

Dr. Robert Vannoy, Genesis, Lecture 7

Literary Framework of Genesis 1, Mesopotamian Creation Stories – Enuma Elish

Source: Biblicalelearning.org by Ted Hildebrandt

Keywords

Literary Framework Hypothesis, Enuma Elish, Pan-Babylonian School, Friedrich Delitzsch, Robert Newman, Appearance of Age, Biblical Inspiration, Marduk

Abstract

In this lecture, Dr. Robert Vannoy examines the Literary Framework Hypothesis of Genesis 1, raising key theological objections regarding its impact on the historical reality of the Sabbath pattern established in Exodus 20. He addresses the 'appearance of age' theory for the creation of the earth, arguing that it leads to scientific skepticism and implies divine deception. Additionally, Vannoy explores how biblical knowledge was imparted to its authors and analyzes the claims of the Pan-Babylonian School, comparing Genesis to the Babylonian creation epic Enuma Elish.

Outline

I. Literary Framework Hypothesis of Genesis 1: Vannoy's Objections

- A. Definition of the hypothesis: the days of Genesis 1 are a literary device rather than actual days, used to present how God created the earth
- B. Objections to the hypothesis
 - 1. Exodus 20 presupposes the reality of God's six days of work and one day of rest as the pattern for human life
 - 2. If the framework hypothesis is true, man is imitating a human literary form rather than the actual reality of God's creative activity
 - 3. This shifts the basis of the Sabbath pattern from what God actually did to a humanly devised literary structure, destroying its basis in reality
- C. Dr. Robert Newman's perspective on chronology in Genesis
 - 1. Newman's article: 'Are the events in the Genesis creation account set forth in chronological order?' in *The Genesis Debate* (1986)
 - 2. Newman argues that identifying a literary pattern does not mean the account is merely a literary device without historical reality
 - 3. God could have ordered His creative activity to reflect parallelism while maintaining actual sequence

II. How Was the Knowledge of Genesis 1 Imparted?

- A. The 'Appearance of Age' theory and its critique
 - 1. Theory: The earth was created with built-in age, including a pre-formed fossil record

2. Vannoy's objections:

- a. It 'proves too much' and can lead to absurd skepticism (e.g., that we were created moments ago with memories)
- b. It destroys scientific investigation and implies that God created the earth with the intent to deceive

B. Modes of biblical inspiration and communication

- 1. Traditional methods: Direct communication, visions (prophets), and historical research (e.g., Luke 1:1-4, 1-2 Kings)
- 2. The primary importance of divine superintendence keeping writers from error (inspiration), regardless of the method
- 3. Moses was not present at creation, and while the exact method (e.g., vision or direct speech) is unknown, Genesis 1 is a reliable, true revelation from God

C. Theoretical use of pagan sources

- 1. Hypothetical idea: If Genesis 1 adapted a Babylonian account with polytheistic elements removed, God could have guided Moses to use it, though Vannoy sees no evidence for this
- 2. Divine inspiration ensures that the final result is the trustworthy, reliable Word of God

III. Babylonian Creation Stories and the Pan-Babylonian School

A. George Adam Smith and The Chaldean Account of Genesis (1875)

- 1. Smith identified twenty Mesopotamian tablets describing creation

B. Friedrich Delitzsch and the Pan-Babylonian School

- 1. Delitzsch's lectures on Babel and Bible (1902)
- 2. Core theory: Biblical worldview is dependent on and derived from Babylonian stories (e.g., creation and flood accounts)
- 3. Critique of Delitzsch's radical views: His book The Great Deception (1920) argued that the Old Testament is full of deceptions, legends, and late folktales

C. Comparing Genesis with the Enuma Elish

- 1. Name and Date: Enuma Elish means 'when on high,' composed around 1700-2000 B.C., with the oldest extant text from around 1000 B.C.
- 2. Comparison to Moses: Moses lived around 1400-1200 B.C., meaning the composition of Enuma Elish is older than Genesis 1
- 3. Alexander Heidel's analysis in The Babylonian Genesis:
 - a. Enuma Elish is primarily an apologetic supporting Marduk as the chief deity of Babylon, not primarily a creation story
 - b. Only a small portion of the seven tablets deals with creation, while much is dedicated to Marduk's birth and growth