

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

Author: Robert Vannoy

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Abstract

This lecture examines the chronological and theological nature of the genealogies in Genesis 5 and 11, drawing on the arguments of William Henry Green and B.B. Warfield to demonstrate that these lists are compressed and not intended for calculating a continuous chronology. Dr. Vannoy highlights how historical, geological, and literary evidence—such as uninterrupted Mesopotamian and Egyptian civilizations, the structure of the Table of Nations, and omissions in biblical genealogies—supports a gap-chronology view that leaves the dates of creation and the flood open to scientific investigation. He also begins an analysis of Genesis 1:1–2:3, discussing the structural 'Toledoth' divisions of Genesis, and the general teachings about God, specifically noting that His existence and monotheism are assumed in contrast to ancient Near Eastern myths.

Outline

I. Genealogy and Chronology in Genesis 5 and 11

A. Green and Warfield's Propositions on Genealogies (Proposition 4)

1. Numbers in genealogies indicate lifespan and age of childbearing, not chronology.
2. These lists are not intended for constructing a continuous timeline.

B. Mathematical Absurdities of Non-Gap Chronology (Proposition 5)

1. Calculating Shem to Abraham as a continuous chronology yields 292 years.
2. In a non-gap timeline, Shem would have outlived Abraham, and Noah would have lived well into Abraham's era.
3. Scripture provides no indication of flood survivors still living in Abraham's day.

C. Lack of Historical and Geological Evidence for Flood at 2300 BC (Proposition 6)

1. Continuous, uninterrupted civilizations in Mesopotamia (to 3000 BC) and Egypt (to 4000 BC) show no catastrophic flood interruption.
2. Localized flood deposits exist in the archaeological record, but no universal catastrophe is found in this specific era.

D. Genealogies as Symmetrical and Compressed

1. Symmetrical arrangement in groups of ten links (Genesis 5 and 11) is indicative of compression.

2. B.B. Warfield suggests gaps could span thousands of generations and years between creation and Abraham.
3. Scripture lacks explicit data to establish specific dates for Creation or the Flood.

E. Open and Extra-Biblical Questions

1. Specifying dates relies on extra-biblical scientific data, rather than theology or biblical faithfulness.
2. Universality of the flood: Genesis 6-9 is global in depiction, but terms like 'all' can represent a circumscribed region (such as Joseph's famine distribution).
3. 'Flood geology' (Whitcomb and Morris) and its scientific weaknesses in interpreting geological strata.
4. Accepting old earth timelines does not mandate accepting evolutionary theory.

F. Additional Considerations Supporting Gap Chronology

1. Uninterrupted civilizations in Egypt/Mesopotamia back to 3000-5000 BC, and Jericho to 8000 BC, meaning Babel and the Flood occurred much earlier.
2. Genealogies primarily trace lines of descent; compression is a standard biblical characteristic.
3. The Bible never totals the genealogical years (unlike census data), suggesting chronology was not the intent.
4. Omissions in Matthew 1:2-17 demonstrate 'beget' means 'ancestor of' and listings are schematic.

II. The World Before Abraham (Genesis 1-11)

A. Pre-Recorded History

1. Events in Genesis 1-11 occur before secularly recorded history, unlike Genesis 12 which correlates with secular history.
2. Genesis 1-11 addresses foundational questions: Creation, the Fall, origin of languages, and distribution of nations.

B. Structural Layout of Genesis

1. Traditional chapter breaks are late additions; a better structural break is at Genesis 2:3.
2. Structural division: Introductory Creation section (Genesis 1:1 - 2:3).
3. The 10-fold 'Toledoth' structure ('these are the generations of') introduces subsequent sections from Genesis 2:4 to Genesis 50.

III. Creation of the Universe (Genesis 1:1 - 2:3)

A. Literary Analysis and the Critical School

1. Wellhausen's JEDP analysis assigns Genesis 1 to 'P' (late, sophisticated concept of God) and Genesis 2 to 'J' (early, primitive).
2. Vannoy plans to critique this late dating.

B. General Teaching About God

1. God's existence is assumed.
 - a. Contrast with Babylonian Enuma Elish, where gods are born from uncreated matter (Tiamat and Epsu).
 - b. Genesis 1:1 begins with a majestic presupposition of God's eternal existence.
2. Monotheism is presupposed and taught.
 - a. No multiple deities, celestial wars, or mythological intrigues are present.
 - b. The plural noun 'Elohim' used of Israel's God takes singular verbs and modifiers, representing a plural of majesty.