

Dr. Jeffrey Hudon, Biblical Archaeology, Session 4, Primeval History [Genesis 1-11] Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Hudon, Biblical Archaeology, Session 4, Primeval History [Genesis 1-11], Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Jeffrey Hudon's lecture on Biblical Archaeology, Session 4, explores archaeological evidence related to Genesis 1-11. He examines a Sumerian cylinder seal possibly depicting the Fall, an early temple at En Gedi potentially dedicated to a sacred tree, and various proposed locations for the Garden of Eden. The lecture also discusses the Noahic flood, comparing biblical accounts with the Gilgamesh Epic and considering archaeological findings, and concludes with an analysis of the Tower of Babel and Sumerian king lists. The overarching theme is the search for archaeological correlations to events described in the Bible's primeval history, acknowledging both supportive and inconclusive evidence. The lecture highlights the challenges and complexities of interpreting archaeological findings within a theological framework.

**2. 21 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of
Dr. Hudon, Biblical Archaeology, Session 4 – Double click icon
to play in Windows media player or go to the
Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link
there (Introduction & Languages → Archaeology).**



**Hudon_BibArch_Ses
sion04.mp3**

3. Briefing Document

Okay, here is a briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from Dr. Jeffrey Hudon's lecture on Primeval History (Genesis 1-11), drawing on specific quotes from the provided text:

Briefing Document: Biblical Archaeology - Primeval History (Genesis 1-11)

Source: Excerpts from "Hudon_BibArch_EN_Ses04.pdf"

Overview:

Dr. Hudon's lecture focuses on exploring the intersection of archaeology and the early biblical narratives of Genesis 1-11, often referred to as "primeval history." He emphasizes that while most of the course will focus on later periods, he wants to touch on the early periods, noting: "Most of this course will focus on the later periods of biblical history, but I do want to touch on primeval history." He aims to examine isolated archaeological finds that may shed light on this period. It's important to note that Hudon acknowledges that the interpretations he gives are not always certain.

Key Themes and Ideas:

1. The Sumerian Cylinder Seal and the Fall:

- Hudon presents a Sumerian cylinder seal dating back to roughly 2200 BC, depicting "two seated figures...seated facing a tree," with a serpent standing behind each figure. He suggests this seal "seems to indicate some recollection of the scene in Genesis chapter three, the fall of humanity." The seal is interpreted as possibly preserving a memory of the serpent tempting the first humans and their eating of the fruit of the tree of knowledge. This is presented as possibly the earliest non-biblical corroboration of the Genesis 3 account.
- He observes the tree as "an object, apparently, of veneration or worship", suggesting the connection between worship and trees.

1. The Early Temple at En Gedi and Tree Worship:

- Hudon discusses an early temple site at En Gedi, dating to the Chalcolithic period (4th-5th millennium BC). This isolated structure, with a distinctive broad-room design and an unusual basin, is interpreted as having possibly "originally a tree that was worshipped at this isolated site."

- He draws a connection to later biblical mentions of "worship of trees or poles, asherah poles. And under every green tree, again, the statement made in the Bible, people worshipped and practiced pagan Canaanite religions."
- He acknowledges that he cannot prove this, however, "I believe, and I think others do believe, that this was actually originally a tree that was worshipped at this isolated site."

1. **The Elusive Location of the Garden of Eden:**

- Hudon addresses the question of the Garden of Eden's location, acknowledging its difficulty. He states that many locations have been proposed: "basically, to locate the Garden of Eden, you can take a dart and throw it at a map of the earth."
- He mentions the four rivers of Eden (Pishon, Gihon, Tigris, and Euphrates), specifically the Pishon and Gihon as "not decisively known."
- He suggests the northern mountainous region of Iraq and Iran may hold relevant place names, and also notes the possibility that a dry riverbed in Saudi Arabia, "the Kuwaiti River," was the Pishon, as suggested by archaeologist James Sauer.
- The Gihon spring near Jerusalem is considered unlikely as a major river source.

1. **The Noah's Ark Narrative and Flood Traditions:**

- Hudon highlights the theological significance of the Ark having "one entrance," viewing it as "an early image of Christ being the door of salvation."
- He acknowledges the Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic, specifically Utnapishtim's boat and that "they clearly are based on a single tradition with variants; again, we think of the Gilgamesh Epic as perhaps embellished and changed over the centuries."
- He emphasizes that the flood tradition is present in "most ancient societies and ancient cultures...and that certainly can't be by chance."
- He mentions an ongoing Andrews University expedition near Mount Ararat, attempting to find physical evidence for the ark, stating that "there have been lots of people that have climbed Ararat that found worked wood, hewn wood scattered over various parts of the mountain, which had to be brought up by hand or deposited there."

1. **The Symbolism of the Rainbow and Covenants:**

- Hudon discusses the rainbow covenant, explaining that “the rainbow was God's sign that he would never again allow a flood to envelop the earth.”
- He links this covenant to Mesopotamian iconography, where the bow in covenants is pointed towards the greater party: “the curve of that bow is always pointed to the greater party,”. He interprets the rainbow’s curve as pointing to God and the string pointing to Earth, reflecting the relationship in the Genesis narrative.

1. **The Neolithic Period, the Flood, and Unexplained Disappearances:**

- Hudon discusses how the Neolithic period, “you have walled cities farming pottery, some sort of structure, polity, perhaps chiefdoms,” represents the Antediluvian world. He also states, “The Neolithic period is also interesting because that is, again, replaced by a totally different material culture...What happened to them? They just disappear.” He suggests that the end of the Neolithic period could possibly be linked to a global flood: “Could that have something to do with a global flood?”
- He mentions that Woolley’s findings of a thick silt layer in Ur was disproven, although it was initially considered evidence of the flood.

1. **The Nahal Mishmar Hoard and its Significance:**

- Hudon discusses the discovery of a cache of copper artifacts in a cave in Nahal Mishmar, dating to the Chalcolithic period. He notes that these artifacts are roughly contemporary with the temple at En Gedi and that these items “were clearly put there with the idea that the people would come back and retrieve them.”
- The abandonment of the En Gedi temple and the non-retrieval of the Nahal Mishmar hoard, he suggests, “certainly gives rise to questions on whether this has anything to do with early biblical events.”

1. **The Tower of Babel and the Origin of Languages:**

- Hudon presents the Tower of Babel narrative as “a polemic against the constant belief of humanity's attempt to somehow reach heaven and divine status.”
- He highlights the biblical explanation of the confusion of languages, in contrast to anthropological theories: “Anthropologists will make all sorts of claims about how

to explain the rise of humanity and the origin of humanity apart from God. One thing they cannot explain is language.”

- He emphasizes that "Babel" is a play on words, connecting it to "Balaal" meaning "confusion".

1. Sumerian King Lists and Extended Lifespans:

- Hudon introduces the Sumerian king lists, noting that they list kings with extremely long lifespans before and after their "flood", and states that "these kings had lists of kings that dated before and after what they called the Flood."
- He sees a possible connection to the extended lifespans in the Genesis genealogies, pointing to the parallel with "the Toledoth, the genealogies in Genesis, where we also have lengthy lifespans, hundreds of years," while acknowledging the possibility of hyperbole in the Sumerian lists.
- He also observes the lifespans "continue to decrease" over time after the fall.

Conclusion:

Dr. Hudon's lecture provides a fascinating exploration of how archaeology may shed light on the narratives in Genesis 1-11. While he emphasizes that conclusive evidence is often elusive, he presents intriguing possibilities linking archaeological finds to these foundational biblical stories, while also stressing areas where archaeology cannot offer definitive answers. He presents these correlations with a view of the Bible as a reliable historical document.

4. Hudon, Biblical Archaeology, Session 4, Primeval History [Genesis 1-11]

Primeval History: A Study Guide to Genesis 1-11

Quiz

Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. Describe a Sumerian cylinder seal and explain its significance in relation to Genesis 3.
2. What is the significance of the En Gedi temple, and what was likely worshipped at this site?
3. According to Dr. Hudon, what are the challenges in locating the Garden of Eden?
4. What was James Sauer's theory about one of the rivers of Eden, and how was it discovered?
5. What is the theological significance of the single entrance to Noah's Ark, according to Dr. Hudon?
6. Briefly discuss the similarities and differences between the biblical Noah story and the Gilgamesh Epic.
7. What is the significance of the wood found on Mount Ararat, and what is the current research team from Andrews University doing?
8. How is the symbolism of the rainbow explained in relation to Mesopotamian covenant practices?
9. What is notable about the shift in material culture following the Neolithic period and what connection might it have to the biblical narrative?
10. Briefly describe the significance of the Sumerian king lists and their potential relationship to Genesis genealogies.

Quiz Answer Key

1. A Sumerian cylinder seal is a small, rolling pin-like object that, when rolled over clay, leaves an impression. One particular seal dating to around 2200 BC depicts two seated figures facing a tree with a standing serpent behind each figure, which may be a recollection of the Fall in Genesis 3.

2. The En Gedi temple is an isolated, very early temple dating to the Chalcolithic period, discovered in the 1950s. It is believed that a sacred tree was worshipped at the site, possibly an early form of the pagan tree worship mentioned later in the Bible.
3. Locating the Garden of Eden is difficult because the Pishon and Gihon rivers mentioned in Genesis are not conclusively known. While the Tigris and Euphrates are identifiable, the precise course of these rivers may have changed since that time.
4. James Sauer suggested that a large, dry riverbed stretching across Saudi Arabia, called the Kuwaiti River, may be the Pishon River from Genesis 2, and this was discovered through satellite photos taken during the first Gulf War.
5. The single entrance to Noah's Ark is significant because, according to Dr. Hudon, it is interpreted as an early image of Christ as the singular "door of salvation."
6. The Noah story in the Bible and the Gilgamesh Epic both feature a great flood and a boat, but there are differences, such as the motivation for the flood and the character names. The general consensus among many is that they likely derive from a single tradition with variations.
7. The worked wood found on Mount Ararat, where no trees grow, is significant because it suggests the wood was transported there. Currently, a research team is surveying the area around the mountain to analyze pottery and study migration patterns from the region.
8. The symbolism of the rainbow, according to Dr. Hudon, mirrors Mesopotamian covenant practices where the curve of a bow is pointed towards the greater party. The rainbow's curve points to heaven (God), and the bowstring points to the earth (humanity), reflecting God's covenant with Noah.
9. Following the Neolithic period, there is a shift to a completely different material culture, with a different kind of pottery and architecture. The people of the Neolithic period seem to disappear from the archaeological record, which raises questions about the possibility of a global flood impacting their society.
10. The Sumerian king lists found in Mesopotamia list kings and their extraordinarily long lifespans before and after a flood. These long lifespans potentially connect with the lengthy lifespans described in the genealogies of Genesis, but this connection may involve hyperbole.

Essay Questions

1. Discuss the archaeological evidence presented in the lecture and its potential implications for understanding Genesis 1-11. How do these findings support or challenge the traditional interpretations of the text?
2. Compare and contrast the themes of the Fall, the Flood, and the Tower of Babel in Genesis 1-11. How are these themes reflected in the archaeological evidence presented, and what common human desires and motivations do they reveal?
3. Evaluate the role of the Mesopotamian context in understanding Genesis 1-11. How do the cylinder seal, the Gilgamesh Epic, and covenant practices illuminate the biblical text, and what are the limitations of relying on these sources?
4. Analyze the significance of the archaeological findings at En Gedi and Nahal Mishmar. How do these discoveries contribute to our understanding of the Chalcolithic period, and what questions do they raise about the people and events of that time?
5. Critically examine the role of the researcher and the researcher's worldview when interpreting the archaeological data in relation to the biblical text. How do perspectives on the Bible influence interpretations and conclusions?

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Antediluvian:** Referring to the time period before the biblical flood.
- **Asherah Poles:** Sacred poles or trees associated with the Canaanite goddess Asherah, often objects of pagan worship in the Bible.
- **Chalcolithic Period:** Also known as the Copper Age, a transitional period between the Neolithic and Bronze Ages, marked by the use of copper tools and weapons.
- **Cylinder Seal:** A small, cylindrical object typically made of stone, engraved with a design that could be rolled onto clay to create an impression, used for identification and authentication.
- **Covenant:** A formal agreement or treaty, often between a greater and lesser party; in the Bible, a binding agreement between God and humans.
- **En Gedi:** An archaeological site near the Dead Sea, mentioned in the Bible, with evidence of a very early temple from the Chalcolithic period.

- **Gilgamesh Epic:** An ancient Mesopotamian epic poem that includes a flood narrative featuring a character similar to Noah, named Utnapishtim.
- **Hejaz Mountains:** A mountain range located in the western region of Saudi Arabia, the possible source of the Pishon River.
- **Hyperbole:** Exaggerated statements or claims not meant to be taken literally, often used for emphasis or effect.
- **Libation:** The act of pouring out a liquid offering, often as a religious ritual.
- **Mesopotamia:** An ancient region in the Middle East between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, considered the cradle of civilization.
- **Nahal Mishmar:** A canyon near the Dead Sea where a cache of copper artifacts dating to the Chalcolithic period was discovered.
- **Neolithic Period:** Also known as the New Stone Age, a period of human history marked by the development of agriculture, settled communities, and polished stone tools.
- **Primeval History:** The early history of the world as described in the first eleven chapters of the Book of Genesis.
- **Shahr al-Arab:** The region where the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers converge before emptying into the Persian Gulf.
- **Sumer:** An ancient Mesopotamian civilization in the southern region of Mesopotamia known for its early writing system and cities.
- **Sumerian King Lists:** Tablets containing lists of Sumerian kings, their dynasties, and their reign lengths, often including very long lifespans.
- **Tel:** A mound or hill created by the accumulation of debris from human occupation over long periods, typical of archaeological sites in the Middle East.
- **Toledoth:** Hebrew word meaning "generations" or "descendants," referring to the genealogies or lists of ancestry in the Old Testament.
- **Toponym:** A place name.
- **Urartu:** The ancient name for the region surrounding Mount Ararat in eastern Turkey.

- **Ziggurat:** A massive stepped pyramid structure built in ancient Mesopotamia, often topped by a temple.

5. FAQs on Hudon, Biblical Archaeology, Session 4, Primeval History [Genesis 1-11], Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

FAQ: Archaeological Insights into Genesis 1-11

1. **What is the significance of the early Sumerian cylinder seal depicting two figures, a tree, and a serpent?** This cylinder seal, dating from around 2200 BC, depicts two seated figures (possibly male and female) facing a tree with an upright serpent behind each figure. This image resonates with the biblical account of the Fall in Genesis 3, where a serpent tempts Adam and Eve to eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, leading to the introduction of sin into the world. While not a direct representation, it suggests that the narrative of the Fall may have been a shared cultural memory in the ancient Near East. The seal's date precedes the traditional date of Adam.
2. **What is unique about the early temple discovered at En Gedi and what does it suggest?** The temple at En Gedi is an isolated structure dating back to the Chalcolithic period (4th or early 5th millennium BC). The temple features a broad-room design with stone wine basins, benches, and a courtyard containing a unique basin. It is believed that the basin was initially a place to worship a sacred tree. This ties into later biblical references to tree worship under every green tree, a common practice in ancient Canaanite religions, and may even connect to the tree from Genesis 3. This discovery is significant because there are no inscriptions to tell us who these people were, how their society was organized, and why they ultimately abandoned the site.

3. **How is the location of the Garden of Eden being approached from an archaeological perspective?** Locating the Garden of Eden is a difficult task. While the Bible mentions four rivers flowing from Eden – the Tigris, Euphrates, Pishon, and Gihon – only the Tigris and Euphrates are easily identifiable. There are theories that the Nile could be one of the other two, and that names and place names in northern Iraq and western Iran (a mountainous region) suggest the area may have been Eden. Satellite photos also revealed an ancient riverbed, the Kuwaiti River, that extended from the Hejaz Mountains to the Persian Gulf, which has been suggested as being the Pishon. There is no single consensus yet, and it's an ongoing area of archaeological investigation.
4. **What similarities exist between the biblical flood narrative and the Gilgamesh Epic?** Both the biblical account of Noah's Ark and the Gilgamesh Epic (specifically the story of Utnapishtim) share a common narrative of a great flood, the building of a large boat, and the salvation of a chosen few. Despite significant differences, the resemblances suggest that they stem from a single, earlier tradition. Many ancient cultures also have traditions of a massive flood. It's understood that these narratives changed over time.
5. **What is the current archaeological research regarding Mount Ararat and the Ark?** An Andrews University team is currently conducting an archaeological survey around Mount Ararat in eastern Turkey. They're studying the pottery found in the area and its migration patterns. Many people in the past have claimed that they found the ark on the mountain but those claims have been largely unfounded. The university team is using a scientific approach and collecting data with the hope that they might be able to discover more information about the story of the ark, or at least about peoples who inhabited the region.
6. **How does the symbolism of the rainbow relate to Mesopotamian covenant practices?** The rainbow in the Bible serves as a covenant sign between God and humanity, promising that God will not send a flood again. In Mesopotamian iconography, covenants between unequal parties are often depicted using a bow. The curve of the bow points towards the greater party, while the string points towards the lesser party. The rainbow, therefore, could be understood as the curve pointing towards heaven (God) and the line pointing towards Earth (humanity), drawing a visual parallel with the covenant relationship described in the Bible.

7. **What can be learned from the archaeological record regarding the period before and after a possible great flood?** Archaeological evidence shows a distinct change in material culture and the disappearance of established societies after the Neolithic period, prior to 4300 BC. Walled cities, pottery, and organized societies were prevalent before that period, but the groups responsible for them simply vanish from the archeological record and new people move in. This has lead some scholars to speculate about the possibility of a global flood, even though there is not enough direct evidence to prove that.
8. **How does the Tower of Babel account relate to the anthropological understanding of language?** The Tower of Babel story in Genesis 11 presents a theological explanation for the origin of multiple languages: God confounded the language of those building the tower, scattering humanity. This contrasts with anthropological attempts to understand language development through other means. Anthropologists cannot explain the origin of language and their alternative theories cannot explain the early age of linguistic development in human babies. The tower of Babel account is presented as a criticism of humanity's attempt to reach the heavens and divine status through its own efforts. Ziggurats, step pyramids like those in Babylon, may have been intended as similar attempts to reach the heavens.