

Chronology Problems in the Bible

Introduction.

- A. Various lists of genealogies in the Bible disagree with each other.
- B. Adding up the genealogies in the Bible, esp. Genesis should give us the age of mankind, but it obviously doesn't.
- C. If the genealogies of the Bible are so mixed up, how can we trust the Bible in other areas?

I. Abridgment is the general rule.

- A. To serve the immediate purpose.
- B. No need to use space with unimportant names.
- C. Examples.
 - 1. Matthew.
 - a. Jesus, son of David, son of Abraham (1:1).
 - b. Longer list in Matthew 1.
 - 1) Vs. 8 leaves out Ahaziah, Joash, and Amaziah.
 - 2) Vs. 11 leaves out Jehoiakim.
 - 3) Makes three groups of fourteen.
 - 2. Ezra's line of descent.
 - a. 1 Chronicles 6:3-14 gives a fuller list.
 - b. Ezra 7:1-5 leaves out 6 consecutive names.
 - 3. The sons of Noah (1 Chronicles 1:1).
 - 4. The sons of Eliphaz (1 Chronicles 1:36).
- C. Contemporary readers would have known but today we don't.

II. An analysis of genealogies.

- A. Nothing in the lists of persons or events supports the idea that these are supposed to be continuous.
- B. Example: Creation – Flood – Abraham.
 - 1. We have a list of names.
 - 2. No events to fill in the years.
- C. Not meant to be continuous.
 - 1. Never does the author add up the genealogies.
 - 2. Why are ages given? To illustrate the gradual decline in length of life as the result of the Fall.

III. Israel in Egypt (Ex. 1).

- A. Immigration to Egypt (vss. 1-7).
- B. New king arose in Egypt (vs. 8) – 400 years later.
- C. Amram and Jochebed not Moses's immediate parents (2:1).

IV. Early translations from Hebrew.

- A. LXX assumes an age of 200 before birth of first son.
 - 1. Adds 100 years to low numbers.
 - 2. Subtracts 100 years from the next number.
- B. Samaritan text.
 - 1. Assumes diminishing ages.
 - 2. If the number seems too large, subtracts 100 years.
- C. To make the lists more symmetrical.

V. Patterns of Genesis genealogies.

- A. Genesis 5 and 11.
 - 1. Each genealogy contains 10 names (Cain and Abel left out).
 - 2. Each ends with a father having three sons.
- C. Sethites end with the 7th member, Enoch who walked with God (5).
- D. Cainites end with the 7th member, Lamech who boasted of his sin (4).
- E. Shemites end with Peleg and his brother (10:25).
 - 1. Peleg means “divided.”
 - 2. The earth was divided after Peleg (probably ref. to Babel).

VI. Problems with treating genealogies as continuous.

- A. Shem, Arphaxad, Selah, and Eber lived till the time of Abraham.
- B. Methuselah died in the Flood.
- C. Noah was a contemporary of Abraham for 58 years.
- D. Shem outlived Abraham by 35 years.

VII. Conclusion.

- A. Making genealogies continuous ignores Hebrew practice.
 - 1. Listing only significant names.
 - 2. Creating patterns.
- B. Scripture does not give data supporting chronological computations.
- C. Wm. Henry Green: it is precarious to assume that any Biblical genealogy is designed to be strictly continuous, unless it can be subjected to some external texts which prove it to be so.