

Walking the Old Paths, Episode 9 transcript

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.

On today's part two of this we'll be talking about the authorship of Genesis, its outline and its interpretation.

Hello friends. Welcome back to Walking the Old Paths in our introduction to Genesis. In part one, we discussed the importance of the book of Genesis. We talked about the foundation of origins, its usage throughout the Bible, and particularly the importance of it in the New Testament. And finally, we saw how Genesis finds its complement in the final book of the Bible, the Book of Revelation.

And today's episode we'll conclude our introduction, talk about the authorship of Genesis, its outline and interpretation. In part one of our introduction to Genesis, I mentioned how Satan, the enemy of God and man, has mounted an attack upon the authenticity of Genesis as the true record of the origins of our universe and the early primeval history of the human race.

This is particularly true of the first 11 chapters of Genesis. Let us think this through logically. If Satan can convince you to reject the divine authority and historical accuracy of the Book of Genesis, then it undermines the rest of the Bible as well. As we noted in part one, the Book of Genesis is quoted or alluded to hundreds of times throughout the Bible.

If the rest of the holy writ testifies to its authenticity and historically accurate record, then the whole of Scripture is on trial if the first 11 chapters of Genesis are questioned. My friends, we are not ignorant of Satan's devices, are we? We can, with confidence, know that Genesis is inspired Scripture, giving us a firm foundation to stand upon as we walk the old paths.

Now I want to discuss the authorship of Genesis. I just want to say at the outset that this shouldn't really be an issue, because we know who the author is. It's the Lord Jesus Christ. Remember, holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

But the question remains, who were the holy men or holy man who was the pen of God used to write the book of Genesis? And I'll briefly give you the three main suggestions. Now keep it always in mind that it matters not because God is the ultimate author.

The first one we're going to discuss here is called the Documentary Hypothesis. Now this theory, as to the author or authors of Genesis, is believed by most liberal theologians and commentators.

This hypothesis believes that a number of unknown writers and editors throughout the period of Israel's history, from around the time of King Hezekiah to that of Ezra, the scribe, wrote and edited old legends and traditions that were verbally passed down from generation to generation by not only their own ancestors, but also by the Egyptians, the Babylonians and others. Then, after compiling these verbal stories and legends, they circulated how it came down through Moses.

Now they justify this theory by some of the differences in the language and style and references to different customs and cultures. But when one examines the works of these liberal theologians and commentators, we begin to see why they support this odd theory. And it's due to their commitment to evolutionary theory of mankind's development.

These higher critics believe that man developed more advanced cultures much later than the time of Moses, and writing wasn't even known at the at this time. However, archeological discoveries have disproved that theory. I have personally been to the Louvre in Paris and the British Museum in London and have seen such artifacts from ancient civilizations. This is no longer questioned that writing not only existed, but was widely practiced, and in many different forms long before the time of Moses.

The second one is Moses as the author. This is the accepted authorship by most conservative scholars and as the accepted authorship by the Jewish scribes and those called the early Christian fathers. Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy make up the first five books of the Bible, and there are referred to as the Pentateuch.

Now, even though no author is directly mentioned in the Book of Genesis, and its historical completion happened almost three centuries before Moses was born. Both the Old and New Testament ascribe the compilation of Genesis to Moses. The question that arises from this view is how Moses received it and wrote it. Now there are three possibilities to answer that question.

The first one is that Moses received it by direct revelation from God. And this could have been through either direct communication. As we see in Exodus chapter 33 and verse 11, it says “And the Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend.” [[Exodus 33:11](#)]

That's one possibility. Or else it could have been by visions of the events of the past that Moses then would have had written down, guided by the Holy Spirit.

The second possibility is that Moses could have received it by oral traditions that were passed down from father to son, century after century, which he then collected and wrote down as guided again by the Holy Spirit.

And the third possibility is that Moses took actual written records of the past. He collected them and compiled them into one final form. And again as he was guided by the Holy Ghost.

So, as you can see, any of these methods would still be consistent with verbal plenary inspiration and associated with mosaic authorship. But one difficulty with this is that the first two we do not see any parallel in the scriptures, and visions and revelations were given to the prophets concerning future events.

Moses did receive specific laws and ordinances by direct communications, as noted in Exodus 33:11, when when God spoke to him face to face. But much of the book of Genesis is in narrative form of historical events. So it's a little it's different.

Also, something to be considered here is that of the 200, some references or allusions to the Book of Genesis that are found in the New Testament Moses is not directly named as the author, even though Moses himself is directly mentioned some 80 times in the New Testament, and of which there are approximately 25 passages that are directly attributed to Moses. In the other books of the

Pentateuch, of which direct authorship is ascribed to him. But all that means is that he may have mainly served as a compiler and editor of Genesis.

Now the third theory, too, is the compilation of patriarchal records. Now, this third suggestion is that Moses compiled and edited earlier written records that had been handed down from father to son through the line of the patriarchs listed in Genesis. Each of those patriarchs would have written down their own individual accounts that occurred during their lifetime, and then these records would have been kept and handed down to the next succeeding patriarch until they finally reached Moses, who then compiled and edited into the book we now have.

This theory still follows the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and the guidance of the Holy Spirit with Moses as he puts it together in book form. And because Moses compiled it together, it is able to be called part of the Pentateuch.

The question then becomes, do we see any sort of evidence for individual eyewitness accounts within the Book of Genesis that would indicate that the book is a compilation of written records?

And the answer to that, I believe, is yes, we do see such evidence. In Genesis we have 11 divisions that occur that are recognized by the phrase these are the generations of or something similar. The first being in Genesis 2:4: These are the generations of the heaven and of the earth. In Genesis 5:1 we see this is the book of the generations of Adam.

In Genesis 6:9, we see these are the generations of Noah. And Genesis 10:1 it says, now these are the generations of the sons of Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Genesis 11:10 says, these are the generations of Shem. Genesis 11:27 now these are the generations of Terah. Genesis 25:12. Now these are the generations of Ishmael. Genesis 25:19 and these are the generations of Isaac.

Genesis 36:1. Now these are the generations of Esau who is Edam. And in the same chapter, Genesis 36:9 and these are the generations of Esau, the father of the Edomites in Mount Seir. And finally, in Genesis 37:2, we see these are the generations of Jacob.

Now, if you are observant, you might notice a problem with this theory.

If these are records passed down from one patriarch to the next, then why do we see Ishmael and Esau in these divisions? Since the patriarchal line of the Israelites does not include them? How this could be reconcilable is that these smaller genealogical lines of Ishmael and Esau were preserved or included as subdivisions. Therefore, Isaac might have included the generations of Ishmael, and Jacob might have included those of Esau, even though they're not part of the patriarchal line, God still included them because of their relationship to the patriarchal fathers.

These are the three main theories as to the human authorship of Genesis. If it wasn't for the attack upon Genesis and its authenticity, it would be less of an issue. But now at least you have some good information to think about.

Let's now take a look at the structure of the Book of Genesis. Depending on the commentator, the divisions they give to the Book of Genesis are slightly different.

This seems to be due to how they view the record of Genesis coming from Moses or to Moses. For example, Henry Morris takes the position of authorship to Moses as being a compilation of records from the patriarchs. This in turn means that he groups the generations of Ishmael and Esau as subdivisions to Isaac and Jacob as we discussed, thus creating nine subdivisions to the Book of Genesis.

Additionally, how they view the generations phrase as being either a superscript or a subscript meaning are the headings applied to the material following, or are they closing signatures to that which precedes it?

For example, in the first division found in Genesis 2:4, which reads, these are the generations of the heavens and of the earth. Does this phrase come at the end of the material as a closing signature from Genesis 1:1 to 2:4, or is it to be applied to the material that follows from Genesis 2:4 through chapter four?

So Morris suggests that they come at the end as a closing signature. Contrast this to, say, Alfred Edersheim, who divides Genesis into two main parts, with five sections under each. The first section, he titles *The History of the World to the Final Arrangement and Settlement of the Various Nations*. Then within that section we have the general introduction from Genesis one to chapter two, verse three.

And then we have the next five generations of the generation that have in the earth the book of the generations of Adam, the generations of Noah the generations of the sons of Noah, and then the generations of Shem. And that ends there in chapter 11, verse 26.

Then he gives it the Patriarchal history as the second section, with the five following generations, for that being the generations of Terah, who is the father of Abraham, you'll notice Abraham isn't listed as a generations of Abraham, it's his, it goes under his father's name.

Then we have the generations of Ishmael, Isaac, Esau, and Jacob. But you may again have noticed that Edersheim only listed ten generations under his subdivisions. Now, this is because he combined the two references in Genesis 36 of the generations of Esau into one subdivision or section. The reason why Edersheim combined the two was to create ten sections, which is the number of completeness in the Scripture.

Now, at this point, I should just briefly mention, since I did not include it in our introductory principles of interpretation, the study of numerology in the Bible or the Study of numbers.

The Bible is rich in significance when it comes to numbers. Numbers have spiritual meaning in the Bible. And if you're paying attention when you're reading, you'll take note of this. We need to always keep in mind that since God is the ultimate author of the Bible and whose understanding is infinite, that it is going to be a gold mine of wealth and treasure, of spiritual significance all throughout.

God is the master mathematician. And we should expect that the numbers we see in the Bible have significance and meaning. Additionally, he is also the creator of language, and so we should expect that the Bible is full of treasures of linguistic complexity and beauty. At some point, I will put together a lesson on the study of numbers in the Bible, which again is called numerology, and include it as a bonus episode so as we don't slow down our walk in the old paths any further.

Anyway, getting back to what I was saying on Edersheim his division of the book is ten sections, thereby giving it the significance of completeness. Now, is he wrong in doing this? Not necessarily. I can see the logic in including both references to

Esau together, but because there are some differences in how these great men of God divide the book. I am going to suggest that we just take a simpler path and divide it naturally, without overthinking it, or trying to force any meaning upon it. So, like Edersheim, let's divide it into two main sections. I do like that. The first one we're just going to call it the *Primitive or Primeval History* in Genesis one through 11. And then the second main section will be our *Patriarchal History* from Genesis 12 to 50.

The Bible itself, in an indirect way, does testify to this type of a division by placing special significance and importance on the second section of the patriarchs. There are 32 different verses in the Bible that refer to all three of the main patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob together. Now it is from these three men that we have the nation Israel.

Let me quote two examples from both the Old and New Testament that demonstrate this. [Exodus 3:6](#), "Moreover he said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God."

And in [2 Kings 13:23](#), "And the Lord was gracious unto them, and had compassion on them, and had respect unto them, because of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and would not destroy them, neither cast he them from his presence as yet."

And in the New Testament, in [Matthew 22:32](#), it says, "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living."

And in [Acts 3:13](#) it says, "The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go."

Now within these two great sections of Genesis, we will see four major events that occur in the primeval history, and we will see four great men in the patriarchal history.

So in the primeval history, we have the creation account in Genesis one and two, the fall in Genesis three through five. The flood in Genesis six through nine, and the dispersion in Genesis ten and 11. Then, in the patriarchal history we have the four great men. As we have noted, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, but then also Joseph, whom a very large part of Genesis is dedicated to.

So our outline would look will look like this. We will have the creation of the heaven and earth, or our introduction from Genesis 1:1 to chapter two in verse three. And then we will begin each section with the heading of the generations of and continuing on through the end of the book.

And I understand that this was a lot of information that we just discussed to arrive in an outline, but you need to grasp the concept that outlining Scripture helps us to manage and see all the individual messages which make up the bigger plan and purpose of God.

Think of it like a puzzle you have before you, a box that has a thousand little oddly shaped pieces in it, and they all have a little different look to them. Some are only one color or some have multiple colors in them. They are different shapes and they only fit together one way that the end result will make sense and look like the picture on the box.

Well, the Bible has many little messages in it, but it isn't until we put it all together in an orderly manner that we can step back and see the whole picture that God has painted for us. Outlining our studies helps us to identify the individual messages, and once we have organized them as God intended, we can put them together and we will have a beautiful picture before us of the mind of Christ and His plan and purpose for his children.

All right. The last thing I want to discuss is the matter of interpretation of Genesis. Many liberal writers and expositors have taken the road of an allegorical approach to Genesis. Now, when I say an allegorical approach, what I mean by that is because they do not believe the Genesis record to be the authoritative and historically accurate. They spiritualize its interpretation, giving it a symbolic representation.

So, for example, Adam is not considered a real person, but rather he is a symbolic represent, a representation of all men. Or the fall of man was not an actual act of disobedience that led to sin entering the world and spiritual death upon all men. But rather it's a figurative expression of the common experiences that all men face.

This type of interpretation must be rejected by you and me. If you are a serious student of the Bible, this type of interpretation has no place in our thoughts or hearts, because it undermines the Word of God as being literal, factually accurate and authoritative.

Now, someone might point out that Paul used an allegory in [Galatians 4:24](#) where it says where he says, "Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar."

This passage refers to the story of Hagar and Sarah. And they will say, because Paul made this allegory, that it means we can apply this approach to Scripture. Now to that I would respond that first in context, Paul understands that these were real people, and the events he describes were actual events that happened.

Second, Paul was drawing a spiritual application from these real people and this actual event. Therefore, Paul is making an allegorical application, not making an allegorical interpretation. There is a big difference. Now, if you've been paying attention to the lessons on interpretation, I think you know that we will be taking a literal, historical, grammatical, cultural interpretation of Genesis the same as we will be doing all through the Bible.

But that isn't to say that we won't draw spiritual applications or identifying types and antitypes as we discussed the old paths. It just means that the emphasis is going to be on the actual people, places, and events and the significant significance that they mean to God's overall plan in the world.

Well, thanks for sticking with me through this long introduction. Hopefully you got something out of it, or I gave you some things to think about as we enter Genesis 1:1 next week. Are you ready? I know I am. That's going to be quite the journey.

Until then friends, get out to church this Sunday. Don't be the lost sheep without a shepherd. You may think you're a lone ranger, but you need the love and support of a church family, even if it is as crazy as your actual family.

Until we meet on the old paths, I pray that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment, that you may approve things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.