

Old Testament Literature

Genealogy/Chronology, the Image of God, and the Two Trees

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Sponsored by Biblicalelearning.org by Ted Hildebrandt

Keywords

Genealogy, Chronology, Image of God, Tselem, Demut, Tree of Life, Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, Fiat-Fulfillment, Vice-Regency, Sacramental

Abstract

This lecture by Dr. Ted Hildebrandt addresses biblical interpretation, human identity, and primordial symbols in the early chapters of Genesis. It demonstrates that biblical genealogies contain intentional gaps for literary symmetry and should not be used to calculate a literal chronological age for the earth. The discourse details four foundational dimensions of the image of God in humanity—spiritual-moral qualities, relational nature, representational dominion, and physical resemblance to Christ. Finally, it analyzes the Tree of Life as a sacramental symbol of relationship with God and the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil as a necessary mechanism for human moral choice.

Outline

I. Introduction and Course Logistics

- A. Reading assignments and course scope (Exodus reading, Bruce Waltke & 'Bloody Bridegroom' articles)
- B. Memory verse emphasis (Psalm 23) and course materials fee administrative details

II. How Old is the Earth? Age of Earth Not a Test of Orthodoxy

- A. Absence of specific biblical statements on exact age of the earth
- B. Dangers of elevating subjective conjectures into tests of orthodoxy or splitting churches

III. Science and the Bible

- A. Distinguishing poetic/phenomenological descriptions from scientific claims
 - 1. Psalm 140:3 – Poetic description of asp poison under the tongue
 - 2. Isaiah 11:12 – Four corners of the earth as cardinal directions
 - 3. Job 9:6 – Pillars of the earth as poetic expression of stability
 - 4. Joshua 10 – Sun standing still (semantic nuance of 'silence')
- B. Hermeneutical principle: Major on majors, minor on minors; handling theological disagreements humbly

IV. Genealogy Is Not Equal to Chronology

- A. Misapplication of genealogies (Genesis 5 & 11) to construct strict chronologies

- B. Historical/archaeological conflicts with Usher's 4004 BC creation date (e.g., Jericho tower ~8000 BC)

V. Matthewan Genealogy as Case Study (Matthew 1)

- A. Demonstration of skipped generations (Jehoram to Uzziah skipping Ahaziah, Joash, Amaziah)
- B. Literary symmetry and gematria (14-14-14 pattern corresponding to David [$D+V+D = 4+6+4 = 14$])
- C. Semantic range of 'father' as ancestor/forefather rather than direct biological parent

VI. Literary Patterns in Genesis 1

A. Fiat-Fulfillment Pattern

1. Announcement ('And God said')
2. Command ('Let there be')
3. Fulfillment ('And it was so')
4. Evaluation ('God saw that it was good' / 'Very good' - Tov Me'od)
5. Time marker ('Evening and morning')

B. Parallel Day Scheme

1. Days 1 & 4: Creation of Light and Light Bearers (Sun, Moon, Stars)
2. Days 2 & 5: Division of Waters (Sky/Oceans) and Sea Creatures/Birds
3. Days 3 & 6: Creation of Dry Land and Land Inhabitants (Animals/Humans)
4. Day 7: Sabbath Rest and Divine Reflection

C. Forming and Filling Framework (Tohu Vavohu)

1. Days 1–3: Forming the formless world
2. Days 4–6: Filling the empty realms

VII. The Image of God in Humankind (Imago Dei)

- A. Defining human nature amidst modern technological shifts (AI, cyborgs, cloning, Moore's Law)
- B. Genesis 1:26–27 Creation Mandate ('Let us make man in our image')
- C. Four Primary Aspects of the Imago Dei

1. Spiritual and Moral Qualities

- a. Capacity for moral choice, true knowledge, righteousness, and holiness (Col 3:10, Eph 4:24)
- b. Persistence of the marred image post-fall requiring ethical treatment of others (James 3:9)

2. Relational Aspect ('Us-ness')

- a. Plurality of divine address ('Let us')
- b. Evaluation of views: Heavenly court context vs. Trinitarian revelation vs. Plural of majesty
- c. Relational nature of human identity formed in community

3. Ruling / Dominion Aspect

- a. Humans as vice-regents representing God's sovereignty over creation
- b. Foundational mandate for environmental stewardship and responsible care of animals

4. Physical Resemblance Aspect

- a. Word studies of Tselem and Demut as concrete, physical terms
- b. Ancient Near Eastern practice of royal statues marking kingly territorial presence
- c. Physical compatibility between humanity and Christ's eternal human form and resurrection body

D. Implications of the Imago Dei

- 1. Future hope and ultimate transformation into Christ's likeness (1 John 3:2)
- 2. Ethical directive to treat every individual with dignity and respect (C.S. Lewis's Weight of Glory; practical illustrations)

VIII. The Two Trees in the Garden of Eden

A. The Tree of Life

- 1. Function in Eden and prohibition post-fall (Gen 2:16, Gen 3:22)
- 2. Eschatological restoration in New Jerusalem (Rev 22)
- 3. Evaluation of views: Magical vs. Health Food vs. Sacramental view (Symbol of covenantal relationship and life with God)

B. The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil

- 1. Transition from innocence/naïveté to moral maturity
- 2. Necessity of choice for genuine moral agency and authentic love

C. The Serpent's Deception in Genesis 3

- 1. Crafty utilization of truthful statements to frame lethal lies
- 2. Subtlety of temptation and distortion of divine intent