those verses here to get the context of it.

Look at this. “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”

Now notice this in verse 19, “And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov’d. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be [made] manifest, that they are wrought in God.” [\[John 3:16-21\]](#)

Friends, sometimes people just don't want to come to the light of the gospel. Their deeds are evil. They know it, but they also love it there in the darkness.

Many people have mistakenly thought that just by bringing the gospel to a foreign nation of pagans, that everybody will jump at that chance to be saved. But they forget these verses that men love darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. They love the darkness, they love their sin. It's pleasurable for a season and they don't want to give it up.

Now we see that this darkness was upon the face of the deep. The word translated as “face” has a primary meaning of presence, but also means surface, like the front of your face or the surface of the earth.

An example of it meaning “presence” is found in Genesis chapter six, verse 11, which reads, “The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence.” [\[Genesis 6:11\]](#)

We see that word translated there as “before”. In other words, it was corrupt in the presence of God.

An example of a meaning surface is found in [Genesis 1:29](#) “And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all

the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be [for] meat.”

There we see that God gave us the herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth. In other words, the surface.

But there is another word we need to look at, and that is the word “upon” that will help to define what is meant. Again, context defines the word or phrase. The word here is used as a preposition meaning above, over, upon, or against. Like it is used in Genesis 8:1 when God made a wind to pass *over* the earth, or in Genesis 6:1 when men began to multiply *on* the face of the earth.

So what we see here, the darkness was upon the face, the surface of a deep. Now, I want you to observe that in this verse we see a literary device called a parallelism. Hebrew is largely poetical, and we see the use of parallelism all throughout the Old Testament.

So we note “upon the face of the deep”. And then at the end of the verse we note “upon the face of the waters”. These two statements are similar. They are parallel to each other. The text then defines what the deep is by the use of the parallel waters.

When God created this earth, he created it with all of its elements. And we take special note here that there is a significant amount of water that he created, for it is referred to as the deep.

And now we see the Spirit of God moved. I know I got a little out of order and talking about the parallel of the face of the waters with the face of the deep. But I wanted to end today's lesson with the phrase “the Spirit of God moved”.

I mentioned last week how the word Elohim for God is a plural name with a singular meaning. Giving us the beginning of the concept for the triune nature of God. And here we see the Spirit of God, that is the third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit. The Hebrew word here, “ruach”, is the word for spirit or wind or breath.

But again the context defines the word and we see the connection here with Elohim. It is the Spirit of God. He is present here at the creation, moving upon the waters.

The word moved is the Hebrew word “rachaph”, and only occurs three times in the Old Testament and is translated as fluttering, moved, and shake. It gives the sense of a mother hen hovering over her eggs to warm them.

It basically means a back and forth motion. The Spirit of God, therefore, is the energizer that is moving or vibrating over the waters, ready to energize life into this lifeless world.

Remember how I used the analogy of the original creation being in darkness, and how we too are born in darkness and need to come to the light of the gospel in order to be saved and have eternal life. Well, in the same way that the Spirit of God was there moving on the face of the waters, so too is the Spirit of God moving in the hearts of men today.

The Spirit of God is drawing people unto the Savior, calling them to come to the cross and look to the Lord Jesus for salvation as he spoke to you.

Has he convicted your heart of sin and shown you your need for the Savior? The Bible says today, if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. If the Spirit of God is speaking to you today, don't harden your heart to him by rejecting his call to come to the Savior. You don't know if you'll have another opportunity.

Some years ago, I was down at the university doing some open air preaching. And I was gathering quite a few people around, and there was a young man standing right down below where I was preaching at, and he was obviously paying attention to me.

And when I was done, I stepped down and I talked to the man and he understood the gospel message. He could repeat it back. He understood why he should be saved. And he knew the consequence of not accepting Christ as his Savior. And I begged the man to come to the Lord. Then give your heart to him.

But he said to me, I cannot said, I love my sin too much. And he walked away from that conversation.

You could tell the Spirit of God was moving upon him, otherwise why would he stay around and listen? It was working upon him. He knew the gospel message. He knew that Jesus Christ died for his sins and that he rose again on the third day. He knew that in order to to be saved, he had to believe on the Lord Jesus

Christ and he would have to turn away from sin. But he loved the darkness rather than light.

It was so sad to see that young man walk off rejecting the Savior, and you'd never know if that was the last opportunity that young man had to receive Christ.

When the Spirit of God is calling you friend, when he is putting a burden upon your heart over your sin. Come to him. Give your sin to him. Lay them at the foot of the cross. Jesus Christ took the punishment for it and paid the penalty for sin, that is death, that you might have life.

That is the gospel message here today. Would you share this with somebody? Go on to our social media sites Facebook, Instagram, X and share some of the posts that Walking the Old Paths has with your friends and give out the gospel. Help to spread the Word of God around to this world. Could you do that, friend?

Well, friends, until we meet again on the old paths, may God bless you as you grow in the grace and knowledge of him. Now to God only wise be glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen.