

An Exegetical Examination of the Genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n8MOABkdWkw&list=PL0QKHh_IUzjFgygbLSKdWcJ4nDnD-Nmst&index=5

Henry:

The item that we want to talk about is an area of research for me for the past seven years or so. My interest goes back further than this and this is our topic for the next two weeks. It has to do with the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11.

As Mark said, the infamous begat genealogies before the Flood and then for the post-Flood period, leading down to the time of Abraham. I've been working on a project for a long time, working through the academic material, speaking about it, writing articles, working towards a book that's been very slow, but I'm getting there.

What I want to share with you today is sort of a synopsis or overview of these genealogies. Why they're important. What they say. How they ought to be interpreted. What those implications are.

Then next week we're going to talk about how the numbers in the genealogies are different in three of the textual traditions, and how that problem goes back 2,000 years. Well, probably about 2,000 years. It was recognized the first time in the church by Eusebius of Caesarea, or at least documented for the first time in the fourth century.

That's kind of our goal. We're going to get into the weeds a little bit, but I promise that I won't bog us down there. A little bit of that will be important. Hopefully you'll see the reasons why. So I just hope that you enjoy it and that you find it interesting and you'll see the importance of this part of Holy Scripture.

If you're interested in the project, it's listed on our website.

Let's begin by just talking about the three major areas that I have developed as being important. The first and foremost is interpreting the text correctly. That is working very carefully through the text.

And then also developing a method of interpretation that doesn't allow the interference of outside authority structures to influence what the text is telling us. In Genesis 1 through 11 this is a major problem. In the church generally, and in evangelical scholarships specifically, that forces outside the text influence accepting what the text says and what it means. This is because of the worldview clash that's created by what is claimed in Genesis 1 through 11, the origin of humanity and of the cosmos.

I found in my research that many evangelical scholars will see what the text says, but then sort of make a maneuver that says, "well, but what we know from archaeology and history, that can't be the right interpretation. There's got to be some other answer to how we understand the text." When you do that, now you're bringing in the question of authority structures. You have the authority of Scripture, the clarity of Scripture, the sufficiency of Scripture.

There's a very big philosophical and doctrinal argument that's taking place when that method is used. Part of my research has been to say "wait, we have to examine the underlying presuppositions that inform that kind of method." If we're going to say that these genealogies are dependent upon archaeology, mystical symbolism, and so on, then we have to show that we have

to understand and explicate that out as it relates to the doctrine of Scripture. That's just one and the first initial category.

The second is I've concluded that the chronological interpretation is actually the correct one. The text gives us more meanings than just the chronology, but we have to very carefully work through the text and make sure we're using a hermeneutical method that honors the Word of God as the Word of God. The authority structure is important. The hermeneutics, the interpretive principles that are used, are very important. That's been my goal.

Then the third, which is an abyss in and of itself, is dealing with what Mark mentioned about in each of the textual traditions the numbers are different. Not all of them. A lot of them match each other. But there's also changes that have taken place. These changes are deliberate. They're not accidental.

So the question has always been, "well which one set of numbers was the original?" And if one makes an argument for the original, then one has to show a plausible theory as to why the others were changed. Who changed them? Who had the authority to change them? Why would they change them? What motivated them to change them?

In all these cases we had people that had some level of recognition that this was the Word of God that they were changing. So it has to be an adequate motivation to do something like that. It's not arbitrary. It has to be for a reason that they felt ... Now I'm not justifying that when I say that, but I'm saying in terms of the way that a person is thinking when they do something like this.

Those are the three major categories that are involved in these genealogies. I think you'll see that as we walk through the next two weeks, but today in particular, why this is so important and where the worldview clash takes place.

Once we start getting to a place, if we take the lifespans as actual ages, which is what I would argue for, that conclusion is incompatible with the whole variety of interpretations of Genesis 1—long ages, theistic evolution—because in all of them the evolution of man is considered part of the matrix. So, we'll talk about that as we work through it together.

In my research I've tried to examine the numerical divergences, looking at external witnesses like Josephus, for example, who lived in the first century and reported the numbers. And other witnesses from antiquity.

Then trying to put that together into what I think is a reconstruction of what happened in the past. It's a forensic investigation and so that's been the task of the project as far as this third category goes.

We have to account for the large volume of data, which is actually quite difficult and has involved reading the literature extensively and trying to understand it.

But let's reverse ourselves now, after we we've done a summary here, kind of the major categories, but we're going to now go back to point number one. How do we interpret the genealogies to start with? How do we understand what the text is telling us? What does the text mean when we study it?

The first thing we can talk about briefly is genealogies as a phenomenon in Scripture. There are different kinds of genealogies in Scripture.

In Genesis 4 the Cainite genealogy.

Noah's mini genealogy with his three sons in Genesis 5:32.

Then the table of nations are what we generally call segmented genealogies, where you have a patriarch and then you have a set of ancestors that are born underneath them, as their progenitor and then the sons and the grandsons and so on that live out in segmented so it goes out sort of like this and then down. So it's segmented and linear.

But Genesis 5:3–31 and the post-Flood genealogy is a linear genealogy. It's one patriarch with one named son, and then the next, and then the next, and so on. That's a little bit of a difference in the genealogy of Genesis 5 and 11 compared to some other genealogies that you find in the Bible.

There are portions of 1 Chronicles, beginning parts that are linear and then they change. So it's a combination of linear and segmented genealogies. There's lots of ways that genealogies are used by the authors in Scripture.

The ones in Genesis 5 and 11 are unique. This is a point that often gets missed when you read papers and articles on the subject. It's that they're replete with numbers, what we call begetting ages, the age assigned to the patriarch when the next patriarch is born, the years of life that the person lives after the birth of the patriarch, and then the lifespan, which is in Genesis 5.

Genesis 11 does not contain the lifespans, but Genesis 5 does. So they are unique in that construction. The other genealogies do not have all this information. Sometimes they have a lifespan, but we do not have this other information. So that's partly one of the things that makes these two genealogies unique in the Bible.

Actually, when you compare it to any genealogies that are found outside the Bible, they're completely unique. Typically, you do not have numbers in Ancient Near Eastern genealogies. If you do, you'll have a life span or usually a reign like the Sumerian king list gives a list of the lengths of reigns of kings. Not lifespans. And not begetting ages the way that these two genealogies are structured.

So comparisons are often drawn between Genesis 5 and 11 and external genealogies, which in and of itself is fine, but it has to be acknowledged that the genealogies in the Bible are unique. And unique not only to the Bible, but to all other Ancient Near Eastern literature in the way that they have been constructed by Moses. That's really important for us to understand and we'll see that as we study this together.

We'll start at the beginning in Genesis 5. As you can see here, if you're opening your Bible, your numbers are going to be different because I'm going to be advocating that these Septuagint numbers are actually, in fact, the original ones. I'm being slightly provocative. I'm using that before I'm proving my case to you.

But in all seriousness, I have engaged with a lot of people that still wish to follow the MT and so while I'm making an argument for my position, I'm certainly not trying to be argumentative. So, I hope you'll be open-minded towards that as we walk through it.

You see the pattern in the genealogy is set here at the foundation. Adam lived 230 years. What's a little unique about this reference to Adam is that it mentions his likeness and image, which is a reflection of God's creative activity. He called his son, he called his name Seth. That's what the Hebrew text says literally.

And the text tells us how long Adam lived after this son is named. You'll notice that Adam must be present to name him, and this is reflected also in Genesis 4:25–26 where Eve actually is a participant in the naming of Seth.

So, we know here that Seth is the direct son of Adam. That is certain and we have three chronological references related to the life of Adam and the bringing forth of his son, Seth, at the beginning of the genealogy.

One of the things that sometimes that we can look at at the genealogy is what it looks like at the beginning and the end. Because sometimes an author, and Moses does this often, will recreate a sort of a literary inclusion, what's called a sort of a way of saying something at one end and on the other, and it kind of brings the two of them together.

If you'll observe our next text, you'll see something quite similar at the end of the pre-Flood period with Lamech. He lived 182 years. He fathered a son. He called his name Noah. The difference here is there's a sort of a prophetic dimension of it. There's no prophecy related to Seth, but there is one to Noah's name. It is sort of telling us something about the significance of his name. We find out later, of course, in the Flood narrative.

Then it tells us how long Lamech lived after Noah was born and how many years of life he lived.

So there's on one side of the genealogy and the other, these relationships, not only that are chronologically interlocked, but explicit texts that tell us that they are father and son relationships. That tells us something about how we should interpret the rest of the genealogy in between. This is a literary construct created by Moses to help us make sure we understand it correctly.

We have other references that go throughout primeval history. Here we have Noah. Noah doesn't have a named son that has the years lived after, but it's the Flood that is the reference. He lived 350 years after the Flood and all his days were 950 years and he died.

This is in the post-Flood period. And then we move to the post-Flood era where we have a very similar formula. The lifespan is now absent. You'll notice that in Genesis 11. A couple of commentators have said, "we think maybe the lifespan is absent because there's a sort of pace to the genealogy. The author wants to get down to Abraham because that's where the next phase of the story begins." So that's one possible reason.

The other is you can infer from Genesis 5, you can just add the two numbers together and get the lifespan. It's a just a consequence of what you see in Genesis 5 and sort of, as the I think Westminster Confession says, good and necessary consequence. You can infer things from Scripture if that's the criteria.

Here we have two years after the Flood that Arpachshad is fathered or brought forth. And then Shem lives 500 years after this happens. Then after Arpachshad's birth then he has other sons and daughters. Very similar formula. No epitaph, like I said from Genesis 5.

Let's we see a little bit of the structure. I'm going to get into some of the details a little bit more because it's important to look closely at the text. But we can draw some inferences that I'm making the case that you can get a chronology from Genesis 5.

There's a theological rationale for these genealogies we see play out in the rest of Scripture, particularly Luke 3. The unity of the human race traced from Jesus all the way back to Adam.

There's a sort of anthropological and theological deduction that can be made from the text. This gradual reduction of the lifespans from Adam down to Abraham and down to Moses has been interpreted historically as a sign of God's judgment upon humanity because of sin. Not in an instant kind of way, you know a lightning bolt kind of manner, but a progressive effect of the Fall on the human race over an extended period of time. Noah down to Moses, for example, in the post-Flood period, which is over 2,000 years.

There's a lot that can be gleaned from these genealogies. It's not just about adding up dates. But there's a rich theology here and a rich anthropology is telling us something about humanity's past that's a story that's quite different than what the evolutionary story is or what evangelical attempts to blend the two together would tell us about the origin of man and what man was like in the distant past. Radically different than those worldview structures that we often read about and hear about.

Now, as I mentioned, and I'm mentioning again, we want to be very careful about imposing external structures of authority upon the text because God is speaking. This is something that I continue to remind myself about as I'm studying this, with the exception of the numbers. I'm trying to determine what the original numbers were, because the original numbers are God's speech.

The rest of it, all of it is the Word of God. It's God-breathed. It's a God-breathed text of Scripture. This is the Word of God speaking and has that authority.

What I've tried to do is discipline myself to not allow external pressures to come to bear on what my interpretation of the text is. I think this is kind of a lesson for all of us, anything that we're reading in the Bible. Letting the Word of God challenge and purify us with its truth, because it's no dead letter. Right?

But we want to interpret the text very carefully. So, we interpret it in its context. We try to understand it as the unfolding of revelation, biblical theology, systematic theology, where we have different categories of theology, where we compare New Testament texts to Old, different doctrines, the doctrine of Christ, the Fall man, and so on. Both Testaments have a lot to say about these different categories. The interpretation of the text falls under the authority of the Triune God speaking in the text.

Then secondarily we then can use servants to the text to help us. For example, one of the arguments I make is over 2,000 years the church and her Jewish predecessors interpreted these texts as actual ages and as yielding in chronology. It's almost a universal interpretation for two millennia. That's not decisive, but that's strong evidence in favor of the interpretation that I favor. I can appeal to the history of interpretation as a secondary argument. It's not primary, but it's secondary. But it still matters.

Then we have other issues with archaeology and cultural backgrounds, Ancient Near Eastern history, literary studies. All these things can help us to understand it better.

But these are all servants to the text. So that's the kind of method that I'm trying to employ and always remembering that the Triune God is speaking in the text. That's just important for every aspect of the Christian life, whether it's academic, personal application, moral, ethical, doctrinal, whatever it is.

If you're interested we've kind of spelled out some of this in some of our TV shows, our sense of what we believe is a robust doctrine of Scripture. So if that's of interest to you as a hobby, if you

got the time on your hands, feel free to watch our show [Digging for Truth, Episodes 77 & 78]. I promise this isn't just self-promotion here, but these things are provided for the edification of the Church.

Then particularly Jesus' view of Scripture. [Digging for Truth, Episodes 150 & 151]. This is very important when we carefully look through the New Testament to see the exalted view that Jesus had about the Bible, about the Old Testament.

Then we have an episode that was about Genesis in particular. We give a survey of Jesus' attitude towards the Book of Genesis. That's for your consideration.

So I mentioned already that for an extended period of time this interpretive conclusion that I'm drawing has a consensus in the history of God's people. That the lifespans are literal and that, of course, means that the beginning ages are literal. Then you can add it up to constructive chronology.

Now what's interesting about this is as it relates to the numbers, which again we're going to talk about next week. Even though Jerome's Latin Vulgate was the dominant text in the western church, people who talked about the genealogies used the Septuagint, even though Jerome's Vulgate came from the Masoretic Text. Jerome's Vulgate was a monumental achievement in the history of the church. It was of a great significance for the church. But yet when people studied the genealogies, they didn't follow Jerome with the numbers. They felt by and large that the Septuagint preserved the original numbers. It's an interesting phenomenon.

Then that kind of switched after the Reformation came along. There was a switch in the thinking about that getting back to the Hebrew text instead. So that consensus kind of waned after the Reformation with some exceptions.

Let's just give you a sort of a sketch. Now for the 2,000 years that was the almost universally accepted interpretation until the 19th century, where we started to see sort of cracks in the façade. The scholar who was most responsible for changing the consensus on this was a man named William Green. He was a really prolific scholar at old Princeton.

I published an article where he challenged this interpretation and believe that the text was to be interpreted non-chronologically and I'll explain that to you in a few moments.

He had a very high view of Scripture from what we can see. He was a strong opponent of the documentary hypothesis and there's a lot to be commended about Green's career. Obviously I'm going to be arguing here that I think he made a mistake in this particular area. He had great influence on the conservative church. His argument supplanted the old view in conservative evangelical scholarship. In the 1950s his view really began to take hold and take off, so it took a while for that to happen.

I'm just going to explain to you the way that his argument is structured. I'll give you a general overview of that. You've probably heard this before if you studied the subject. Green's argument is not in totality, but this is a key component of it.

Look there's genealogies in the Bible. We know these genealogies have names missing in them and so therefore there may also be names missing in Genesis 5 and 11. His argument was this genealogy is missing names. This one skips over names. Matthew 1 skips over names. There's like a 300-year gap in Matthew 1, if you look carefully at the names that are listed. So therefore,

it's entirely plausible that there are names missing and we cannot calculate a chronology from Genesis 5 and Genesis 11.

So what he did was in his argument, he conflated the idea that missing names equals missing time. This is all over the conservative literature. I've collected 40–50 references of people pretty much just deferring or arguing Green's main points that look there's an extended period of time here that we can't calculate because there's names missing in the text. We can't prove there's not names missing. There's no way to show there's not names missing. But his argument conflated the two concepts and I'm going to explain that to you as we move forward.

Now before your eyes start to blur over, because I've got some Hebrew up on the screen. Please know that you don't need to know any Hebrew to understand what I'm going to explain to you. So don't be intimidated by that, and I understand that is the case. I only have it up there to show you if you want to read it literally from the right side to the left side. You would read it that way.

When Jared had lived two and sixty and one hundred years he brought forth (or he caused) Enoch to be born. Yes, that's the literal way that the text is constructed. It's kind of a wooden way of reading it. I'm going to explain to you the key components of this and hopefully it'll make sense to you as I walk through the text.

You'll notice that I don't say fathered or begat. I say he caused or he brought forth, caused to be born. I'm going to explain that in a few moments.

We find this pattern throughout the two genealogies. We talked about Adam. We talked about Lamech. Jared lived 800 years after he brought forth Enoch, and he brought forth other sons and daughters. That's the typical pattern throughout with some exceptions. Same thing in Genesis 11, without the epitaph.

So now we have in Hebrew a variety of what we call stems. There is a stem that in verbs points to causation. You could say something like he killed the man, and you would write that differently in Hebrew. He caused the man to die. We use that in English all the time. We use causation in verbs.

In Hebrew it's no different. You have stems that are written to communicate causation. In Genesis 5 and 11 we have a verb called *yalad*, that means to be born, to be brought forth, to beget. And it's written in this stem 55 times. He caused so-and-so to be born, to be brought forth. It's very important in terms of the way that genealogy is constructed.

Now it's my theory that Moses used this form because of the obvious nature of childbirth. The woman gives birth. The man is indirectly a participant, as it were. And we all understand that from "the birds and the bees". That probably is the reason why he used it. But he didn't have to. But that's the form that he chose to use.

Here's the key thing to understand about this. Sometimes *yalad* can point to an immediate son, as it did with Seth. Or, it can point to a remote ancestor. So it could be a grandson, a great grandson, or a great, great grandson. The direct object is always stated. The person being born is always stated, but it can point to a remote ancestor.

So this happens in Ruth 4. The hiphil of *yalad* is used in the genealogy of David. There's names missing in the text. It skips generations and it points to a remote ancestor. In Deuteronomy 4:25 I'm going to show you right now. Moses is speaking. He says when you father children, when

you father (future tense) children and grandchildren ... The same verb is being used. It's pointing to sons and it's pointing to grandsons.

Some interpreters have latched on to this reality of the verb to try to argue that there's names missing in the genealogies and therefore there's time missing in the genealogies. I'm going to show you why that doesn't work in this particular case.

We have to acknowledge that this form can point to a grandson, great grandson, and so on down the line when it's used. That's clear from Deuteronomy 4:25.

Here's the very simple reality of the way this is constructed. It's telling us that when Jared lived 162 years, he caused Enoch to be born. Now the Bible nowhere else tells us the actual nature of this relationship. We do not know if Enoch is Jared's immediate son. We know that Seth is the immediate son of Adam because of Genesis 4:25. And we know that Lamech is the father of Noah directly because he's there for his birth and he names him. Here we don't know. But we don't have to know because we have several things going on.

One: Enoch is the one who's being born.

Two: We have a time reference. So Enoch is born in the 162nd year of Jared's life.

Three: It doesn't matter if Enoch is his son, or his grandson, or his great-grandson because he's being brought forth in the 162nd year.

So their lives are chronologically interlocked with each other regardless of their biological relationship.

You see here what we're doing is we are allowing the use of the verb, it's full range. It can point to a non-immediate son. But because of the numbers it doesn't matter as far as chronology goes. Maybe there are names missing. Maybe there's not. But we don't have to prove whether or not there are names missing. All we have to show is that syntax interlocks the two lives together. That's the key.

Now I'm going to continue to build that case for you as I walk it through. I just basically said what's on this slide here. The actual relationship is irrelevant to the construction of a chronology. It doesn't matter because of the way the syntax is constructed.

That's repeated in the next verse. You know when we have the remaining years, the 800 years afterwards. Enoch is repeated again as the direct object of Jared's begetting. So it's very clear that Enoch is the one who's being brought forth and no one else.

What other interpreters have tried to do is try to say, "No. It's not Enoch who's being born in the 162nd year. It's some unstated ancestor. That just simply violates the text. The text does not say that. And because of the way that the word *yalad* is used, it has to do with birth. So it can only be referring to the birth of the direct object stated in the text. And that direct object is Enoch. No one else.

Because of the number, 162, the relationship is locked chronologically and in my judgment there's no way of getting around it.

Now as somebody who studies archaeology, I'm aware of the arguments outside the Bible for much more extended periods of time than what can be derived from Genesis 5 and 11. But I cannot allow that to influence the interpretation of the text. The text is primary.

Then we turn to the outside evidence and grapple with the conflict between the outside evidence and what the text tells us. So that's the method that we're trying to shoot for. I'm well aware of the conflict and if I can be transparent with the audience, I wanted to give us longer periods of time to make it easier to reconcile. But I can't do that because it's as Martin Luther said, "it is not incumbent upon me to wantonly turn the Word of God in the way that I wish it to go." So I can't do that, if this is really God speaking, and it is God speaking.

So that's difficult but it is important to think in those terms about having the exalted view of Scripture. I think I've belabored that point enough.

The interpretation that Green and others try to advocate is that Enoch was born later at some undetermined time and therefore now there's a gap in the genealogy of time. Not just names, but time is missing. Therefore, you can't calculate a chronology for the period.

I just want to tell you just a little bit more of a nuance in the Hebrew that doesn't come through in English. That is that the object of a verb that's causative in Hebrew is a participant in the action. And this is why you can't put anybody else's birth in the 162nd year of Jared's life. Because, and you think about the logic of childbirth, Jared caused Enoch to be born, Enoch is a second object indirectly participating.

Well, the only way you can do that is if you are participating in your own birth, but you're really not doing anything. You're a participant, but you're not the primary actor, if you want to say it that way. But it can't be somebody else, because it's Enoch who is the expressed direct object of the action of the verb.

This is what's so beautiful about the way that the Hebrew is being constructed. It forces us to this conclusion because there's just no way to get around the reality of the syntax. We lose that a little bit in the English translation. We do our best with it. That's why I'm trying to use the "cause to be born" way of expressing it, which is awkward in English. We just don't speak that way. We say "fathered". Right? But it's a little bit looser than I like. So I'm using this more wooden translation to really get the point across of what the text is telling.

Then to sum it up, we have the benefit of the chronological cross-check in Genesis 5 where we just simply add up the two numbers, the beginning age and the remaining years, and we get the lifespan. This is another way that the text has been constructed to ensure that we understand it correctly. It's a matter of simple math, which people from antiquity, since the creation of Adam to today can do. It's a universal. It's not a secret. It's not some kind of gnostic mystical way of interpreting the text. It's very simple. It's something that a fifth grader could figure out very easily. In this sense it's very easy to understand.

The one thing that I will add, as someone who's been trained and gone to seminary and studied Hebrew, I'm not a Hebrew expert. But I've studied it enough to know that there are many passages in the Old Testament that can be difficult to translate in Hebrew. Things like Lamentations, parts of the Psalms. They're very challenging.

This is actually very easy Hebrew to interpret. It's not difficult at all. The difficulty is believing what it says and what the implications are for worldview, and for worldview paradigms, and for anthropology. That's the tough part. That's what you see as the tough part in the literature when you read it. You see evangelical scholars seeing what the text is saying and then grappling with the implications, and not quite knowing what to do with what the implications are.

I want to be careful when I say this. I sympathize with them to a degree. But only so far. I can only sympathize so far and so that's the sense of that.

Now let's talk a little bit more about internal support, because what you want to do when you're interpreting the Bible, you want to look at the larger context. I was zeroing in here on the numbers and the syntax, but as we started with Adam on one end and Lamech on the other, we actually find out from Genesis 4:26 that Enosh is the direct son of Seth. And all of these are chronologically interlocked with each other.

So at the beginning of the genealogy, we have three unmistakable relationships that are chronologically interlocked. It's irrefutable because Seth is the son of Adam, and Enosh is the son of Seth. Now that doesn't mean that everybody else is a direct son. But it doesn't have to mean that. What it's doing is establishing the chronological interpretations foundational to the rest of the genealogy. I don't see any way to get around this. It's irrefutable that Seth is Adam's son and that Enosh is Seth's son.

Then you have this interesting phenomenon. This is really fascinating because if you want to say that there's big time gaps between these names ...

Let's move down to Methuselah. The non-chronological interpreters will say Methuselah could have died. There's a big gap in time between Methuselah and Lamech. That's what the argument is. So Methuselah could have died thousands of years before the Flood.

But it's interesting what happens when you interpret it chronologically. Methuselah dies in the very year that the Flood began. Now the presumption has always been that he died. He was a righteous man and he died before the Flood started. But whether he drowned in the Flood or he died before it, it's clear from the interpretation that he died in the year of the Flood.

But if a chronological interpretation is illegitimate, this is a phenomenal coincidence of happenstance. It just so happens that those of us who interpret chronologically, who are wrong, Methuselah dies in the year of the Flood. That's a very strange phenomenon if our interpretation is not correct.

Now it doesn't prove it. It's part of the matrix of looking at all the pieces of the evidence. That's an oddity that I think suits the position that I'm advocating better than the other position. Because he dies in the very year that the Flood is inaugurated.

Now let's move to the other end. We already talked about Lamech naming Noah—the father-son combination. But we also know from other texts of Scripture that Shem, Ham, and Japheth are the direct sons of Noah. They go on the ark with Noah during the Flood. They come off the ark. We have several passages and the New Testament that are clear about this. There's no question about this.

When you put it all together and we look at our facts after the Flood, who can only be the direct son of Shem because he's born two years after the Flood. You put it all together and you have a four-generation chronology that extends across the year of the Flood. Lamech, Noah, Shem, Arpachshad.

So the point of all that is to say on the front of the genealogy we've got a three-generation chronology. On the back end going across the Flood, we have four generations. If you add Methuselah in, because he dies in the year of the Flood, that's five generations of chronologically interlocked relationships based on these other texts that God has given.

When I say all that, I'm not only looking at the syntax of the text, I'm looking at the way that the whole thing has been constructed by Moses. It sort of pigeonholes you into ... If I want to interpret this non-chronologically, how does that make any sense?

I'm going to show some absurdities that come out if you try to plug in some non-literal interpretation in a little bit.

The idea here is what we see is such precise structuring of the genealogy and the extension across the Flood. It's very difficult to get out from under the chronological interpretation of the text. So these indicators help us to be sure we're interpreting it correctly.

So you know you'll recall that Green argued that genealogical gaps in other places meant that there could be gaps in Genesis 5 and 11, and therefore chronological gaps. But we've seen that the way the Hebrew word is constructed and the construction of the genealogy, it doesn't matter in the instances of Jared and Enoch, for example, and some of the others where we don't know the nature of the relationship. The nature of the relationship is irrelevant to the construction of the chronology because missing names do not necessitate missing time based on the way this text has been constructed very, very carefully.

So, Green's argument, I believe, has sort of led a hundred and some odd years of conservative scholarship in the wrong direction. I know that sounds kind of like I think I'm smarter than Green, and I think I'm smarter than everybody else. No, I don't think I'm smarter than any of those people. But when we work through the text carefully, I think a lot of errors have been made.

This is the conclusion that we come to, that the old interpretation has much to be said for it and the arguments are much stronger when we look very closely at the syntax and the structure of the genealogies.

[Short break]

... It's not the devil that's in the details it's God that's in the details and the details matter. It's really important to do these kind of things, to go over and over again what people say about the Bible. It's been a lesson that I've learned in this study, that I've been doing for seven plus years.

I have a colleague, Dr. Bryant Wood. Some of you may have heard of him. He's an archaeologist. He's famous for his work on Jericho. He has told me dozens of times: don't believe what the scholars say. So, check it for yourself. That's his mantra and he's really been someone who I admire for that reason. Go check it for yourself!

What I've found is a lot of mistakes. Quite a few people have gotten things right, I think. And so I borrow from those arguments. This is not unique. I'm not innovating anything here. I'm merely making sort of up-to-date arguments about something that people have recognized for a very long period of time as being the way to understand the text.

This is a reminder to us, too. We have a rich heritage in the history of interpretation of the church that we can draw on as modern-day Christians. It is a blessing. I found so many rich and insightful things that people had to say about these passages from antiquity and the medieval

period, about the genealogies, about their ages, about the times, and all that kind of thing. So it's been very illuminating and instructive for me as a as a Christian trying to do good scholarship.

With all that being said, we have a more modern recent phenomenon as it relates to Genesis 5 and 11. I've hinted at this a couple of times, and I'm going to be more specific. There's been some evangelicals that have moved beyond Green's argument to say these numbers are not literal at all. In other words, people before the Flood and in the post-Flood period, even all the way down to Abraham, simply we know from anthropology and archaeology that people did not live for this long.

Therefore, there must be some other interpretation of the texts that we can legitimately draw on to understand the text. There's a whole bunch of different rationales and reasonings for that, and motivations and methodologies that are employed. Obviously, I can't get involved with that today. So I'm going to give you a sort of a survey. And what I'm going to do is show you the absurdities that come out of trying to do these kind of things.

A couple of the different approaches have been: "look, they inflated the ages in the past because they wanted to honor these patriarchs so they came up with these inflated numbers." It's a way of saying, Noah was a phenomenal, God-loving, faithful man and so he didn't really live that long and this is a way of honoring him. They're called honorific formulas.

Others have said, "no, they're symbolic. We've got to figure out there's some kind of secret key to understanding the text. And we've just got to figure out what it means, because it can't mean what it says on the surface. It's got to be some secret system that tells us what it means."

Now that has implications, by the way, for the clarity and the sufficiency of Scripture. If God's people for 2,000 years couldn't understand these texts, it means that the text has been obscured and it requires an "expert" to come along in the 21st century to tell us what it means.

That's what I meant at the beginning of my talk about the implications for doctrine, the doctrine of Scripture. You have to reformulate the doctrine of Scripture if you're going to make that kind of interpretive maneuver. You can't just make the maneuver as a professing Christian.

Liberal scholars outside the church do whatever they want with the text. We can't appeal to the authority of Scripture because they don't believe in it anyway. But for evangelicals I think it's fair for us to say, "hey wait. If you're going to do this, you've got to provide a justification from the doctrine of Scripture that this is a legitimate maneuver. And, of course, you get the sense folks from what I'm arguing is it's not a legitimate maneuver. But that's the implication.

We have other things like mysticism, Jewish mysticism, secret systems. There's a whole variety of different articles. Some say it comes from Ancient Near Eastern texts. There's a list of kings that lived before the Flood in what's called the Sumerian King List. They have extremely long reigns and there seems to be some relationship between Genesis 5 and the list. But the arguments in the literature, they disagree with each other. There's something there to it, but it's hard to put together. But they insist that Genesis 5 is somehow derived from these texts, or is inspired by these texts, but can't be literal.

Then we have a new phenomenon that William Lane Craig, the Christian apologist, has been putting forth that this is part of what he calls mytho-history. It is a new genre that he kind of borrowed from a scholar named Thorkild Jacobsen, who studied the Sumerian king list. In fact, much of this material from Genesis 1 to 11 is in the realm of mytho-history, which is really a disturbing genre, a maneuver that he's made. He just recently came out with a book about Adam

on that, which is being critiqued by a number of people and is very problematic. I don't mean to slam Dr. Craig. He's a brilliant man. But I think this is a major mistake to move in this kind of direction.

The point is, these are some of the ways that people try to get around the force of the way that the text is constructed, the literalness. Let me just share with you one of the absurdities that this yields.

Let's say for a moment that these people that lived in this time really only lived to ages that are similar to ours. In the case of Jared, he wasn't 162 when Enoch was born, but he was 30. Think about the implications of that if you run that across the entire two genealogies. The goal here is that these interpreters are trying to get out from underneath the force of the text because they're aware of the external arguments, for long periods of time for the development of man based on a variety of scientific arguments. But if you interpret the text and plug those numbers in, you don't expand the chronology, you collapse it.

Because now the period of time between Jared and Enoch is not 162 years, it's 30. If you apply that to every patriarch before and after the Flood you haven't expanded the time to accommodate the science. You've collapsed it. And there's no way to get around that in my judgment, unless you want to say that Jared and Enoch were not real people.

Most evangelicals who make this argument will not go that far. They'll say these figures are historical. That whatever is recorded in the Bible happened to them. The events that they experienced were real, but the numbers are honorific or symbolic.

One of the consequences is you don't end up getting apologetically what you're looking for. You collapse the chronology into something that's even more impossible to correlate with the external evidence.

So that's what I call interpretive absurdities that are yielded when you follow the logic of these arguments, when you start to play them out. On the surface they're very appealing to people. They seem to, oh well, maybe that's a legitimate way of interpreting the text and then we don't have to have this fight with the secular scientists about the ages.

But what you end up with when you press it is something that's even more difficult, if not impossible, to defend. That's just one consequence that flows out of this interpretive maneuver.

So, again, we know you would have to inflate the beginning ages to thousands of years to stretch the timeline.

I figured it out. To get a half a million years, each begetting age would have to be at least like 10,000 years old, to stretch the chronology, because of the way the syntax is constructed. You can't get there. And obviously that would be absurd, too, because that would just completely violate the meaning of the text.

Now one of the things that's fascinating about the way that Moses constructed all of this is how particular the chronology is. Here we have Moses zeroing in on a very specific day in the history of the world as to when the Flood begins. He says, "In the 600th year of Noah's life, in the second month, on the 17th day of the month, **on that day** the fountains of the great deep burst forth, and the windows of the heavens were opened."

So, 600th year, second month, 17th day of the month, on that particular day in history. When you see “on that day” used in the Hebrew Bible, it’s always a literal particular day in the context of the time period. That’s the way it’s used.

Then we see the same thing at the end of the Flood. In the 601st year, and the first month, in the first day, and so on. So you can see how precise these events are being placed in the context of Noah’s life. There’s just no getting around how precise the references are.

But watch what happens when you want to say, “No. The numbers applied to Noah are blocks of honoring formula.” That’s what one scholar uses. Steve Collins and Craig Olson are two scholars that say that. Forty was a significant number in the Bible and maybe it was in the Ancient Near East. They think that 40 is the key to understanding this.

So, no, not in the 600th year, but in the 15 honorific blocks consisting of 40 years each year in the second month, and the 17th day of the month, and on like that. You see what happens when you start to plug in what they say is the real meaning of the text. It’s not in the 600th. It’s in this formula.

The text doesn’t mean anything. Where do you place the second month? What year is that being placed in? When I read this, I’m asking the question from the text where do I put this month, if I don’t read 600 as a literal year? I can’t put it anywhere. It’s incoherent. The text literally doesn’t make any sense. I don’t know what you do with that if you want to move in this direction.

The same thing with 601st year after the Flood in the 15 honorific blocks supposedly derived from Ancient Near Eastern mythology. Now I have to confess I am being just a wee bit snarky in the way that I’m doing this. I’m confessing. But part of the reason I’m doing that is I’m trying to appeal to people’s logical minds to show you how this just doesn’t make any sense.

If we’re going to hold to a doctrine of Scripture that says God doesn’t mumble when He speaks, especially easy-to-interpret texts like this, we are really pressing the meaning of a text into something that doesn’t mean anything. That’s what’s so troubling about these kind of interpretations.

I’ve just I just put them up here on your screen for your reflection. If you think about it, if you’re struggling with the idea that men live to be this age, if you’re wrestling with it, if you have a scientific background, if you’re just struggling with, that’s beyond my experience. Right?

Well, it’s beyond my experience, too. So I’m with you in that sense. “In the mystical interpretation still unknown to us year of Noah’s life”. We don’t know what it means. We’re waiting for scholars in the 21st century to tell us what it means.

Or, no, the numbers really come from a different mathematical system from Sumeria, which is now extinct, and that’s the key to understanding the text. That’s my example number two there. We see remnants of the Sumerian numbering system in like degrees in a circle we have 360 degrees. It’s a 60-base numerical system instead of a decimal-based one like the one that we use in the modern day.

Some people have said, a friend of mine in fact, makes this argument very strongly. I’ve tried to challenge him, but I haven’t gotten anywhere with it. He says when you calculate the numbers, there’s a curve, a sigmoid curve, that it yields, a mathematical curve. It’s got to be a contrived set of numbers. The numbers are contrived, but we don’t know what they exactly mean.

Or William Lane Craig's interpretation "in the mytho-historical year of" the ... I'm asking does Dr. Craig even believe that Noah was a real person? I don't know from reading what he says. What do I do with that? What do you do when Jesus is talking about Noah in the New Testament? What are the implications for those things?

Again, and you can do that with any interpretation you come across. Just plug in the reinterpretation of 600 and see what it yields and see if that makes any sense when you're reading the text.

I'm reminded by the way of theologian Wayne Grudem warning lay people in the church, folks like yourselves who love the Word of God, go to church, go to Sunday School, trying to raise their kids, some expert comes along and tells you some complicated meaning of the text and the Holy Spirit is doing something in your spirit to give you reservation about it. Listen to your reservation.

It's not we're not always right in the plain meaning of the text in the immediate sense. We do make mistakes. Everyone makes mistakes in interpretation. But when experts are telling you something that goes completely against what you're sensing the text is telling you, listen to that and listen to the Holy Spirit. Because the Holy Spirit's working in you to guide you. He is the ultimate Mediator of helping us understand and apply the Word of God.

That's just a pep talk, I guess, not only for you guys, but for myself.

As much as I'm involved in this academic realm, I can't forget that it's the Word of God. It's the Holy Spirit who guides me into understanding all truth.

[Comments about how long he's talked]

Henry:

Some folks say that Genesis 5:32 is ambiguous chronologically and therefore it proves that the rest of the genealogies are ambiguous. But if we allow a whole series of texts to inform us of the meaning of it, it should be interpreted as after Noah was 500, he had his three sons, and then you could figure out from the rest of Scripture, which son is the one that's born in a particular time. That is Shem. He's born when Noah is 502 years old.

But because I've talked too long, I can't get into the details with that. But again, the precision of the text is what guides us along. Moses has given us a great deal of detail in the text

The last thing I'll say is these non-literal interpretations work against, and I use the word "subvert", and it's a kind of inflammatory word, but it really concerns me when we're not taking into account the whole counsel of God when we're understanding these texts. Nowhere else in the rest of the Bible are any of the patriarchs, when we're dealing with these issues do you get any sense that we shouldn't understand these things in a straightforward way. Including Abraham's age when Isaac is born, in Romans 4, at the age of 100, which, in the non-literal interpretation, all needs to be reinterpreted, too. That's to me a major problem, that all throughout the New Testament as well.

The last thing I'll say is next week we're going to talk about the three texts, the three traditions that preserve the numbers and the differences. I'm going to give you my theory as to what I think happened. If you're interested in that whole thing from a doctrinal perspective. We have a great episode of Digging for Truth we call the Preservation of Scripture. What is the Doctrine of Preservation? How do we how relate that to the fact that people changed the numbers in these

traditions. What do we do with that? How does that fit into our understanding of God's preservation of His Word over history.

Q&A

Q: I'd like to like to start and see if I can summarize what you've said in two or three sentences and then you can correct me. So Genesis 5 and 11. There's at least three reasons that people don't like them. One is we don't know anyone living that old, so they like to make those ages younger so they're more like in our [time] when we see people live to be a hundred years old .

Number two is science and archaeology. Two and three. They want to make that extended period of time because it's too short of a total time. But what you're saying is those ages are right and the Bible said exactly what it means, and we should believe it.

A: It still comes back to the way that you just summarized it. But I'm hoping that I've made a really detailed good case as to why that you can land at that conclusion and be comfortable with it.

Q: Jason's asked do we see other areas in Scripture where we see other examples of honorific ages?

A: No, not that I know of. I'll say this interpretive maneuver is even being now applied to the life of Moses, who lived to be 120 years old. Moses, in in one place in Deuteronomy, himself says that he's 120 years old. So, I asked the question, is he honoring himself? If somebody else is honoring him it's one thing. But Moses is telling the people of Israel he is 120 years old. In a critique that I'm writing up now, the people of Israel were turning to each other saying why is Moses saying he's 120 years old? I thought he was only 70. And the father turns to the son and says, well, that's blocks of honorific formula. Don't you know that from years and years[??] in text, son?

Again, I'm being a little sarcastic, but how are the people of Israel supposed to understand what Moses is saying if he's not 120 years old? That's the fundamental interpretive question that I'm asking. The answer to the gentleman's question is I haven't found any evidence in the rest of the Bible that the ages are not intended to mean what they say.

And the Moses thing is just another thing where you plug in and you get interpretive absurdities that are yielded particularly because it's in his own speech. And Joshua does the same thing. He said I'm 85 years old today and that chronology coheres with the chronology in Moses' life. Again, it's I don't know how to get around it. And I don't want to, but if I was trying to get around it, I don't know how you get around it.

Q: Henry, I find these genealogies easy to believe, literally. Studying other areas, I don't study chronology, I find that the secular scholars are very biased and they've stretched time out exceedingly like with carbon-14, which is probably good to maybe the first 3,000 years and then it's really stretched out in time. I think there's reasons for that. I always look for the reasons for why we have these sorts of things. The long age spans.

Now, for those that after the Flood I know it's a nice generally exponential curve downward indicating some physical process was turned on about the time of the Flood. So I looked for possibilities with things like the strange skull shape of Neanderthals and *homo erectus* and *homo*

hypergensis and other ones. I find no difficulty with what you said. It's just plain common sense believing what the Bible says, and it's logical. Thank you

A: Let me add to Mike's comments because I think they're very helpful. I'm trying to help the person who might be having that kernel of doubt. I know that for some the pressures of these external arguments affect us differently. And we want to encourage people who are having those doubts, or might be even afraid to express them, that you can trust the Word of God, even if the conflict remains.

We should work towards resolving these conflicts, by studying the external data, like Mike does, and others do. But in the end we're not going to fix every purported conflict. We've got to trust the Word of God and let God sort it out, if He doesn't sort it out in our lifetime.

Q: My name is Ed. I was an art student in college and even though I learned to hone my drawing and design skills, I also had to take art history classes. Plus, my trip to Israel one year we learned that some of the archaeological findings were around 10,000 years old. You know with pottery dating and whatnot. Of course, as Michael was saying, you know they're very biased in their dating. How do we argue or justify with all these arguments?

A: I'll just give you some general real sketchy comments. Particularly before the time of Abraham, the dating is highly dependent on carbon-14 dating. Mike can tell you much more about that than I can. But if you reject the global Flood is covering the entire ecology of the planet, then you're going to assume that the carbon dates are relatively close to historical dates. But if you have an event like the Flood, it's going to disrupt the whole schedule.

But the secular scientists reject the Flood as historical. They're tied in together. The one thing we can say is these very ancient sites that are being referred to 10,000 years of conventional data, there is a relative dating to them. The further you go back in time, the older they obviously are. There's pottery associated with them and then there's pre-pottery and the pre-pottery neolithic period and so on. Then there's a period before there's pottery at all.

So those layers are relative, as far as dates go. And there's a good typology that's been worked out with the pottery in terms of relative relation to one another. What we need in the Creation community is a new generation of archaeologists who believe in the young Earth global Flood model, who can become experts in these areas and reinterpret the data. That's the thing to be praying about. We need a revolution in the pre-Abrahamic period that gets back to the biblical chronology.

That's my hope and that'll go way beyond my lifetime. But I'm hoping that a new generation of archaeologists will take the text seriously for this period. We'll be able to examine that data and then give us a new dating system. Because the data is there, but it needs to be radically redated.

I don't have the answers for the archaeology. I know the issues, but I also know that the carbon-14 is largely what drives that. That is one of the fundamental problems that we have to deal with. Mike, maybe you want to add to that.

Yes, you're right. The carbon-14 is the main system and other dating methods are kind of plugged into that, calibrated to it. So they depend on the accuracy of carbon-14. If you look at archaeology, you know you can find a lot of things up to about 1000 BC. After that you find very little and it gets stretched way out. Just that in itself indicates there's something wrong with these carbon-14 dates stretching these things out.

I think the answer is form[??] carbon-14, you form it in the upper atmosphere and it's formed by cosmic rays. So there appears, based on a study I did on beryllium-10, which is similar to carbon-14, we had a lot more cosmic rays during the Flood and it tailed off during the Ice Age so that we were producing more carbon-14 right after the Flood.

It was decreasing the time to the point where dates between 4,500 years from the Flood (about 3,000 years ago), that's 1,500 years. The carbon-14 changed about 47,000 years. Well, it was only 1,500 years. Then after 3,000 years ago, it's pretty close. So I think it's due to the more cosmic rays hitting the Earth and forming more carbon-14 in those early times during the Ice Age and a little after. In fact, you can get my article on that in the Creation Research Society Quarterly, two issues ago, if you've read that.

No, I haven't. I haven't turned my attention to the external yet. I'm still working on the internal, but there is obviously a need for a whole field of experts working on for a generation at least.