

Dr. Robert Vannoy, Genesis, Session 7, Genesis 1 Literary Framework, Mesopotamian Creation Stories

Resources from NotebookLM

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

1. Abstract of Vannoy, Genesis, Session 7, Genesis 1 Literary Framework, Mesopotamian Creation Stories, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This lecture excerpt from Robert Vannoy's Old Testament History course examines the literary framework hypothesis of Genesis 1, arguing against its interpretation as a purely literary device rather than a historical account. The lecture contrasts the Genesis creation narrative with the Babylonian *Enuma Elish*, highlighting differences in their purposes and suggesting that the biblical account is not merely a derivative of the Babylonian story. Vannoy explores the implications of interpreting Genesis 1 literally versus allegorically and considers how the knowledge of creation was imparted to Moses. He also addresses claims of Babylonian influence and the views of scholars like Friedrich Delitzsch, who held a skeptical perspective on the Old Testament's historical reliability. The lecture concludes by emphasizing the reliability of Genesis 1 as a divinely inspired revelation.

2. 13 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Vannoy, Genesis, Session 7 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament → Pentateuch → Genesis).



**Vannoy_Genesis_Se
ssion07.mp3**

3. Briefing Document: Vannoy, Genesis, Session 7, Genesis 1 Literary Framework, Mesopotamian Creation Stories

Okay, here's a detailed briefing document summarizing the main themes and important ideas from the provided lecture excerpts by Robert Vannoy, focusing on Genesis 1, the literary framework hypothesis, and the Enuma Elish:

Briefing Document: Analysis of Robert Vannoy's Lecture on Genesis 1

I. Introduction:

This document summarizes a lecture by Robert Vannoy discussing the literary framework hypothesis of Genesis 1, the question of its historical accuracy, the origins of the knowledge within the chapter, and comparisons with Mesopotamian creation accounts, specifically the Enuma Elish.

II. Key Themes and Ideas:

A. The Literary Framework Hypothesis and Objections:

- **Definition:** The literary framework hypothesis posits that the "days" in Genesis 1 are not literal 24-hour periods, but rather a literary device used to present God's creative activity in an organized manner. This is seen by proponents as a way to reconcile the Genesis account with modern scientific findings.
- **Vannoy's Objections:** Vannoy raises several objections to this view, arguing it lacks textual support.
- **Lack of Textual Hint:** Vannoy argues, "I don't think there is anything in the text in Genesis 1 itself that gives us the slightest hint that the days are to be regarded simply as a literary form..." He contends that the chapter reads as a historical account of actual events.
- **Erosion of Historical Narrative:** He is concerned that allowing for literary interpretation in Genesis 1 could open the door to applying the same principle to other historical narratives in the Bible, undermining their historicity. He states, "...if you allow here what appears to be a historical description, to be really not a historical description but rather to be simply a literary form, then why can't that be said of many other narratives in the Bible that also present themselves as historical narratives?"

- **Exodus 20 and the Sabbath:** Vannoy's primary objection centers on the connection between the creation week and the commandment to observe the Sabbath in Exodus 20. He argues that if the Genesis days are merely a literary device, then the pattern of six days of work and one day of rest is based on a human literary creation, rather than God's actual activity. "It seems to me that implies that there is a reality to that activity of God. If you accept the framework view, then what you are really saying is that man is not following God in his pattern of six days of work and one day of rest, but man is just patterning himself on the basis of humanly devised literary form."
- **Newman's Perspective:** Vannoy references Robert Newman's view, acknowledging the potential existence of literary patterns in Genesis 1 but emphasizing that this does not negate the historicity of the sequence. Newman doesn't see the pattern itself as an indication that the account is merely a literary device, saying "the discovery of that pattern is not something that necessarily leads to the conclusion that it is simply a literary device, not something that necessarily portrays reality."
- **Summary of Vannoy's Objections:** Vannoy's overall concern is that the literary framework approach shifts the basis of truth from what God actually did to the literary choices of the author of Genesis. He believes it is a dangerous move that undermines the historical reliability of the Bible.

B. Creation with Apparent Age and Its Problems:

- **Argument:** The argument is that the earth and the universe were created with an appearance of age, including fossils and geological strata that imply a long history.
- **Vannoy's Rejection:** Vannoy rejects this argument, stating, "The problem that I have with that is that it proves too much." He argues that this concept can lead to a position where nothing can be known with certainty, possibly implying deception on God's part. He contends this argument can "...be applied in almost limitless ways to the point where you really can't know anything and it destroys all scientific investigation," and that the argument implies deceit on God's part.

C. How Genesis 1 Knowledge Was Imparted:

- **Multiple Methods of Scriptural Revelation:** Vannoy notes various ways that biblical writers received and recorded information, including direct communication from God, visions, and historical research.

- **Uncertainty Regarding Genesis 1:** The exact method by which the knowledge in Genesis 1 was communicated to Moses is unknown, but Vannoy believes that "...it is a revelation from God to us on how the world came to be and how man was created, and it's true and reliable." He emphasizes that the most important factor is that the Holy Spirit guided the writers and ensured accuracy.
- **Hypothetical Adaptation from Babylonian Sources:** Vannoy speculates about the possibility that Moses might have adapted a Babylonian creation account, removing polytheistic elements, with divine guidance. He states, "if it could be demonstrated, that Genesis 1 was the adaptation of a Babylonian account of creation, with polytheistic elements removed, and things of that sort changed...then we could say it is quite possible that God could have led Moses to utilize a tradition of that sort. Maintaining the parts of it that were true, discarding the rest, and this would be the Word of God." However, he emphasizes that this is only theoretical. He stresses that the crucial element is that the Holy Spirit inspired the writing of scripture to make it the written word of God.

D. Comparison with Mesopotamian Creation Accounts (Enuma Elish):

- **Discovery and Context:** Vannoy recounts the discovery of Babylonian creation texts in the late 19th century, which sparked considerable interest in comparing these accounts with the Genesis narrative.
- **Pan-Babylonian School:** Vannoy introduces Friedrich Delitzsch and the Pan-Babylonian school, which argued that biblical accounts are derived from and dependent on Babylonian ones. Delitzsch is quoted as saying that, "the Old Testament is full of deceptions of all kinds of veritable hodge-podge of erroneous and incredible, undependable figures..." This school viewed the Old Testament as a late and unreliable source.
- **Enuma Elish:** Vannoy explains that the main Babylonian creation story is known as the "Enuma Elish," which translates to "when on high". The consensus amongst scholars is that the original document dates from between 1700-2000 B.C., making it older than the biblical account.
- **Enuma Elish's Focus:** Vannoy points out, referencing Alexander Heidel's work, that the Enuma Elish is primarily an apologetic for the Babylonian god Marduk rather than a comprehensive creation account. He quotes Heidel as saying, "it is primarily not a creation story at all."

III. Conclusion:

Vannoy's lecture emphasizes a literal, historical interpretation of Genesis 1, rejecting the literary framework hypothesis due to concerns about undermining the authority and historicity of scripture. He presents a view that is wary of both attempts to view Genesis as non-historical and that finds the idea of God creating things with the appearance of age as problematic. Finally, he acknowledges that the Genesis creation account has similarities to other Ancient Near Eastern narratives, but cautions against viewing it as a derivation. The main points of the lecture can be summarised as:

- The literary framework hypothesis is dangerous and textually unsupported.
- The idea of creation with apparent age is both illogical and leads to uncertainty and doubt about God's character.
- The method by which Moses received the Genesis 1 account is unknown but inspired.
- The Enuma Elish is not a primary creation account and is an apologetic for the god Marduk and has a different focus and purpose than Genesis 1.

4. Study Guide: Vannoy, Genesis, Session 7, Genesis 1 Literary Framework, Mesopotamian Creation Stories

Genesis 1 Study Guide

Quiz

Instructions: Answer each question in 2-3 complete sentences.

1. What is the literary framework hypothesis regarding Genesis 1, and what does it propose about the "days" of creation?
2. What is Vannoy's primary objection to the literary framework hypothesis, as evidenced in Exodus 20?
3. How does Vannoy view the idea that the earth was created with the appearance of age?
4. According to Vannoy, what are some ways that knowledge of Scripture is imparted to the authors?
5. What is Vannoy's hypothetical suggestion regarding the origins of Genesis 1, and how does it relate to a possible Babylonian source?
6. Who was George Adam Smith, and why is he important in the discussion of the relationship between the Bible and Mesopotamian creation stories?
7. Who was Fredrich Delitzsch, and what was the central idea of his "Pan-Babylonian School" approach to the Old Testament?
8. What is the Enuma Elish, and what is its approximate date of composition?
9. According to Alexander Heidel, what are two primary purposes or focuses of the Enuma Elish?
10. What is Vannoy's overall view regarding the reliability of Genesis 1 as a historical narrative?

Quiz Answer Key

1. The literary framework hypothesis suggests that the "days" of Genesis 1 are not literal 24-hour periods, but rather a literary device used by the author to organize the presentation of God's creative acts. It proposes that the days are a structured way of communicating the divine process of creation.

2. Vannoy objects to the literary framework hypothesis because it undermines the connection between God's six days of work and one day of rest and humanity's pattern of work and rest as established in Exodus 20. If the creation days are merely a literary device, then humanity's pattern is based on a human invention rather than God's action.
3. Vannoy views the idea that the earth was created with the appearance of age as problematic because it can easily lead to absurd conclusions and destroys any basis for scientific investigation. Further, it can be interpreted to imply that God created the world to deceive.
4. Vannoy notes that some scriptural authors received direct communication from God, while others had visions; still other authors engaged in research and used existing materials. Regardless, what is essential is the Spirit of God prevented errors and ensured the truth of what was written.
5. Vannoy suggests hypothetically that Genesis 1 could be an adaptation of an existing Babylonian creation account, with polytheistic elements removed and other changes made. However, he does not find evidence to support such a view and does not consider it likely.
6. George Adam Smith was a British Museum employee who wrote about the discovery of Mesopotamian tablets containing creation stories. His letter and book, *The Chaldean Account of Genesis*, sparked early interest in the relationship between the Bible and archeological findings.
7. Fredrich Delitzsch was a scholar who popularized the "Pan-Babylonian School," which claimed the Bible was heavily dependent on and derived from Babylonian worldviews. He argued that both the Genesis creation story and the Noahic flood account were adaptations of earlier Babylonian stories.
8. The Enuma Elish is the Babylonian creation story, whose name translates to "when on high". Scholars generally agree that its original composition dates back to 1700-2000 B.C., though the earliest existing text is from about 1000 B.C.
9. Alexander Heidel notes that the Enuma Elish is not primarily a creation story, as most of it focuses on the god Marduk. Heidel identifies the story as an apologetic for the worship of Marduk as the god of Babylon.
10. Vannoy believes Genesis 1 is a reliable, historical account of God's creation activity. He does not believe that there is any evidence to suggest the days are merely a literary device or that the account is derived from other stories.

Essay Questions

1. Compare and contrast the literary framework hypothesis and the view that Genesis 1 is a straightforward historical account. What are the strengths and weaknesses of each perspective, and what are the implications for our understanding of biblical authority?
2. Discuss the impact of the discovery of Mesopotamian creation accounts, such as the Enuma Elish, on the study of Genesis. How did these discoveries influence scholars like Delitzsch and what are some contemporary views?
3. Analyze Vannoy's critique of the idea that the earth was created with the appearance of age. Why does he find this argument problematic, and what alternatives does he suggest or imply?
4. Explore the different ways that the knowledge of Scripture is thought to have been imparted to biblical authors, according to Vannoy. Discuss the role of the Holy Spirit in the process.
5. How might the historical context and worldview of the ancient Near East inform our reading of Genesis 1? How do we interpret Genesis 1 as a text that has universal implications while being written within a specific cultural and historical context?

Glossary of Key Terms

Literary Framework Hypothesis: The view that the days of creation in Genesis 1 are not literal 24-hour periods, but rather a literary device or structure used to communicate theological truths.

Pan-Babylonian School: A school of thought that argued the biblical worldview was derived from and heavily dependent on Babylonian culture and stories, with the stories in Genesis as adaptations of earlier Mesopotamian myths.

Enuma Elish: The Babylonian creation epic, which begins with the words "when on high." It features a battle of gods and the eventual rise of Marduk to prominence.

Verbal Inspiration: The doctrine that the words of Scripture are the very words of God, with the Holy Spirit superintending the writers so that they were kept from error.

Appearance of Age: The concept that the earth and its geological features were created in a mature state, giving the appearance of age although having been created recently.

Historical Narrative: A text that presents events as having occurred in a linear timeline, with the intention of recording real events that happened in the past.

Chronological Order: The sequence of events or time periods according to when they occurred. The idea that there is a sequence of actual creative acts by God in Genesis 1.

The Chaldean Account of Genesis: A book written by George Adam Smith, which discussed early Mesopotamian creation stories and their relationship to the Bible.

Babel and Bible: A book by Fredrich Delitzsch that argued the Old Testament was derived from Babylonian sources.

The Great Deception: A two-volume work by Delitzsch that argued the Old Testament is full of deception and is not a reliable historical document.

5. FAQs on Vannoy, Genesis, Session 7, Genesis 1 Literary Framework, Mesopotamian Creation Stories, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Okay, here's an 8-question FAQ based on the provided source, formatted with markdown:

FAQ on Genesis 1 and Creation Accounts

1. **What is the "framework hypothesis" regarding the days of creation in Genesis 1, and what are some objections to it?** The framework hypothesis suggests that the "days" in Genesis 1 are not literal 24-hour periods, but rather a literary device used to present God's creation in an organized manner. The days are seen as thematic groupings, not a strict chronological sequence. Objections include: First, there's no textual hint within Genesis 1 suggesting the days are anything other than historical periods of time. Second, the 6+1 pattern of work and rest, which is found in Exodus 20 as a model for human activity, implies that God's creative work was also real and not just a literary device. To base human activity on a literary form undermines the reality of God's own activity.
2. **How does the interpretation of the days of Genesis 1 affect the understanding of the Sabbath and the pattern of work and rest?** The interpretation significantly impacts how the Sabbath is understood. If the days of creation are literal, then God's six days of work and one day of rest provide a real, historical pattern that humans are to follow. However, if the framework hypothesis is correct, and the days are literary, then the basis for the human pattern shifts from God's actions to a literary structure. This makes the human pattern seemingly based on the author's invention rather than God's activity.
3. **What is the argument that the earth was created with the "appearance of age," and why is this argument problematic?** The "appearance of age" argument suggests that God created the earth with existing geological strata and fossils, making it seem much older than it actually is. This argument is problematic because if you take it to its logical extreme, it could lead to the conclusion that the entire universe was just created moments ago with all the appearance of having existed much longer, rendering any scientific investigation impossible. Furthermore, such an act could be interpreted as deceptive on God's part.

4. **How might the knowledge of Genesis 1 have been imparted to Moses, and what is considered most important about this information?** The Bible does not explicitly state how Moses received the knowledge of Genesis 1. It is suggested that God could have communicated directly to him, he might have had a vision, or it could be that God could have led Moses to adapt existing traditions from the surrounding culture. The important thing is not the method, but the fact that the content is a reliable revelation from God, and the written text was superintended by the Holy Spirit, making every word trustworthy, reliable, and the truth.
5. **What is the "Pan-Babylonian School," and what is its view of the relationship between the Old Testament and Babylonian literature?** The Pan-Babylonian School, emerging in the early 20th century, posited that the Old Testament was heavily dependent on, and derived from, Babylonian mythology. They believed that stories like the Creation account and the Flood narrative in Genesis were adaptations of earlier Babylonian stories, such as the Enuma Elish. This approach generally held a low view of the Old Testament's historical and religious claims.
6. **What is the Enuma Elish, and what is its significance in relation to the Genesis creation account?** The Enuma Elish is a Babylonian creation epic, dating back to around 1700-2000 BC. It is significantly older than the composition of Genesis 1. Its primary focus is not on creation, but rather on the rise of the god Marduk. The epic describes a cosmic battle and how Marduk became the chief god of Babylon. Some scholars from the Pan-Babylonian school view Enuma Elish as the source of the biblical creation narrative, while others view the creation account in Genesis as divinely inspired even if it had its roots in a culture that also had similar ideas.
7. **How does the Enuma Elish differ from the creation account in Genesis 1?** While the Enuma Elish is a mythological story that focuses on a battle between gods and the rise of Marduk, Genesis 1 depicts a single, sovereign God creating by speaking, with order brought into chaos. The Enuma Elish is polytheistic, while Genesis 1 is monotheistic. The focus of the Enuma Elish is on Marduk's exaltation and the founding of Babylon, while Genesis 1 emphasizes God's glory and the creation of the world for humanity.

8. **What are some key considerations when comparing different creation accounts and understanding the origins of Genesis 1?** When comparing creation accounts, it's important to consider the unique theological perspectives and historical contexts from which they emerged. Rather than assuming that similarities equate to derivation, it is important to recognize that the Holy Spirit can use any traditions while also maintaining the unique aspects of the biblical text. It's important to remember that the Bible presents itself as the Word of God, and, while humanly authored, it is divinely inspired. Any similarities between the creation accounts are to be seen through the lens of God's inspiration rather than a pure, derivative relationship. The primary focus of Genesis 1 is not just on the *how* of creation but also the *who*: the one true God.