

Robert Vannoy, Old Testament History, Lecture 4

Early Chronology, Creation (Gen. 1:1-2:3)

4. The Numbers Introduced into These Genealogies may Give an Impression of Having Chronological Significance but in Reality They Have No Bearing on Chronology

We were looking at the propositions developed by William Henry Green, B. B. Warfield in their discussion in the two articles that were mentioned in the last class hour. Now I've given you summaries of their articles in four propositions the last of which was, "the numbers introduced into these genealogies may give an impression of having chronological significance but in reality they have no bearing on chronology. They simply serve to indicate life span, and the age in which child bearing began."

5. If You Total the Years in Genesis 11 Using Them for the Purpose of Chronology then Shem Would Still be Living in the Time of Abraham and the Flood to Abraham would be 292 Years.

So picking up from that point let's go onto 5. "If you total the years, in Genesis 11 using them for the purpose of chronology then Shem would still be living in the time of Abraham, and from the flood to Abraham would be 292 years." In other words, if you use the Genesis 11 genealogy for chronological purposes and work down the genealogy in this kind of fashion here's Shem. Then Shem gives birth to a son if you add these up, over periods of time, and if you total that up you get 292 years. Now that seems very unlikely from the biblical record to have worked this way if you use the genealogy for a non-gap-chronology which was often done from Noah to Abraham. We'd start here with Shem after the flood, 2 years after the flood. Shem gives birth to Arphaxad which we discussed in the last class hour. So, you take the 2 and then add 35, 30, 34, 30, 38 and you step it

on down. You have ten links there; the total would come out to the point when Abraham was born 292 years later. Now, this 1656 years is on the assumption that you have behind that Genesis 5 from Adam to Noah. Then you step it on down from there and it would be only 292 years from the flood to Abraham.

Now, reflect a minute on the biblical material about Abraham, he's pulled out of the Ur of Chaldees, out of a heathen background and told to go to Haran eventually told to go down into the land of Canaan. The Bible gives no indication of others from the ark still living. Noah, on this basis, would have been alive well into the time of Abraham because Noah lived 350 years after the flood and Shem himself, Noah's son, would have outlived Abraham. Since Abraham was 175 years old when he died. Shem gave birth to Arphaxad two years after the flood and lived for 500 years beyond that. And almost every one of these individuals, in fact every one of them would have been alive during the lifetime of Abraham if you use all those links all the way down through. We don't get any indication in the Bible that that was the picture during Abraham's time.

6. 290 Years Before Abraham who was about 2000 BC There's No Evidence of a Flood in Mesopotamia

I'm going to go a bit further. The next problem is 290 years before the time of Abraham who was approximately 2000 B.C; there's no evidence of a flood in Mesopotamia of the scale indicated by the Genesis flood account. We've discovered in the village settlements in Mesopotamia, in the cities, the civilizations, by the successive layers that can be traced back and there's no indication of an interruption of a flood. There are flood deposits but they are local little things. One time here and another time somewhere else. Not any kind of general flood that affected all civilization within 290 years but even prior to that. But the point is if you go back you have civilizations fairly well established by 3000 B.C. in Mesopotamia and you can trace the successive developments of that

civilization without any interruptions. The same is true in Egypt, Egypt can be traced back in their civilizations even longer than the 3000 B.C., in fact 4000 B.C. or so. Yet there is no indication of interruption of the flood. You just don't have the time if you want to place that flood in that sort of historical period. Only 292 years between Noah and Abraham, you don't have anything back about 2300 B.C.

Warfield says, page 247 of "the two genealogies but particularly this last one there is a symmetrical arrangement in groups of ten both ten links Genesis 5 and Genesis 11 is indicative of their compression. And for all we know instead of twenty generations and 2000 years measuring the interval between creation and the birth of Abraham, 200 generations and something like 20,000 years or even 2,000 generations and something like 200,000 years may have intervened." Now he's not trying to set a date, in fact Warfield really thinks as far as the antiquity of some of these things its less far back then some other people do. But what he is establishing is the principle that you can't set that from the biblical information. You can't specify well it was at this state or it could only go to this limit and couldn't go to that limit. It was all speculative because of the nature of the material you're working with. The Bible does not give us the data to place dates either on the creation events or the flood. Those are the two points, which are the crucial points.

Warfield's Conclusion – Scripture Data Leave Us Wholly Without Guidance in Estimating the Time which Elapsed from Creation to the Flood

So he says, "in a word the scriptural data will leave us wholly without guidance in estimating the time which elapsed between the creation of the world and the deluge and between the deluge and the life of Abraham. So far as the scriptural assertions are concerned, we may suppose any length of time to have intervened between these events, which may otherwise be reasonable." That's a key statement, and I think that's the heart of the issue. As far as the Scripture is

concerned, we may suppose any length of time to have intervened between these events, which may otherwise be reasonable. In other words, if you want to establish a date for creation, if you want to establish a date for the flood, you're going to have to do that with data other than biblical data. Whatever that other data may suggest that is the evidence that you have to go on. It's not a theological issue, it's not a problem of biblical interpretation, *per se* because the biblical materials don't address it. It's only if you are going to force this genealogical material into a chronological purpose that you can have the Scripture addressing this issue. Since it doesn't, then you have to settle the problem with extra-biblical data, whatever that may be.

Of course, I'm sure you are aware when you get into the question you get the young earth people and the old earth people which isn't so much speaking about the date of the origin of man, but the date of creation. At what point in time did man appear in the earth compared to when the earth was created is a whole other question. But the young earth people and the old earth people argue and get into flood geology versus more traditional attempts at interpreting the geological strata of the earth and what the kinds of time frames are involved in that. I think that debate is certainly legitimate but it has to be carried on its own merits. It's not a theological question or exegetical question. We'll come back to that a bit later. For this point I think that what Warfield and Green are saying to me is what is significant. These questions of the date of creation and date of the flood are not theological issues. They cannot be settled by biblical data. Therefore, it's an open question. Because it's an open question, I think that we need to be very careful about making someone's view of dates of creation or dates of the flood some kind of test of orthodoxy or biblical faithfulness. Scripture doesn't address it; therefore, it's not a theological question.

7. Universal Flood?

I'm inclined to say that Genesis 6 and 9 presents a global flood but I'm not inclined to conclude that all the earth was covered because there you get into an argument of what the term "all" means. Is it "all" within a circumscribed frame of reference? We will look at some texts that will follow that out because there are other places that say when Joseph was administering the food to Egypt, it says that "all the nations of the earth came to him for food." That's the same kind of phraseology that is used with the flood. Now would we say there were people coming from China to buy food from Joseph? I don't think so. I think it's all the countries within the eastern Mediterranean region. So I think you have to be careful what you base an argument on for the global flood. We will discuss that later.

If there was a global flood, then I think the next question is geologically speaking where's the evidence for it in the strata? I can't tell you that. I have not ever seen anyone point to the geological evidence for that other than the flood geologists, like Whitcomb and Morris, claiming its most popular advocates for that who say the entire crust of the earth with all the strata are to be explained by the one year flood. Then there's a question whether that is a convincing argument. Again that's a scientific matter not a biblical one again. There's nothing in Genesis 6-9 that talks about flood geology. So then, when you argue that it's not a theological issue and that issue it's an argument between geologists and how they interpret the strata, how they were deposited, what evidence supports that conclusion, and what conclusions one can draw from that evidence; it is up for question. We'll come back to that, I'm not going to discuss that in any detail because I'm not a geologist. There's where you get yourself at the mercy of experts. But I have read some of that material and I'm inclined to think the flood geology has weaknesses and it doesn't really hold. Where is the evidence? I'm implying that perhaps its way back and maybe evidence has been lost in the course

of time with erosion and various factors that we just don't have. While we can't point to the strata and say here's the flood; that doesn't mean, at least to me, that there wasn't a flood. I think there was on the basis of Scripture.

I would go with this last statement of Warfield's "we may suppose any length of time to have intervened which may otherwise appear reasonable." So whatever evidence there is that can be turned up scientifically addressing that issue is valid as long as it rests on a good basis. So, the Bible doesn't address the issue and any conclusion you draw is going to have to be based on extra-biblical evidence. You can take that evidence wherever it leads you.

8. Does the Old Earth view Open Up to Evolutionary Theory?

Student comment: Well isn't that opening up to evolutionary theory or origins?

Vannoy's response: I don't think so, I think that the assumption has often been that if you allow for long periods of time the reason for doing it is to accommodate the evolutionists. I think some reverse the thing and say that there weren't long periods of time proving the evolutionary theory failed. But, on the other hand, you cannot say, just because there are long periods of time it doesn't mean you must accept evolution. I don't accept evolution and there are many others who don't yet who do accept long periods of time for the presence of man on earth and yet reject evolutionary theory.

Student comment: In a sense, you are giving them the grounds for the argument.

Vannoy's response: That's just one factor: time. But it's by no means the only factor. There are a lot of other things that have to work together.

Student comment: Is this genealogy unique, by that I mean how does it compare to others from this period? Would readers have understood this to have gaps?

9. Vannoy's Response: Don't say more or less than Scripture

Vannoy's response: I think you could say that, see until scientific discovery began to examine things like strata in the earth and to get ideas about time and, of course, evolutionary theory arose, until all those questions arose nobody ever really paid that much attention to these things. In other words, the scientific data and I'm not including evolutionary but scientific data has compelled people to look closer at the biblical material and to reflect on it more and I think that has certainly been a factor in coming to an understanding that this doesn't necessarily mean a non-gap-chronology. You don't want science to rule over Scripture in an unwarranted way but on the other hand, scientific developments can be a motivation to take a closer look at Scripture and see exactly what it says. When you look at Scripture then you have to be careful not to make it say either more or less than it actually says. You should not read things into it and make assumptions that are invalid.

Let's look at what it actually says. And when you look at the terminology that is used, "son," "bear" and "beget" and you look at other genealogies and see the general character of biblical genealogies, you see it is designed to trace line of descent. Hence, the general character is compression not a full or complete listing, then I think that is a natural conclusion. We need not force these genealogies into just ten links. In fact I think that you have king lists in Babylon which would be much later than this. But as far as I'm aware, the interest in line of descent is something uniquely biblical in this period of time.

B. A few Additional Considerations: Egyptian and Mesopotamian Cultures Back to 3000-5000 BC

B. on your sheet is, "A few additional considerations." Some of this we have already touched on. But first, just for sake of argument, if you take the

traditional date of creation that comes out of using these genealogies for chronological purposes at about 4000 B.C. there is a conflict in that we know that there were developed civilizations in Egypt and Mesopotamia at 3000 B.C. From these civilizations, at 3000, you know that both the flood and the confusion of language at the tower of Babel had to have taken place prior to that because there wasn't any uniformity of language in those Mesopotamian cultures or Egyptian cultures. So all that had to happen after the flood and the confusion of tongues at the Tower of Babel had to have taken place prior to that. Then if you take a non-gap chronology and chart, of Genesis 5, the same thing we did with Genesis 11 a minute ago, from Adam to Noah and you step that down, to creation at 0, then you're going to come up to the flood at 1656. So if you have 3000 years here, and at 1656 you're already at the flood and the present is 4656 so you already don't have enough time. I've used the most conservative possible figures. So there is just no way you can fit it in. Now do you then conclude that there is a conflict between Scripture and historical knowledge? I don't think so. There were village settlements in Mesopotamia as early as 5000 B.C. and Jericho dates back to 8000 B.C. There is no evidence of an intervening flood. What's the conclusion, not that there's a conflict between science and Scripture but that this is not the proper way to use these genealogies. They are not intended to serve as chronologies.

1. Early Inadequate Attempts to Harmonize the Bible and Geological Science

Now back in the late 1800s people faced this problem initially, in some interesting ways, this book, it's a very anti-Christian book called *The History of the Warfare of Science with Theology and Christendom* by Andrew Dixon White. He sort of summarizes here all the ways in which science and the Bible had clashed and of course, he's convinced as a scientist who thinks he has proved the Bible to be unreliable. But he discusses this thing of chronology on page 201 of his book, *The History of the Warfare of Science with Theology and Christendom*.

He says, “It became evident that whatever system of Scripture chronology was adopted, Egypt was the seed of a flourishing civilization at a period before the flood of Noah, and that no such flood had interrupted it. It was soon clear that civilization of Egypt began earlier than the time assigned for the creation of man, even according to the most liberal sacred chronologists.” See that was working on the old kind of chronology system utilizing these genealogies for chronology and people began to become aware of that.

Well, what did they do with it? He cites one interesting example. On page 232 he says, that “a Mr. Southhall showing great ingenuity in learning in his book published in 1875, titled the *Recent Origin of the World*, grapples with the difficulties presented by the early date of Egyptian civilization. The key note of his argument is this statement made by an eminent Egyptologist at a period before archeological discoveries were well understood that ‘Egypt lacks the idea of a rude Stone Age, a poly Stone Age, a Bronze Age, an Iron Age, to scorn.’ Mr. Southhall’s method was substantially of that of the late Mr. Gossa in genealogy. Mr. Gossa as the readers of this work may remember felt obliged in the supposed interest of Genesis to urge that safety to men’s souls might be found in believing that 6000 years ago the Almighty for some inscrutable purpose suddenly set Niagara pouring very near the spot where it is pouring now, laid and bury the various strata, sprinkled the fossils through them like plums through pudding, scratched the glacial brooms upon the rocks, did a vast multitude of things subtle and cunning, little and great in all parts of the world, required to delude geologists of modern times into the conviction that all these things were the results of steady process through long epics.” In other words, creation with the appearance of age. There was a geological solution to the geological problem. White says, “on a similar plan, Mr. Southhall proposed in the very beginning of his book as a final solution to the problem, that the declaration of Egypt was in high civilization, in the time of Mena, with its racist classes and institutions, arrangements, language

and monuments, all indicating an evolution through a vast period of history was a sudden creation, which came fully made from the hand of the Creator to use his own words, ‘the Egyptians had no stone age they were born civilized.’”

So that’s just one illustration of an early attempt to try to harmonize. I don’t think it is very convincing. The tragedy of the thing is you’re not forced to that. You don’t have to do that kind of a thing because it is based on a misunderstanding of the purpose of why this material in Genesis 5 and Genesis 11, was placed in Scripture. I think Warfield and William Henry Green saying this is not a theological issue and that the Scripture does not tell us this, have eliminated all these kinds of sophistry and not only, as far as I’m concerned, with the civilization issue with respect to time, but also with respect to the geological strata.

2. Table of Nations – Gen. 10

That’s one additional consideration, and a second that is very closely related to it. In Genesis 10, you have a table of nations, which traces the geographical distribution of people from Noah’s three sons: Shem, Ham and Japheth. Now interestingly enough, Genesis 10 is put between the end of the flood and before the tower of Babel, even though what’s described in Genesis 10 has material pertaining to conditions subsequent to the tower of Babel. In other words, all these nations, languages and tongues didn’t exist prior to Babel, but the point of including it prior to chapter 11 is simply that at the end of chapter 9, you have reference to Shem, Ham and Japheth, the three sons of Noah and here it’s going to trace out what the outcome of the three sons of Noah was and how different people were settled in different places as descendants of Shem, Ham and Japheth. Look, for example, at Genesis 10:21 and following. “Sons were born to Shem, whose older brother was Japheth, Shem was the ancestor of all the sons of Eber. The sons of Shem: Elam, Asshur, Arphaxad, Lud, and Aram. The sons of Aram:

Uz, Hul, Gether and Meshech. Arphaxad was the father of Shelah and Shelah was the father of Eber.” From Shem comes such peoples as Asshur and Elam, for example, those were groups of people that lived long before the time of Abraham. They had their own languages, they were developed as peoples and nations with languages that differ.

Again, if you take this non-gap-chronology of Genesis 11, you only have 292 years between the end of the flood and the birth of Abraham. How could all of these nations and peoples and languages have developed in only 292 years? It just doesn’t fit there. The Elamites were a strong people long before 2000 B.C. as were the people of Asshur.

3. The Bible does not combine the numbers of the years in the genealogies.

A third consideration: the Bible does not combine the numbers of the years in the genealogies. In other words, it doesn’t add up from Shem to Abraham giving 292 years. It doesn’t do that. It doesn’t give you a total. It seems to me if the purpose was chronology you would get a total. In the census, the figure of numbers I have eluded to in the last class hours you get how many males are 20 years older and up in each of the tribes and at the end you get a total. It does total them up. But here you don’t have that. So I think that also suggests that that was not the intent.

4. Matthew 1:2-17 Genealogy of Christ

There’s another problem in Matthew 1:2-17 I believe you get that original brief heading, “Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the son of Abraham” expanded into 42 links divided into three units of 14 each. So it’s schematic. If you compare, for example, verse 8. “Asa was the father of Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat father of Jehoram, Jehoram the father of Uzziah,” if you compare verse 8 with the Old Testament you see that three kings are passed over and Jehoram is said to be the

father of Uzziah. Uzziah in reality was the great great grandson of Jehoram. So again the use of the “begat” must mean, “became the ancestor of.” But then that adds another implication because if you go to verse 17, you read “Thus there were 14 generations in all from Abraham to David. And 14 from David to the Exile in Babylon and 14 from the exile to Christ.” The “all” there, I don’t think meant that these are “all” the generations that lived. It must mean all those enumerated by Matthew in this schematic arrangement. I don’t know what else you can do with it, because you can clearly compare verse 8 with the Old Testament in 2 Kings 8:24. There you find that Jehoram’s son in 2 Kings 8:24 was not Uzziah, but was Ahaziah, and Joash was the son of Ahaziah and Ammaziah was the son of Joash and the Uzziah comes as the son of Ammaziah.

III. The World Before Abraham

Let’s go on to Roman numeral III. “The world before Abraham. The primeval history from Genesis 1 through chapter 11.” Just a couple of comments generally about Genesis 1 to 11. In Genesis 1 to 11 we are concerned with events prior to otherwise recorded history. When you get to Genesis 12, you are in the time of Abraham. Abraham lives at a time when biblical history can be correlated with secular history. He lives in a time where we have sources other than the Bible--historical sources. But in Genesis 1 to 11, we are dealing with things that happened in the time prior to otherwise recorded history, outside the Bible. At the same time, were dealing in Genesis 1 to 11 with some of the most basic questions of human existence. In particular chapter 1 to 3, with creation and the fall, and then also in chapter 11 with the development of different languages, and the distribution of people. So I think we can say that particularly with Genesis 1 to 3, but also generally with Genesis 1 to 11 that we have some of the most important chapters in the entire Bible.

A. The Creation of the Universe in Genesis 1:1-2:3

So, let's begin to look at it and we'll begin to deal here with the biblical text. A. is "The creation of the universe in Genesis 1:1 to 2:3." Just to comment on that particular division of material 1:1 to 2:3 I didn't make the break at the end of chapter 1. I carried it over into chapter 2 to the third verse. As you're aware I'm sure, chapter and verse divisions are not something original to the text, they have been inserted subsequently and in many cases you can find better breaking points than the ones that have traditionally been followed. A better dividing place for the first section of Genesis is 2:3 the reason for that is verse 4 of Genesis begins with a phrase that becomes the phrase that structures the rest of the book. That phrase is "these are the generations of," in the King James Version.

Toledoth 10-fold Structure of Gen. 2:4-Genesis 50

In the NIV which I am looking at, it says, "this is the account of the heavens and the earth." What you have as far as the structure of the book of Genesis is you have creation in 1:1 to 2:3 and you could say that is the first section of the book. The second section of the book would be 2:4 to the end of the book and that is divided into 10 sections. Each one is introduced with the phrase "these are the generations of." The first one of those sections begins there at Genesis 2:4 "these are the generations of the heaven and earth." The second section begins at 5:1 "these are the generations of Adam" and 6:9 is the third one, "these are the generations of Noah." Now the NIV says, "this is the account of Noah." We'll discuss that phrase later. But my point here is structurally speaking the book of Genesis falls into those blocks of material introduced by that phrase regularly through the book. So it's better to make that phrase you're dividing point in each section. Not only is that the dividing point of the section, it's sort of set off from the rest of the book as an introductory section of great importance, the creation. So you have the creation of the heavens and the earth in Genesis 1:1 to 2:3 and then

you have the generations you might say that follow it to 2:4 to the end of the book in 10 sections of generations.

1. General Teaching about God

1. under A. is “General teaching about God” You notice what I am going to do here in 1., 2., and 3. is just give you a summarization of “general teaching about God,” “The general teaching about the universe,” and then, “The general teaching about mankind” that’s found in the first chapter of Genesis. I’m not going to dwell on this in any great detail but just give some general principles in these areas as we find in Genesis 1. I might say before doing that, the Wellhausen School and the JEDP analysis assign Genesis 1 to the P document, which is the latest material because it has a very sophisticated God concept in Genesis chapter 1 that couldn’t have been earlier but had to be late. P material is written in the Exile or even after the Exile according to the critical school. Genesis 2 is assigned to J, which would be the earliest so you move from sophisticated to the most primitive of the material. The reason I said that is that I want to discuss that issue when we get to chapter 2. I just mentioned it at this point.

a. God’s Existence is Assumed

All right under “General teaching about God.” a. “God’s existence is assumed.” That’s interesting in itself, if you compare biblical material with extra-biblical mythologies, what you find in extra-biblical mythologies are stories that tell how the gods came into existence themselves. The story that is most often compared with Genesis is the Enuma Elish. We’ll talk more about that later, you’ll read about it in Finegan. The Enuma Elish is a Babylonian creation story and in it you have two principles of living, uncreated matter, Tiamat and Epsu. It’s from Tiamat and Epsu who were the mother and the father of all the gods that this whole Pantheon of Babylonian deities are born and then you get all the family and

so forth that develop out of that. In Genesis, God's existence is assumed and you contrast that then with extra-biblical mythologies and there's an enormous difference because what you read in Genesis 1:1 is that beautiful majestic statement, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." See it doesn't tell you anything about how God came into existence. His existence is assumed. "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth."

b. Monotheism is Presupposed

b. "Monotheism is presupposed," and in that sense it is taught. I wouldn't say there is any explicit theoretical kind of teaching about monotheism in Genesis 1 it's assumed so in that sense, it is taught. I already mentioned extra-biblical mythology tell of many different gods. You learn of wars and intrigues, battles, gods killing each other, and all that kinds of things. You don't have any hint of that in Genesis 1, there are no other gods mentioned and it seems like there is no possibility of any other gods. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."

"Elohim" – singular [God] / plural [gods] – Context determines meaning

Now the interesting thing is the term "God" itself in Hebrew is "Elohim." The word *Elohim* has a plural ending. It's a plural noun form that designates God. Depending on the context in which that word appears it can be translated either singular or plural. See the very same word *Elohim* could be used in the context of the gods of the Canaanites. Then you would translate it plural with a small "g". But that term when used of Israel's god even though it's a plural noun is used with a singular verb and singular modifiers which goes against, you might say, the structure of the language. You would choose a singular verb with a singular modifier in that first statement. "In the beginning, God created" the verb is serving as a singular not a plural verb. It's not, "in the beginning gods created," even

though the noun is a plural form. “In the beginning, God created.” It is a singular verb and when modifiers are attached to the noun. *Elohim* [God] takes singular modifiers.

Now I see my time is up. Let me just make a brief statement and we’ll dismiss. Some understand that plurality to suggest plurality within the godhead but it is better taken as a plural of majesty. We’ll continue on next time.

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