

The Genealogies of Genesis 5 & 11: Reasons for Understanding These as Gapless Chronologies

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Introduction

This paper is concerned with the genealogies given in Genesis 5 and 11 and the bearing they might have on the dating of the creation account (Gen 1–2) and the flood event (Gen 7–9). Specifically the question is whether the genealogies in Gen 5 and 11 are “tight chronologies” or whether they have “gaps” (missing names). The question is not a moot one. If the latter is the case, then admittedly one cannot merely add up the numbers between Abraham and Adam to calculate the date of the creation account in Gen 1–2. The argument that Gen 5 and 11 have gaps was given classic expression in an article by W. H. Green in 1890, an article that has subsequently had significant influence on evangelical scholars.¹ More recently, a number of modern evangelical commentators have embraced the idea that there are gaps, including Gordon Wenham, Victor Hamilton, and Kenneth Matthews, as well as other OT scholars such as Gleason Archer.²

Numerous studies have been done on biblical chronologies in an effort to understand their purpose and function.³ The Old Testament alone has something like twenty-five genealogies of varying complexity. In general scholars distinguish two categories of biblical genealogies: linear (or vertical) genealogies and segmented (or horizontal) genealogies. Linear genealogies simply trace an unbroken line of descendants, whereas segmented genealogies trace more than one line of descent from a common ancestor. In the latter case, more than one individual may show up in the same generation. Both types are found in the context of Gen 4–11. For instance, Gen 5 is basically a linear genealogy, as is Gen 11, though both genealogies end in a segmented genealogy (the first with Noah and his three sons, and the second with Terah and his three sons). Gen 4:17-22 is similar, having a linear genealogy of the line of Cain that ends in a segmented genealogy of Lamech and his three sons (and a daughter). Gen 10:1-32 is a typical segmented genealogy.

In this paper, I will discuss the major issues affecting the decision of whether or not there are “gaps” in the genealogies of Gen 5 and 11. In contrast to some critical scholars, however, who question the historicity of the data in these chapters, I will presume that the information is historically reliable. Hence, the discussion will be about how to *interpret* the texts that we have, based on sound exegesis (including textual criticism) and sound hermeneutical principles. I will argue that the evidence favors the position that these genealogies are *gapless chronologies*.

¹ William H. Green, “Primeval Chronology,” *BibSac* 47 (Apr 1890) 285-303. As a witness to the article’s widespread influence, it was reprinted later in Walter C. Kaiser, ed., *Classical Essays in Evangelical Old Testament Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1972). For a helpful rebuttal to Green, see Jeremy Sexton, “Who Was Born When Enosh Was 90? A Semantic Reevaluation of William Henry Green’s Chronological Gaps,” *WTJ* 77 (2015) 193-218.

² Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, WBC (Waco: Word, 1987), 123-134; Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 249-254; Kenneth A. Matthews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, NAC (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 295-305; and Gleason Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, 4th rev. ed. (Chicago: Moody, 2007), 166.

³ For a general introduction, see Marshall D. Johnson, *The Purpose of the Biblical Chronologies* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1969).

The Issue of Manuscript Variations in Genesis 5 and 11: MT vs. LXX

If we assume for a moment that the creation account recorded in Genesis 1–2 took place in six literal days (based on the understanding that the Hebrew word for “day” [יִּוֵם, *yôm*] means a twenty-four hour day), and that there are no gaps in the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11, I have demonstrated in a previous article that we can date the creation event to roughly 4200 B.C.⁴ However, the figures used in that calculation were based upon the Hebrew MT (Masoretic text). The issue is a bit more complex, once we take into account the figures from the LXX tradition. Furthermore, LXX^A manuscript differs from that of LXX^B manuscript. To complicate the analysis even further, there is the question of whether or not to include the person of Kainan in Gen 11:13, which MT does not have but which both manuscripts LXX^B and LXX^A do have. [Note that the name Kainan is included in many of the Greek manuscripts at Lk 3:36 between Arpachshad and Shelah. The issue of whether or not this reading is authentic in Luke will be addressed later].

For the most part, manuscripts LXX^A and LXX^B are similar for the ages given for the individuals at the time of birth of their firstborn sons. In the genealogical list for Gen 11, they differ by a 100 years for the person of Nahor, while in the genealogical list for Gen 5, they differ by twenty years for the person of Methuselah. The following chart shows the differences between the versions in regard to the Gen 11 genealogy:

	Age at Time of Firstborn Son				Remaining Years of Life			
	MT	SP	LXX ^A	LXX ^B	MT	SP	LXX ^A	LXX ^B
1 Shem	100	100	100	100	500	500	500	500
2 Arpach-shad	35	135	135	135	403	303	430	400
(Kainan)			130	130			330	330
3 Shelah	30	130	130	130	403	303	330	330
4 Eber	34	134	134	134	430	270	370	270
5 Peleg	30	130	130	130	209	109	209	209
6 Reu	32	132	132	132	207	107	207	207
7 Serug	30	130	130	130	200	100	200	200
8 Nahor	29	79	79	179	119	69	129	125
9 Terah	70	70	70	70	135	75	135	135
Arpachshad's birth to Terah's birth (rows 2–8)	220	870	1000	1100	2606	1836	2840	2706

⁴ J. Paul Tanner, “Old Testament Chronology and Its Implications for the Creation and Flood Accounts,” *BSac* 172 (Jan-Mar 2015) 24-44.

The versions have tended to add 100 years to MT figures, as if to stretch the time intervals. Wenham concluded, “The consensus among commentators, then, is that because of their difficulty the MT figures have here the best claim to originality.”⁵ In addition, the LXX appears to be “adjusting” the dates to make the transition smoother from Shem to Abram. Otherwise, there is an abrupt drop-off following Shem (he had his first son at 100, but Arpachshad and others were around 30) and an unexpected jump with Terah (back up to 70). In short, the SP and LXX figures appear artificial, and there is no compelling reason to prefer them over the MT figures.⁶

In considering Genesis 5, again one encounters differences in the data between the MT, the LXX versions, and the Samaritan Pentateuch. The following chart shows the differences.

	Age at Time of Firstborn Son				Age at Death			
	MT	SP	LXX ^A	LXX ^B	MT	SP	LXX ^A	LXX ^B
1 Adam	130	130	230	230	930	930	930	930
2 Seth	105	105	205	205	912	912	912	912
3 Enosh	90	90	190	190	905	905	905	905
4 Kenan	70	70	170	170	910	910	910	910
5 Mahalalel	65	65	165	165	895	895	895	895
6 Jared	162	62	162	162	962	847	962	962
7 Enoch	65	65	165	165	365*	365	365	365
8 Methuselah	187	67	187	167	969	720	969	969
9 Lamech	182	53	188	188	777	653	753	753
10 Noah	500	500	500	500	950	950	950	950
Adam’s birth to Noah’s birth (rows 1–9)	1056	707	1662	1642				

* Enoch’s death at age 365 is unique and obviously breaks the longevity pattern (since God took him).

⁵ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 251.

⁶ G. Larsson has shown that the LXX (and sometimes SP) altered the numbers in the MT, which he takes as original (“The Chronology of the Pentateuch: A Comparison of the MT and LXX,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 102 [1983] 401–9).

In this case the LXX traditions are the same (except with Methuselah), and the ages at death are similar for all versions.⁷ For the most part, LXX has added 100 years to the age at the time of the firstborn son. Which of these chronologies, however, is closest to the original? Wenham suggests that the LXX is secondary:

The regular lengthening, usually by 100 years, of the period till the birth of the patriarch's first son and the corresponding contraction of his subsequent years of life looks artificial. When the LXX was being translated in Egypt, there was great interest among Egyptian Jews in chronological issues, and it seems likely that these patriarchal ages were adjusted by translators to compete with Egyptian claims about the antiquity of mankind.⁸

There is no sufficient reason to distrust the MT figures, and until there is, one should assume them to be the most reliable.

Utilizing the dates of the MT, one can use the genealogical data in Genesis 11:26 to calculate that Arpachshad was born 220 years before Terah, i.e., in 2541 B.C. \pm 25 years (2321 + 220). According to 11:10, Arpachshad was born two years after the flood, thereby yielding a date for Noah's flood of 2543 B.C. \pm 25 years.⁹

Some scholars do regard the LXX figures as more reliable than those of the MT.¹⁰ Yet this alone changes the debate very little. The maximal additional years one would gain by this would be 1466 years, going with the figures in LXX^B and including Kainan in the list. At best, this would push the creation date back to roughly 5665 B.C. If one is predisposed to an old earth view, this would hardly give him the millions of years he might have hoped for, as DNA scientist Francis Collins has argued for in his *New York Times* bestseller, *The Language of God*.¹¹ This, then, leads to the question of whether or not the Genesis 5 and 11 genealogies might be "incomplete," that is having gaps. The following table summarizes the discussion of the preceding section.

⁷ The difference in LXX manuscripts for Methuselah is easy to account for. The LXX^A figures imply that Methuselah died after the flood (obviously incorrect), and LXX^B rectified that blunder by shortening his age at the time of his firstborn son by 20 years.

⁸ Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 130. Cf. G. Larsson, "The Chronology of the Pentateuch: A Comparison of the MT and LXX," 401–09. There is some speculation that it was Manetho's *Aegyptiaca* ("History of Egypt"), supposedly written during the reigns of Ptolemy I Soter (323–283 B.C.) and Ptolemy II Philadelphus (285–246 B.C.), that may have influenced translators or scribes of the LXX to adjust the genealogies in Genesis 5 and 11 to conform with Egyptian chronological accounts.

⁹ The assumption is that Arpachshad's birth was two years from the time that the flood *began*, rather than from the end of the flood. Notice a similar phrase "after the flood" is used in regard to Noah's life in Genesis 9:28–29. From the time that the flood started (in the 600th year, 2nd month, and 17th day according to 7:11) until the time the earth was dry (the 601st year, 2nd month, and 27th day according to 8:13–14) was one year and ten days. So Noah's family was in the ark for at least a year. But Noah's life is divided into 600 years before the flood and 350 after (a total of 950) without any apparent allowance for the time on the ark.

¹⁰ Jeremy Sexton, "Who Was Born When Enosh Was 90? A Semantic Reevaluation of William Henry Green's Chronological Gaps."

¹¹ Francis S. Collins, *The Language of God* (New York: Free Press, 2006). He accepts the age of the earth as being 4.55 billion years (89) but that the earth remained barren until about 400 million years ago, at which point plants appeared on dry land, derived from aquatic life forms (95).

	MT	LXX ^B incl. Kainan	LXX ^B not incl. Kainan	LXX ^A incl. Kainan	LXX ^A not incl. Kainan
Year of Abraham's Birth	2166 B.C.	2166 B.C.	2166 B.C.	2166 B.C.	2166 B.C.
Year of Terah's Birth ¹²	2321 ± 25	2321 ± 25	2321 ± 25	2321 ± 25	2321 ± 25
Years from Arpachshad to Terah (Gen 11)	220 yrs.	1100 yrs.	970 yrs.	1000 yrs.	870 yrs.
From Flood until Arpachshad's Birth (Gen 11:10)	2 yrs.	2 yrs.	2 yrs.	2 yrs.	2 yrs.
Date for Noah's Flood	2543 B.C. ± 25	3423 B.C. ± 25	3293 B.C. ± 25	3323 B.C. ± 25	3193 B.C. ± 25
Years from Noah's Birth to the Flood	600 yrs.	600 yrs.	600 yrs.	600 yrs.	600 yrs.
Year of Noah's Birth	3143 B.C. ± 25	4023 B.C. ± 25	3893 B.C. ± 25	3923 B.C. ± 25	3793 B.C. ± 25
Years from Adam to Noah (Gen 5)	1056 yrs.	1642 yrs.	1642 yrs.	1662 yrs.	1662 yrs.
Date of Creation	4199 B.C. ± 25	5665 B.C. ± 25	5535 B.C. ± 25	5585 B.C. ± 25	5455 B.C. ± 25
Variance from MT Date	-	1466 yrs.	1336 yrs.	1386 yrs.	1256 yrs.

General Arguments Sometimes Used to Argue for Gaps in the Gen 5 & 11 Genealogies

A number of reasons have been suggested to argue in favor of the thesis that the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11 might have gaps. Before looking at specific details of the Gen 5 and 11 genealogies, I will first address a number of these issues to determine what bearing they might or might not have on the genealogies in Genesis.

The problem of comparative ANE genealogies and familial terminology. Matthews contends that there is evidence of “open genealogies” (i.e., with gaps) among other ancient Near Eastern peoples, and familial terms like “father” and “son of” were used loosely for “ancestor” and

¹² Regarding the second question, Abram was not the firstborn son of Terah, and Terah's exact age when he fathered Abram is not known (so G. Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, 166). Consequently only an approximate date for the birth of Terah is possible. Genesis 11:26 indicates that Terah was 70 when he became the father of Abram, Nahor, and Haran. However, there is a conflict if one assumes that Abram was the firstborn son. According to 12:4, Abram was age 75 when he departed Haran for Canaan in 2091 B.C. But according to Acts 7:4, Abram left Haran after his father had died. Genesis 11:32 tells us that Terah died at age 205. Therefore, Terah could not have been 70 at Abram's birth and also have died before Abram left Haran. Based on this, the latest date that Terah could have been born would be 205 years before Abram departed Haran, i.e., 2296 B.C. (2091 + 205). To calculate the earliest date that Terah could have been born, one needs to consider Abram's wife Sarah. Terah left Ur for Haran after Abram and Sarah were married (so Gen. 11:31). According to 17:17, Sarah was ten years younger than Abram, and according to 23:1, she lived to be 127 years old. If Abram was born in 2166 B.C., then Sarah lived 2156–2029 B.C. How old Sarah was at the time of her marriage to Abram is not revealed, but a safe assumption is that she was at least 15 years old. Therefore, Abram and Sarah were married by at the earliest 2141 B.C. (2156–15), and Terah and his family moved to Haran sometime after 2141 (likely several years later). Given this, Terah probably died between the years 2141 B.C. (the earliest likely date of Abram's marriage) and 2091 B.C. (when Abram left Haran for Canaan). Since Terah lived to be 205, the earliest he could have been born was 2346 B.C. (2141 + 205) and the latest 2296 B.C. (2091 + 205)—a 50-year span. Another way to say this is that Terah was born in 2321 B.C. ± 25 years (averaging 2346 and 2296). The implication of this inexactness means that ancestors of Terah can be dated to only ± 25 years of their actual birth year.

“descendant.”¹³ Even though this may be true, the question is whether or not the author of Genesis has resorted to these conventions. The evidence in the text suggests that he has not. In both Genesis 5 and 11, the author is meticulous about pointing out the age at which the father had his son, and the number of remaining years for his life. Had there been gaps in his chronology, this information would be superfluous. In several cases, biological fathers and sons are listed (for example, Adam and Seth, Seth and Enosh, Lamech and Noah, Noah and Shem, Shem and Arpachshad, and Terah and Abram), not to mention that Jude 14 states that Enoch was in the seventh generation from Adam. First Chronicles 1:19 states that Eber had two sons, Peleg and Joktan; so there are no gaps between Eber and Peleg. Finally, there is a difference between someone being listed as a “father” of another (since the Hebrew word for “father” [אב, *’ab*] can mean grandfather [Gen. 28:13] or great grandfather [1 Kings 15:10–13]) and someone “begetting” or “fathering” another. The latter verbal idea is based on a Hiphil form of the verb יָלַד (yālād). The noun “father” (אב, *’ab*) is not used in the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11. The expression translated “became the father of” (repeatedly occurring in Genesis 5 and 11) uses the verb יָלַד (yālād) in the Hiphil stem. Further comments on the verb יָלַד (yālād) will be addressed later in the paper.

In attempting to find any correlation with other ANE documents, Sumerian and Akkadian king lists have provided the major sources for comparative study. One noteworthy document is the Sumerian King List. Yet the Sumerian King List has no regular genealogical notices.

In a 1972 article addressing the issue of the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11 to the Sumerian King List, Thomas C. Hartman rightly observed that both are divided into two smaller lists by a disruptive flood, yet otherwise were quite different. He stated:

... we would have to conclude that the purpose of the King List was not to say anything in terms of absolute beginnings, but rather to trace the passing down of kingship since the time of its introduction on earth, i.e., since the beginning of civilization.

The Hebrew list, on the other hand, traces an unbroken line of descent from the creation of man by God, on down to Abram. Thus in both documents continuity is obviously important, but in the case of the Sumerian King List it is only from the introduction of an institution, kingship, that the continuity is traced. In the Hebrew account, on the other hand, it was precisely continuity from the creation of man by God which was deemed essential.¹⁴

Hartman went on to conclude: “In sum, then apart from the superficial difference in format, namely listing — flood — listing, the Sumerian King List and Genesis 5 and 11b seem to differ significantly enough as to suggest a denial that the Sumerian document served as a source for the latter.”¹⁵

Another important document is the genealogy of the Hammurabi dynasty, which preserves a record of the early rulers in the line preceding Hammurabi and his Amorite dynasty in Babylon. Yet the form involves a listing of names of each ruler without intervening comment and no

¹³ Matthews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, 302.

¹⁴ Thomas C. Hartman, “Some Thoughts on the Sumerian King List and Genesis 5 and 11B,” 27–28. Thorkild Jacobsen had earlier concluded that the Sumerian King List was compiled by Utuhegal at the inauguration of the Neo-Sumerian period (*The Sumerian King List*, Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago Assyriological Studies, 11 [Chicago: Oriental Institute, 1939] 140). Jacobsen’s dating has since been challenged by later scholars.

¹⁵ Hartman, 32.

expression of kinship. Based on correspondences in the names with the Assyrian King List and with the Babylonian King List, Hess concluded:

It is clear from these comparisons that this king list is a composite. The comments which follow the list of names suggest that this text was used in a cultic context and designed for invoking or honoring these royal ancestors of the present ruler.¹⁶

By way of contrast to the genealogies of Genesis, the longer genealogies found in the ANE are concerned with the succession of office holders (usually kings but sometimes priests and scribes). As Hess observes, “Political offices or land holdings do not seem to be involved in the genealogies of Gen 1–11.”¹⁷ Rather, the genealogies of Gen 1–11 consistently and exclusively involve relationships that are only those of kinship, namely, father and son, not that of one’s status or ruling position.

Another contrast between the genealogies of Gen 1–11 and ANE documents has to do with the way numbers are utilized in the lists. Hess describes this contrast:

. . . although some of the king lists include numbers recording lengths of reign and although these numbers are incredibly large, the length of years lived and the age at which the next figure named was begotten is never recorded in the Ancient Near Eastern king lists. This is in contrast to the biblical genealogies for whom the only purposes in using numbers seems to be that of recording the lifespan of each name bearer and the age at which he begot the next name bearer.¹⁸

In a 1989 article examining the genealogies of Genesis 1–11 with comparative literature, Richard Hess argued that “none of the comparative Ancient Near Eastern examples proposed by scholars actually have a precise parallel with any of the genealogical forms found in 1–11,” and “that the primary functions of the biblical genealogies are significantly different from those found in the Ancient Near Eastern examples.”¹⁹ At the end of his research, Hess concluded:

While useful comparisons can be drawn between the forms of literature, the fact remains that these basic forms are different and that this difference is reflected in the purposes of the literature; purposes which thrust the lists of generations in two different directions. The king lists consistently suggest a backward movement in time, while the biblical genealogies move forward in time. This would suggest a different purpose for the two forms of literature.²⁰

While a comparative study of ANE documents (mainly king lists) to that of the genealogies of Gen 1–11 is helpful, there is nothing gained from this that would suggest there are gaps in the biblical genealogies.

¹⁶ Richard S. Hess, “The Genealogies of Genesis 1-11 and Comparative Literature,” 245.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 247.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 248.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 242.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 253.

The problem of ten-generation schematics. Matthews also argues against a tight chronology in light of the use of the number “ten,” claiming that this “evidences a selective genealogy by its highly structured conventions of language and its schematic ten-generation depth.”²¹ He appeals to the use of another ten-name genealogy in Ruth 4:18–22. The latter, however, does not prove his point. It may be that the author of Ruth has purposely cast the genealogy involving Perez to David in a ten name format, omitting some generations, to reflect the ten name scheme in Gen 5 and 11.²² Why would he do that? The answer may be that in doing so, Boaz falls in slot seven.

Perez-Hezron-Ram-Amminadab-Nahshon-Salmon-**Boaz**-Obed-Jesse-David

Just as Enoch was the seventh from Adam, so Boaz appears in the seventh position from Perez. The point would be to give Boaz the *place of honor*, just as Enoch had in Gen 5.

Although the number ten seems rather conspicuous in the Gen 5 and 11 genealogies, this does not in and of itself disprove a tight chronology. As Niessen has pointed out, if some ten-generation lists have been schematized, this does not necessarily mean that all have been.²³ Niessen also notes that believing Gen 5 and 11 have been schematized because Matt 1 has been ignores the fact that they are different types of literature; that is, the Genesis texts have numbers, but Matt 1 does not. Finally, any appeal to a Sumerian king list for its ten-generation form or dependency on any similar ANE document must certainly be rejected.²⁴

There is just as much reason to believe that God in his providence has beautifully orchestrated the course of history, with numbers being very much a part of divine design throughout Scripture. Witness the 70 years of Babylonian exile (Jer 25:11–12; Dan 9:2) in relation to the “seventy weeks” prophecy of Dan 9:24–27, the forty days of testing Jesus (Matt. 4) corresponding to the forty years that the Hebrews wandered in the wilderness, and the utilization of numbers in the book of Revelation. One should not readily dismiss the idea that God would intentionally cause ten generations from Adam to Noah, and ten from Noah to Abraham.

The problem of gaps in Matthew’s genealogical account. Some have appealed to known gaps in the genealogy of Jesus in Matthew 1 to argue that there are likely gaps in Genesis 5 and 11 as well, especially since Matthew devised a three-fold scheme of fourteen generations each (Matt 1:17).²⁵ Admittedly, Matthew omitted three names in verse 8 between Joram and Uzziah (Ahaziah, Joash, and Amaziah) or four if Athaliah is included. There is also a text critical problem in verse 11, which says, “Josiah became the father of Jeconiah [i.e., Jehoiachin] and his brothers.” One might have expected this to say that Josiah became the father of Eliakim (i.e., Jehoiakim), since Jeconiah

²¹ Matthews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, 303.

²² One cannot prove that the author of Ruth has omitted some names in the Ruth 4:18-22 list (1 Chron 2:5-15 has the same list of names). Yet most modern commentators think so (e.g., R. L. Hubbard, *The Book of Ruth*, NICOT, [1988] 280-85; F. Bush, *Ruth/Esther*, Word [1996] 13-16; and R. Chisholm, *A Commentary on Judges and Ruth* [2013] 682-85). Given that Hezron was born before 1876 B.C. (Gen 46:12) and David was born abt. 1041 B.C., the average generation span would be over 100 years for this to be a tight chronology, far higher than that in Gen 11:10-26.

²³ Richard Niessen, “A Biblical Approach to Dating the Earth: A Case for the Use of Genesis 5 and 11 as an Exact Chronology,” 63.

²⁴ Gerhard F. Hasel, “The Genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11 and Their Alleged Babylonian Background,” 361–74. Arguing in favor of Genesis 5 and 11 being made to fit a ten-generation form is Abraham Malamat, “King Lists of the Old Babylonian Period and Biblical Genealogies,” in *Essays in Memory of E. A. Speiser*, ed. William W. Hallo, American Oriental Series 53 (New Haven, CT: American Oriental Society, 1968), 163–73. Wilson, however, has demonstrated the flaws in Malamat’s presentation (Robert R. Wilson, “The Old Testament Genealogies in Recent Research,” 169–89).

²⁵ Matthews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, 303.

was the grandson of Josiah and the son of Eliakim. Some manuscripts have Eliakim rather than Jeconiah, though Jeconiah has strong manuscript support. Since Matthew included “and his brothers,” he was obviously cognizant of the cluster of brothers that stemmed from Josiah. By mentioning only one of Josiah’s descendants, Matthew preserved his fourteen-generation scheme. He may have selected Jeconiah because he was the king who survived in Babylon (2 Kings 25:27–30) and through whom the Davidic line continued.

So what are left are not widespread gaps in the Matthew 1 genealogy. There is basically *one omission* at verse 8 (involving a string of three or four names) and one puzzling statement about Jeconiah in verse 11. Regarding the omission at 1:8, were these names excluded for ideological reasons—perhaps because of the illegitimate infusion of Ahab’s line into the Judean kings? [Ahaziah was a son-in-law of Ahab, who was under God’s curse, according to 1 Kings 21:20–22.] Carson has suggested, “The three omissions not only secure fourteen generations in this part of the genealogy . . . but are dropped because of their connection with Ahab and Jezebel, renowned for wickedness (2 Kings 8:27), and because of their connection with wicked Athaliah (2 Kings 8:26), the usurper (2 Kings 11:1–20).”²⁶ Even with these tensions, one must admit that the genealogy in Matthew 1 is distinct from those in Genesis 5 and 11 and therefore does not provide a basis for concluding that they have gaps. After all, Matthew was structuring his genealogy to fit the fourteen-generation scheme that he admitted utilizing (Matt. 1:17), and he did not give the ages (at birth of firstborn son and at death) found in the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11.

The problem of a gap in Ezra’s genealogical account. Some have also claimed that there is a gap in the genealogy given in Ezra 7:1–5, which links Ezra to Aaron, the first high priest. In comparison with the genealogy in 1 Chronicles 6:3–15, six names are missing from the genealogical list of Ezra (between Meraioth and Azariah). A closer inspection, however, suggests that there really is no gap in Ezra’s list. Rather it seems that a copyist (subsequent to the original penning of Ezra) inadvertently left out a string of six names. The list in 1 Chronicles 6 has two men with the name Amariah. The first one follows the name Meraioth and the second follows Azariah. While copying the list, a scribe’s eye accidentally skipped from the first Amariah to the second one, causing him to omit six names. The author of Ezra did not leave out names in the genealogical list, i.e., he did not purposefully create a gap. This *apparent gap* probably came about by scribal error.

The problem of Kainan’s name in the LXX of Genesis 11:12. At Genesis 11:12 in the LXX manuscripts presently known, there is an additional name in the genealogy of Shem, namely, Kainan (placed between Arpachshad and Shelah). Complicating the textual problem, most Greek manuscripts (excepting D and Π^{75vid}) include the name Kainan (spelled “Cainan” in most English versions) in the genealogy of Jesus at Luke 3:36. Marshall drew the conclusion that Luke was using the LXX, though Bock took the position that the original autograph of Luke did not have the name Kainan.²⁷ For some, the presence of the name Kainan in Luke 3:36 shows that it was in the original LXX manuscript for Genesis, which then confirms a gap in the Genesis 11 genealogy.

A closer investigation, however, suggests that the name Kainan was not part of the original autograph of Luke, despite the numerous Greek manuscripts supporting that reading. Extant copies of the LXX (especially A, B, and ⌘) are largely “late,” dating to the 4th and 5th centuries A.D., and do not necessarily conform perfectly to earlier copies of the LXX. Other evidence suggests that

²⁶ D. A. Carson, “Matthew,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 67.

²⁷ I. Howard Marshall, *Commentary on Luke*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 165; and Darrell L. Bock, *Luke 1:1–9:50*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 359.

copies of the LXX existed in the first century that did *not* have the name Kainan. Josephus, for example, apparently worked with a copy of the LXX that did not have the name Kainan. In his *Antiquities* 1.146, Josephus for the most part used the numbers from the LXX for the pre-Abrahamic list of names (confirming that he was working from a copy of the LXX), but his list did not have the name Kainan between Arpachshad and Shelah. The same is true for Sextus Julius Africanus, the most famous early church historian and chronologist prior to Eusebius. Julius wrote *Chronographiae*, covering all of history from creation until A.D. 221. Although his work is no longer extant, extracts of it are found in Eusebius's *Chronicon*. Eusebius stated in his *Chronicon* that the Septuagint identified Arpachshad as the father of Shelah (not Kainan). So Eusebius (and Julius Africanus) must have had access to a copy of the LXX without the name Kainan following Arpachshad. Finally, there is the evidence from Theophilus, said to be the seventh bishop of Antioch (ca. 169–ca. 183), who died ca. A.D. 183–85. In his *Apologia ad Autolyicum* (“Apology to Autolyicus”), he gives the list of men in the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11.²⁸ His numbers reflect that he had consulted the LXX, but Theophilus has Shelah, not Kainan, as the son of Arpachshad. In summary, the evidence from Josephus, Julius Africanus, Eusebius, and Theophilus shows that there were copies of the LXX in the first through third centuries that did not have Kainan as a son of Arpachshad.²⁹ This points to the probability that the name was a later insertion into the LXX tradition. This, together with the absence of Kainan from Luke 3:36 in the earliest Greek manuscript of Luke, namely Π^{75vid} (third century A.D.), suggests that the name Kainan (as the son of Arpachshad) was not in Luke's original autograph and thus cannot be used as proof of a gap in the Genesis 11 genealogy.

In summary, any claim to gaps in the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11 based on comparison with other genealogies fails to settle the debate. As Külling has demonstrated, biblical genealogies come in more than one genre, which must be considered.³⁰ Freeman summarizes Külling's reasoning:

One type of genealogy (for example, Ezra 7) aims mainly at establishing someone's right to a certain office, position, or inheritance, and need not include every generation. Another type includes sufficient details, especially numerical data, to indicate it intends to establish a chronology, although other intentions may be present as well.³¹

The genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11 have circumstances different from those in Ruth 4, Ezra 7, and Matthew 1. The numerical notations in Genesis 5 and 11 about the fathers' ages mark these genealogies as distinct, and thus should be regarded as “chronogenealogies” in distinction from non-chronological genealogies. Likewise, arguments based on speculative criteria involving the relation of Abram to Shem or on account of the name Kainan in manuscripts of Luke 3:36 are unconvincing.

The Problem of Telescoping. One of the arguments used against the view of gapless chronologies in Gen 5 and 11 is the evidence of *telescoping* that is attested elsewhere in the Bible.

²⁸ Book III, Chapter 24, in the *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 2, *Fathers of the Second Century* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 118.

²⁹ Hippolytus, writing in the early third century A.D., did include Kainan as the son of Arpachshad. So conflicting manuscript traditions existed at least by this time. See *The Refutation of All Heresies*, Book X, Chapter 26, in the *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 5, *Fathers of the Third Century* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 149.

³⁰ Samuel R. Külling, *Are the Genealogies in Genesis 5 and 11 Historical and Complete: That Is, without Gaps?* 30–31. Cf. David T. Rosevear, “The Genealogies of Genesis,” 68–77; and James B. Jordan, “The Biblical Chronology Question: An Analysis.”

³¹ Travis R. Freeman, “Do the Genesis 5 and 11 Genealogies Contain Gaps?” 290.

A case in point is Exod 6:14-27 that gives the genealogy of Levi (the son of Jacob) to Moses and Aaron. Although the passage begins by listing Reuben as the firstborn of Jacob, it goes no further than Levi (hence, a truncated genealogy). The author's point is rather obvious: his concern in this context is not to list all the twelve sons of Jacob and their children, but rather to show Moses' descent from Levi, so as to underscore his priestly heritage and in doing so, to establish his authority over the people he led out of Egypt. Yet the author only lists four generations that follow Jacob:

(Jacob) – Levi–Kohath–Amram–Moses

Based on the biblical data provided elsewhere, Abraham's date of birth can be determined to be 2166 B.C. and the date of the exodus from Egypt as 1446 B.C.³² Using the chronological data in Genesis, the dates for Jacob would be 2006-1859 B.C., while the dates of Moses (age eighty at the time of the exodus) would be 1526-1406 B.C. Furthermore, Gen 46:11 indicates that both Levi and his son Kohath appeared before Pharaoh along with Jacob's larger family, an event that can be dated to 1876 B.C.³³ Yet if Kohath was born before 1876 B.C. and Moses was born in 1526 B.C., it is highly improbable that Amram is the only link between them.³⁴ Hence, the genealogy does not seem to be exhaustive but is sufficient for the author's purpose, namely, to link Moses back to Levi. This conclusion is supported by the fact that 1 Chronicles 7:23-27, in a genealogy of Jacob's grandson Ephraim, indicates ten generations following Jacob leading to Joshua, a contemporary of Moses.³⁵

(Jacob) – (Joseph) – Ephraim–Rephah –Telah–Tahan–Ladan–Ammihud–Elishama–Nun–Joshua

³² For the documentation of the biblical chronology and Abraham's date, see my paper, "Old Testament Chronology and Its Implications for The Creation and Flood Accounts" 24-44. The date of 1446 B.C. for the exodus and 2166 B.C. for Abraham's birth is also defended by Eugene Merrill, "Fixed Dates in Patriarchal Chronology," *BibSac* 137 (July–Sept 1980) 241-51.

³³ According to Exod 12:40, the entry of Jacob's family to Egypt took place 430 years before the exodus. I defend the interpretation of 1876 B.C. and discuss the textual conflicts with LXX in my 2015 paper, "Old Testament Chronology," 38-39.

³⁴ The complication can be further demonstrated in the following way. Since Kohath appeared in Egypt with Jacob's family in 1876 B.C. (Gen 46:11) and since he lived to be 133 years old (Exod 6:18), the very latest he could have died would be 1743 B.C. (1876 - 133). If he were the literal father of Amram, then Amram would have had to have been born before 1743 B.C. On the other hand, if Amram is the literal father of Moses, then Amram had to have been alive at the time of Moses' birth in 1526 B.C. We know from Exod 6:20 that Amram died at the age of 137. So the earliest possible date for Amram's birth would then be 1663 B.C. (1526 + 137). But this conflicts with birth date of Amram based on Kohath's latest possible year of death. Hence, there has to be a gap in the list, and it is probably between Amram and Moses. This issue is basically avoided in the commentaries (e.g., Victor Hamilton, *Exodus*; and Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus*, though Stuart does acknowledge [176] that the genealogy of Exod 6:16-20 does have gaps). Dyke and Henry grapple with the issue, and take the position that Amram is not the literal father of Moses, and thus the gap is between them ("From Noah to Abraham to Moses: Evidence of Genealogical Gaps in Genesis, Part 2"), a position also advocated earlier by W. H. Green ("Primeval Chronology," 292). The evidence for this is that Amram's wife was Jochebed, the daughter of Levi (Num 26:59), and that Amram married his father's sister, i.e., his aunt (Exod 6:20). 1 Chron 5:29 (6:3 Eng) simply indicates that Aaron and Moses were "sons" of Amram, a term which can also mean grandsons or descendants (וּבְנֵי עַמְרָם אֶהְרֹן וּמֹשֶׁה, *ûb'ne' amram 'aharōn umōšeh*). Note that Exod 2:1 does not indicate the names of Moses' parents. [In Exod 6:20, Jochebed "bore him Aaron and Moses," but the verb is a Qal form of *yālaq*, not the Hiphil].

³⁵ This point is valid, only if all the names actually represent sons and not brothers. Note that in the case of 1 Chron 6:22-24, some of the names in the list are actually brothers (Assir, Elkanah, and Ebiasaph), as is clear from a comparison with 1 Chron 6:37-38 and Exod 6:24.

Other scholars would argue that we also have telescoping in the Davidic genealogy found in Ruth 4:18-22:

(Judah) - Perez–Hezron–Ram–Amminadab–Nahshon–Salmon–Boaz–Obed–Jesse–David

This is possible, given that Hezron was apparently born before 1876 B.C. (the date of the family's appearance before Pharaoh, Gen 46:12), while David was born about 1041 B.C. (he was thirty years old at the time he became king, 2 Sam 5:4). Yet the Davidic genealogies in 2 Chron 2:1-15, Matt 1:2-6, and Luke 3:31-34 do not (conclusively) indicate that there is telescoping.³⁶ According to Gen 38:27-29, Perez was a literal son of Judah, while according to Gen 46:12, Hezron was a son of Perez. A fair reading of 1 Chron 2:9 indicates that Hezron was the father of Ram. Boaz was obviously the father of Obed, and Jesse was the father of David. So, if there are gaps, they would have to be with one of the other names. [See further discussion for Ruth 4:18-22 under "The problem of ten-generation schematics"].

Other scholars have mentioned the genealogy of Christ in Matthew 1 as another example of telescoping. At best, however, this is very minor (see discussion earlier in the paper), and there are clearly theological and thematic reasons for the exclusion of a few names. This has a very negligible effect on the time range of the genealogy.

In summary, the three most crucial passages that need to be examined for evidence of telescoping are Exod 6:14-27, Ruth 4:18-22, and Matthew 1. In the discussion by Keathley and Rooker on telescoping, they are so persuaded of this being a significant issue that they hastily conclude that Gen 5 and 11 must have gaps:

Consequently, it is doubtful if the genealogies in chapters 5 and 11 can be used with confidence to construct a comprehensive chronology for the early chapters of Genesis. It is questionable that the sum of these years could be used to arrive at the age of mankind. Genesis 5 is selective in creating its ten-generation depth. The ten-name scheme telescopes the number of descendants but creates what appears to be a comprehensive historical chronology.³⁷

In response, there are two observations that I feel nullify the effectiveness of their argument:

(1) Even if telescoping is observed elsewhere in Scripture, that does not lead to the conclusion that we have this in Gen 5 and 11. Not all genealogies are the same! I would argue here that the context of Genesis 5 and 11 reveals a very different type of genealogy than those found in such passages as Exod 6:14-27, Ruth 4:18-22, and Matt 1. In the case of the latter, the primary purpose is to connect the persons on each end of the genealogical thread, without being concerned about chronological details. Yet in the case of Gen 5 and 11, the author has gone to great lengths to provide chronological details, namely, the age at which one person "fathers" another and how many more years he lived. If one was only listing the *primary names* (excluding some) to connect one historical figure with another (e.g., Noah with

³⁶ There is a text critical problem at Lk 3:33. Some translations (NASB, ESV, and NRSV) do have an additional name, "Admin." Other translations, however, omit this name (so NET, NIV, and NKJV). There is a significant variation in the Gk manuscripts, and several different options are found. In general, the name "Admin" is omitted in manuscripts A D K Δ Ψ 33, but is attested in p⁴vid ⋈* B. For discussion, see Bock (*Luke 1:1-9:50*, 361-62) and I. Howard Marshall (*Commentary on Luke*, 165). The name "Admin" is unattested in the LXX.

³⁷ Kenneth D. Keathley, and Mark F. Rooker, "Are There Gaps in the Biblical Genealogies?" 174.

Adam), this kind of information would be superfluous. Obviously the genealogies of Gen 5 and 11 *do more* than merely connect one to another.

(2) If these passages (Exod 6:14-27, Ruth 4:18-22, and Matt 1) are used to substantiate telescoping (despite the cautions mentioned in this paper), we would also need to conclude that in such cases, any gaps are of a very limited nature. A proper parallel to be drawn from this would be that Gen 5 and 11 do not have *massive gaps*. Even Keathley and Rooker admit this: “Even though there is evidence of telescoping, gaps, and selection in the biblical chronology of the genealogies, we still have the impression from the biblical genealogies that not an enormous amount of time has passed since the beginning of creation.”³⁸ Therefore, the argument of telescoping—even if admitted—does not satisfy the demand of old earth advocates who might wish for millions of years in support of their theories.

The Context and Structure of the Genealogies in Gen 5 and 11

The primary purpose of the book of Genesis is not to teach the age of the earth or *how* God created everything, though the text (as God’s inerrant Word) is truthful and reliable regarding everything it has to say about such matters. Yet from the overall perspective of the book as a whole, I would describe the primary purpose of Genesis in this way:

to reveal how a loving and sovereign Creator God reached down into a fallen world that had descended into rebellion and wickedness and chose one man (Abram) through whom He could build a nation and begin His program of salvation-history, and in doing so could draw those of faith (from all ethnic groups) back into submission unto Himself that they might be blessed by Him.

The flood account underscores that this Creator God does bring judgment upon those who rebel against His sovereign rule. Yet He is also a God of grace and compassion, and there are those who find “favor” (חֵן, *hēn*) in His eyes . . . men like Noah and Abram. With this in mind, what are the purposes of the genealogies? They tie God’s call of Abram with God’s redemptive purpose He began with Adam. Rebellion against the Creator God has never thwarted His plans.

The background for the genealogies stems from the effect of sin upon God’s created order and the curse of death upon mankind.³⁹ The genealogy of Gen 4:17-24 highlights Lamech in the seventh generation from Adam who has no fear of God and boasts in his sin of killing a fellow human being.⁴⁰ Yet Lamech (and those who follow in his stead) will not undermine God’s program of blessing. The genealogy of Gen 5 introduces us to another man in the seventh generation from Adam (but by way of Seth), namely, Enoch. He stands in stark contrast to Lamech, for he “walks with God” (Gen 5:22). The fact that “God took him” (Gen 5:24) clarifies that the curse of death is

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 176.

³⁹ For the purposes of this paper, I am going to assume that the genealogies of Gen 4 and 5 have a separate origin, and that the common names (Enoch and Lamech) simply reflect different individuals. For discussion, see Travis R. Freeman, “A New Look at the Genesis 5 and 11 Fluidity Problem,” 269-72.

⁴⁰ R. B. Robinson (“Literary Functions of the Genealogies of Genesis,” 600, fn 8) points out a certain irony to be found in the Gen 4 genealogy: “The use of the genealogy to link two murderers is highly ironic. Their actions in bringing life to an end contradict the whole logic of the genealogies, which normally record the orderly continuation of life from one generation to the next. The irony, in turn, highlights a fundamental theme in Genesis, namely that human sin stands in profound contradiction to the created order of God. Cain’s and Lamech’s acts subvert the very nature of genealogical succession, which rests on the command to be fruitful and multiply in Genesis 1 28.”

not the final answer. With God, there is hope beyond physical death (a hope not witnessed in the line of Cain). The contrast between Lamech and Enoch—both of the seventh generation—is not accidental. Had there been gaps up until this point, the contrast would not have been as dramatic. Furthermore, those of the line of Seth and Enoch lead to Noah, the man chosen by God to survive the flood judgment, so that a fresh start can be made in the “new world.”

Meticulously, the author of Genesis (Moses) records not only the names of the ten men of the “godly line” in Gen 5, but also the details of their ages and life-spans. In fact the author has done this in a rather consistent and methodical way, with only minor interruptions and modification. The structure can be diagrammed in this way:⁴¹

וַיְחִי P_{N1} X שָׁנָה וַיֹּלְדָה אֶת־P_{N2}:
וַיְחִי־P_{N1} אֶחָד־הוֹלִידוֹ אֶת־P_{N2} Y שָׁנָה
וַיֹּלְדָה בָּנִים וּבָנוֹת:
וַיְהִי כָל־יְמֵי־P_{N1} X + Y שָׁנָה וַיָּמָת:

PN₁ lived X (number of) years, and he **fathered** PN₂;
 PN₁ lived after he **fathered** PN₂ Y (number of) years;
 And he **fathered** (other) sons and daughters;
 So all the days of PN₁ were X + Y years; and he died.

Following the flood the sons of Noah multiply, and nations are formed from their offspring. Yet we quickly recognize that evil has not been eradicated but still infects those in the “new world.” The bloodthirsty tyrant Nimrod and the incident of the tower of Babel testify to what Satan’s diabolical treachery is all about. Yet God is in no wise defeated. The ironic account of God’s confusing the languages and scattering mankind (Gen 11:1-9) attests to this. This is immediately followed by the genealogy of Gen 11:10-26, showing us how the line of Shem (“the father of all the children of Eber,” from which we get *Hebrew*) brings us to Abram. With this established, the main storyline embarks at Gen 11:27 with the seventh *tôl’ dōt* of the book that will explain what became of the man Terah that bore the son Abram.

The genealogy of Gen 11:10-26 (with only slight modification) has a similar structure to that of Gen 5, yet without the final line giving the total years and the statement of the person’s death. What is missing is the statement, “So all the days of PN₁ were X + Y years; and he died.” Perhaps the absence of the last line of the structure found in Gen 5 (the total years and death) was not thought necessary, since the theological point about death was very germane to Gen 5 but not needing to be reiterated in Gen 11.

The Verb יָלַד (*yālad*) in Gen 5 and 11

Fundamental to an understanding of the genealogies in Gen 5 and 11 is the use of the Hebrew verb יָלַד (*yālad*), commonly translated “became the father of” (NASB, NIV, NRSV, and NLT), “fathered” (NET, ESV), or “begot” (NKJV). The verb is quite common in the OT, being used some

⁴¹ I am indebted to Richard C. Hess (“The Genealogies of Genesis 1-11 and Comparative Literature,” 243) for this illustration, though I have made slight modification to his original example. In his work, he goes into greater detail about the verbal analysis.

492x.⁴² Most often it occurs in the Qal stem (238x) or the Hiphil stem (176x), and less frequently in the other stems. In general *yālad* is commonly used for humans giving or causing birth, though *yālad* is used a few times (rarely) with God as the subject and a few times for figurative “birthing.” The Hiphil usage of the verb (when used of humans) is exclusively used of a male subject *causing the birth* of a child. When it is a female giving birth to a child, the Qal stem will be used. There are a few exceptions where the Qal is used even of the father.⁴³ Hence, it is not surprising that in the genealogies of Gen 5 and 11 (where we have fathers causing the birth of sons), *yālad* is used exclusively in the Hiphil stem.⁴⁴

In a study of the 176 occurrences of the Hiphil of *yālad* in the OT, it is almost always used literally of a father causing the birth of his physical son. This occurs 169x, or in 96% of cases. Otherwise, the Hiphil is used 4x figuratively, and 3x where the object of the “fathering” extends to a generation beyond the immediate son (Deut 4:25; 2 Kgs 20:18 = Isa 39:7). [The claim that the Hiphil of *yālad* in Lev 25:45 refers to the *begetting of extended families* is inaccurate. The Hiphil verb הוֹלִידוּ occurs in a relative clause that refers back to the “sons” from these sojourners in the land. The point is that these sojourners fathered “sons,” not that they fathered families or clans (מִשְׁפָּחוֹת)]. Hence, in less than 2% of cases in the OT do we find the Hiphil of *yālad* referring to a grandson or other descendant (3/176 = 1.7%), and even here two of the three involve a duplicate account.⁴⁵

In order for one to argue that there are gaps in the genealogies of Gen 5 and 11 on the basis of the Hiphil verb *yālad*, one has to establish both that (1) there are cases where the Hiphil of *yālad* involves a descendant beyond the immediate literal son; and (2) there is warrant and compelling reason to believe that such is the case with Gen 5 and 11. Regarding point one, there are two cases where the Hiphil verb *yālad* refers to the fathering of a descendant beyond that of one’s literal son, and these will now be examined more closely:

1. Deut 4:25

⁴² J. Schreiner, “וֹלִידוּ *yālad*,” in *TDOT*, ed. G. J. Botterweck and H. Ringgren, 6:76. A search using Logos Bible software indicated 493 total occurrences.

⁴³ Of the 238x that the Qal of *yālad* is used in the OT, there are only a few places where the subject is a male. Where this happens, it is always in either a genealogical list (Gen 4:18; 22:23; 25:3; several times in 10:8-26; and several times in 1 Chron 1:10-20), or in proverbial sayings (Prov 17:21; 23:22, 24).

⁴⁴ Of the 176x that the Hiphil of *yālad* is used in the OT, this occurs most frequently in Genesis (59x) and 1&2 Chronicles (83x), which is understandable in light of the emphasis upon genealogies in these books. Otherwise, the Hiphil occurs 9x in the genealogy of Ruth 4:18-22, and only 25x in all the rest of the OT.

⁴⁵ Based on my survey of the usage of the Hiphil of *yālad*, it is simply not true (as Dyke and Henry have asserted) that for *yālad* to mean a literal father-son relationship in genealogy passages, there must be some clear indication that this is the case, as signaled by the word הָרָא (*hārā*, “conceived”) and/or a birth narrative that confirms the date of birth. Cf. D. J. Dyke and H. Henry, “From Noah to Abraham to Moses: Evidence of Genealogical Gaps in Mosaic Literature, Part 5.”

“When you **become the father of** children and children’s children and have remained long in the land, and act corruptly, and make an idol in the form of anything, and do that which is evil in the sight of the LORD your God *so as* to provoke Him to anger,

כִּי־תוֹלִיד בָּנִים וּבָנֵי בָנִים

2. Isa 39:7 (= 2 Kgs 20:18)

“And *some* of your sons who will issue from you, **whom you will beget**, will be taken away, and they will become officials in the palace of the king of Babylon.”

וּמִבְּנֵיךָ אֲשֶׁר יֵצְאוּ מִמֶּךָ אֲשֶׁר תוֹלִיד יִקְחוּ וְהָיוּ סְרִיסִים בְּהֵיכַל מֶלֶךְ בָּבֶל:

Several observations need to be made about these two exceptional uses of the Hiphil of *yālaḏ*:

1. In both situations, there are statements in the surrounding *context* clarifying that *yālaḏ* is not to be understood in its normative way of a literal father-son.
2. In both situations, the *temporal direction* of the verb is for the future, where one might expect that further descendants might issue from the immediate ones. This is not the case with Gen 5 and 11, where the past is in view and where subsequent sons are being specifically delineated.
3. In both situations, where *yālaḏ* might extend beyond the immediate son, it only does so to one more generation in the case of Deut 4:25, and only four more generations in the case of Isa 39:7 (Hezekiah – Manesseh – Amon – Josiah – sons of Josiah).

Hence, it is not a valid application to take these rare exceptions and project them backwards upon Gen 5 and 11 to insist that *yālaḏ* allows for gaps in the list. First, Deut 4:25 and Isa 39:7 are *rare* exceptions, and sound hermeneutics demand that justification in the text first be established before assuming there are gaps in the case of Gen 5 and 11. Second, and building on the first point, there is nothing in the context of Gen 5 and 11 that clarifies subsequent generations are meant by the names (in contrast to Deut 4:25 and Isa 39:7). To the contrary, we do have multiple instances where literal father-son relationships are known: Adam-Seth, Seth-Enosh, Lamech-Noah (since he names his son), Noah-Shem, Shem-Arpachshad, Eber-Peleg (in light of the naming in 10:25), and Terah-Abram. This would lead us to expect all of them to be literal father-son relationships, barring any evidence to the contrary. Third, the genealogies in Gen 5 and 11 are not *looking forward* (as with Deut 4:25 and Isa 39:7), but are a reporting of “fathering” in the past where names are known. Fourth, even if we allowed Deut 4:25 and Isa 39:7 to affect our understanding of the Gen 5 and 11 genealogies (possible gaps), these exceptional verses would not lead us to expect significant gaps as some have maintained: “From these two examples, together with our earlier articles, it can be concluded that **large gaps are possible** in the genealogies in Genesis 5, 10, and 11.”⁴⁶ [Emphasis mine]. Based on the preceding points, good exegesis would lead us to conclude that on the basis of the Hiphil verb *yālaḏ* used in Gen 5 and 11, this provides no warrant for the expectation of gaps.

⁴⁶ Daniel J. Dyke, and Hugh Henry, “Biblical Genealogies Revisited: Further Evidence of Gaps.”

The Question of Names Implying a “Line that Resulted in a Descendant”

In the preceding section, I argued that of the 176x that the Hiphil verb *yālad* is used in the OT, only rarely (actually, only two known cases) is it used of a descendant beyond one’s literal son, and that there are significant reasons why it is not used in this way in Gen 5 and 11. Another argument involving the Hiphil verb *yālad* used by those who argue for gaps is that the text carries an *implied meaning*. Their argument is that in some cases, when the author writes “PN₁ lived X (number of) years, and he fathered PN₂,” we must understand that this is meant to convey that “PN₁ lived X (number of) years, and he fathered *the line that resulted in* PN₂.”

Since we know that several of the names in Gen 5 and 11 do involve literal father-son (e.g., Adam-Seth), if this argument were true, it would only be applicable to the other names that are not as certain. So, as an example, let us take Mahalalel and Jared (Gen 5:15-17). Those who argue for gaps would understand this to mean that Mahalalel had a son that fathered a son that fathered a grandson, etc., who eventually fathered Jared. The verse could then be represented by the following formula:

“Mahalalel lived 65 years, and he fathered PN₁, who fathered PN₂, who fathered PN₃, who fathered PN₄, . . . , who fathered PN_x, who fathered Jared.” In this case PN_x would represent some generation down the line just before Jared, though we (the readers of Genesis) have no idea how many generations he might be from Mahalalel.

Theoretically, the same scenario could be true in any of the other relationships in the list where we do not know for sure that they are literal father-son. Yet there are a number of problems with this theoretical argument:

1. There is no known precedent for understanding any of the verses in Gen 5 and 11 in this way. That is, we have no other known examples where the named son represents “the line that resulted in this son,” neither in the Bible nor in any other ANE literature.
2. To say that the named son represents “the line that resulted in this son,” is not hermeneutically sound, as it is tantamount to a change in the wording of the text itself.

Freeman writes, “To change the wording of the formula from, ‘When X had lived Y years, he became the father of Z’ to ‘When X had lived Y years, he begat someone in the line of descent that led to Z,’ changes the author’s intended meaning and constitutes a major violation of a well-established hermeneutical principle.”⁴⁷

3. The numbers provided in the text (age at birth of son, subsequent years after the birth, and total years) would be superfluous, and of no value to the story line.

Granted, those who advocate for gaps in the chronologies have suggested other purposes for the numbers to counter this argument. These will be discussed and evaluated in the next major section of this paper.

4. To argue that the named son represents “the line that resulted in this son,” simply flies in the face of the known evidence. There are too many cases where we know that literal fathers and sons are in view, which ought to prompt us to expect that the unknown cases

⁴⁷ T. R. Freeman, “Do the Genesis 5 and 11 Genealogies Contain Gaps,” 304.

would be also. Furthermore, Jude 14 indicates that Enoch was ἑβδόμος ἀπὸ Ἀδὰμ, “in the seventh generation from Adam” (NRSV).

5. Even if the named son (PN₂) represented an unknown number of generations in the formula “PN₁ lived X (number of) years, and he fathered *the line that resulted in* PN₂,” that would not lead *mathematically* to a greater number of years.⁴⁸

The point here is that there must be consistency of variables. Specifically, if indeed PN₂ really means “*the line that resulted in* PN₂,” it still must be true that “PN₁ lived X (number of) years” after “*the line that resulted in* PN₂.” Using again the example of Mahalalel and Jared, if someone wants to argue that Gen 5:15 means “Mahalalel lived sixty-five years, and became the father of *the line that resulted in* Jared,” then he must also be consistent and say that Gen 5:16 means “Then Mahalalel lived eight hundred and thirty years after he became the father of *the line that resulted in* Jared.” One cannot limit Mahalalel’s 830 years to the first link in the chain; it is the whole chain including Jared.

The Role of the Numbers in the Gen 5 and 11 Genealogies

A point was made in the previous section that, if there were gaps in the genealogies of Gen 5 and 11, the meticulous recording of numbers (age, longevity) would be superfluous. Those who advocate for gaps, however, have made suggestions that (they think) would explain the numbers otherwise.

For example, Dyke and Henry, following the lead of B. B. Warfield, have argued to the contrary. They write:

A century ago, B. B. Warfield wrote an article in *The Princeton Theological Review* in which he observed that Genesis 5 contains much more information than just the age of the progenitor (or father) at the birth of a descendant (or son). He opines that the reason for this inclusion “cannot have been a chronological one: for all the items of information furnished do not serve a chronological purpose.” He suggests that the additional detail serves “to make a vivid impression upon us of the vigour and grandeur of humanity in those old days of the world’s prime.” He concludes:

It is quite true that, when brought together in sequence, name after name, these notes assume the appearance of a concatenated chronological scheme. But this is pure illusion, due wholly to the nature of the parenthetical insertions which are made.

In summary, Warfield’s point is that Genesis 5 was not meant to convey precise father-to-son genealogies, but to provide representative family lines to emphasize the long lifetimes of the pre-flood patriarchs relative to the lifetimes of subsequent eras.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ James B. Jordan makes a similar point: “Moreover, even if there were gaps in the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11, this would not affect the chronological information therein recorded, for even if Enosh were the great-grandson of Seth, it would still be the case that Seth was 105 years old when Enosh was born, according to a simple reading of the text. Thus, genealogy and chronology are distinct problems with distinct characteristics. They ought not to be confused” (“The Biblical Chronology Question: An Analysis,” *Creation Social Science and Humanities Quarterly* 2.2 [1979] 11).

⁴⁹ Daniel J. Dyke and Hugh Henry, “Q&A: What is the Purpose of the Numbers in the Genesis Genealogies?” Mar 27, 2014. They quote from B. B. Warfield, “On the Antiquity and Unity of the Human Race,” 7, 10.

In response, Warfield's argument essentially applies to the longevity of the pre-Abrahamic race (and especially the pre-flood race). Green had made a similar argument in his 1890 article:

They exhibit in these selected examples the original term of human life. They show what it was in the ages before the Flood. They show how it was afterwards individually narrowed down. But in order to [*do*] this it was not necessary that every individual should be named in the line from Adam to Noah and from Noah to Abraham, nor anything approaching it. A series of specimen lives, with the appropriate numbers attached, was all that was required.⁵⁰

Yet his point is really only dependent upon knowing how old each person was at the time of their death. The age at which he bore his son and the number of years that he lived subsequent to the son's birth would not be essential information. Furthermore, this does not account for the parenthetical statements in the list (e.g., Enoch and the naming of Noah). Hence, this theory does not adequately account for all that the text is telling us.

A second argument that Green made about the numbers in the Gen 5 and 11 genealogies was that the author does not sum the numbers, which supposedly indicates he is not concerned with indicating the age of the earth. He writes:

He nowhere sums these numbers, nor suggests their summation. No chronological statement is deduced from these genealogies, either by him or by any inspired writer. There is no computation anywhere in Scripture of the time that elapsed from the creation or from the deluge, as there is from the descent into Egypt to the Exodus (Ex. xii. 40), or from the Exodus to the building of the temple (I Kings vi. 1).⁵¹

In response, I would advocate that the author (Moses) probably had several purposes in writing the material in 5:1–11:26. Even if *his purpose* was not to provide detailed information so that we could determine the age of history prior to Abraham, that does not mean that the numbers are untrue or unreliable. By analogy, it was probably not the purpose of the author of Acts (Luke) to argue for a chronology of Paul's ministry, yet we can certainly piece together the chronological data available in Acts to establish a chronology of Paul's life and ministry. Hence, the recording of meticulous details of each person's age at the time of his son's birth, the subsequent years that he lived, and (in the case of Gen 5) the total number of years of his life, argues for a tight chronology (without gaps).

Hence, the numbers in the genealogies of Gen 5 and 11 are highly significant, and in fact characterize these genealogies as being distinctively different from those found elsewhere, whether it be Exod 6, Ruth 4, Ezra 7, or Matthew 1. Each genealogy has to be evaluated on its own merits. The genealogies of Gen 5 and 11 are rightly termed *chronogenealogies*. Freeman points out the necessity of identifying the proper genealogical genre:

In summary, those who take the chronogenealogy view insist that the first step in deciding the fluidity question is genre identification. Ancient genealogies came in different forms to serve different functions. Some forms accommodated fluidity, others did not. The inclusion of the

⁵⁰ W. H. Green, "Primeval Chronology," 297.

⁵¹ Ibid.

age of each patriarch at procreation marks Genesis 5 and 11 as chronogenealogy, a genre which excludes the idea of fluidity.⁵²

Concluding Remarks

Prior to the late A.D. 1700s, there would have been little discussion, if any, about taking the Gen 5 and 11 genealogies at face value as *gapless chronologies*. Only with the rise of geological studies and later with the spread of Darwinian evolutionary theory was a need felt by some to accommodate an older earth. Since the chronological data from Abraham onward was firmly established (with the exception of the dating of the Exodus event), scholarly focus turned to Gen 1–11 to find a way to explain an older earth.⁵³ One way to see this realized—though not the only way—was to argue that the genealogies in Gen 5 and 11 were not “tight chronologies.”

In this paper, I have discussed—on the basis of textual criticism and exegesis—most of the relevant issues that would have a bearing on the decision of whether or not these genealogies might have gaps. Even though the Samaritan Pentateuch and LXX manuscripts have different numerical figures, most scholars agree that the MT figures are to be preferred (the LXX figures *have the appearance of* being deliberately inflated).

Other relevant issues have been examined and evaluated, including comparative ANE genealogies, supposed ten-generation schematics, the matter of gaps in Matthew’s genealogical account, the missing names in Ezra’s genealogy, the problem of Kainan’s name in the LXX of Gen 11:12, and the issue of telescoping. Carefully considered, none of these issues lead to the conclusion that there must be gaps in the Gen 5 and 11 genealogies (certainly not massive gaps).

The discussion then turned to consider more carefully the context, structure and terminology used in Gen 5 and 11. A study of the Hiphil verb form of יָלַד (*yālad*) in the OT (the primary verb form used in Gen 5 and 11) almost always refers to literal father and son relationships (there being only two known exceptions out of 176 occurrences). The argument was also refuted that the structural form utilized in the Gen 5 and 11 genealogies should be understood as “a line that resulted in the named descendant.” The point was made that the heavy use of numbers in the Gen 5 and 11 genealogies mark them as distinctively different than other biblical genealogies, and should rightfully be regarded as *chronogenealogies*.

Finally, for those who reject a relatively young earth on the basis that the Gen 5 and 11 genealogies must have gaps, the question needs to be addressed as to how many generations have been omitted. Taking the biblical data literally, I have calculated the date of the flood to be 2543 B.C. ± 25 years. Hugh Ross, on the other hand, estimates the flood to be “between twenty thousand and thirty thousand years ago.”⁵⁴ According to the data in Gen 11:10-27, there were 220 years from

⁵² T. R. Freeman, “The Genesis 5 and 11 Fluidity Question,” 88. By “fluidity,” Freeman means that genealogies may change over time, with names being added, omitted, or changed in form.

⁵³ This is not to say that all scholars would date Abraham’s birth at 2166 B.C., as I have argued in this paper. Some would put Abraham later, usually as a result of a late date for the Exodus event (not taking the 480 year notice in 1 Kgs 6:1 literally). Yet a later date for Abraham would only compound the problem by reducing the age of the earth.

⁵⁴ Hugh Ross, *The Genesis Question*, 2nd ed. (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2001) 177. This is not to say that Ross believes in a worldwide flood. On the website of *Reasons to Believe*, Jeff Zweerink writes, “Reasons to Believe holds to the position of a universal flood (one that God used to destroy all of humanity) that was not global in geographic extent. Since humanity had not yet spread to cover Earth, the flood did not need to cover the entire globe”

Arpachshad's birth to Terah's birth, involving seven individuals. That would be an average of 31.43 years per generation. If we take the lesser of Ross's figures (20,000 years ago) and subtract the time from Terah to the present (about 4331 years, if Terah were born 2321 B.C. \pm 25 years), then according to Ross's estimation approximately 15,669 years passed from the flood to Terah. Using the average generation length of 31.43 years for this period, then we would have expected something close to 498 generations during this time. If that were true, the Gen 11 genealogy has a lot of gaps! Jonathan Sarfati points out the improbability of this:

One must wonder how a genealogy could miss out all these without any trace. And since many of the names that are mentioned include no trace of any deeds or sayings by them, why would the writer bother to mention these when so many others had been omitted?⁵⁵

When all is said and done, the case for gapless chronologies in the genealogies of Gen 5 and 11 has far more to commend it and serves to support a young-earth creation view.

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⁵⁵ Jonathan Sarfati, "Biblical Chonogenealogies," *Journal of Creation* 17 (Dec 2003) 17.

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