



*"The heavens declare the glory of God" (Psalm 19:1)*

# REASONS TO BELIEVE - SEATTLE AREA CHAPTER

NEWS AND VIEWS

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## What's Happening?

### New RTB Book

RTB has released Fuz Rana's latest book, *The Cell's Design—How Chemistry Reveals the Creator's Artistry*. The book goes beyond Behe's concept to irreducible complexity, discussing over a dozen remarkable features of the cell that point to a supernatural designer. Available from the RTB webstore at [www.reasons.org](http://www.reasons.org).

### Hugh Ross Fall Visit

Hugh Ross plans to visit the Seattle area in October. We are in process of planning evening outreach events and will pass on this information ASAP. We are also looking for daytime speaking opportunities. If your church or group is interested in hosting him, contact us at [seattle@reasons.org](mailto:seattle@reasons.org).

### We Do Presentations

The Seattle chapter does presentations on wide range of topics. If your church or group is looking for speakers, contact us at [seattle@reasons.org](mailto:seattle@reasons.org). We are also happy to help you with questions and resources for your personal studies and/or ministry efforts.

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## The Genesis Genealogies

DR. JOHN MILLAM

In 1650, James Ussher, the archbishop of Ireland came up with a detailed timeline for all the events in the Bible, going all the way back to the creation of man and the universe. According to Ussher's chronology, Adam and Eve were created in the year 4004 BC. In order to date backwards from Abraham to Adam and Eve, he made use of the genealogies given in Genesis 5 and 11. A critical assumption that he made in his interpretation was that these two genealogies were complete (that is, that they contained no gaps or missing names).<sup>1</sup> Are these genealogies indeed complete as Ussher assumed?

Biblical genealogies are numerous and yet they are probably the most often ignored and least studied portions of the Bible. Most people find genealogies to be uninteresting and difficult to apply to current circumstances. The nature and function of Biblical genealogies is also very different from modern genealogies, which can lead to confusion and misunderstanding. For example, telescoping (leaving out some names for the sake of brevity) is common in Biblical genealogies but is rare in modern genealogies. Similarly, the key genealogical terms (such as "son" and "father") have much broader meanings than their corresponding English words. An accurate understanding of Biblical genealogies is difficult, yet it is important for understanding of scripture.<sup>2</sup> Having a proper understanding of Biblical genealogies is prerequisite to attempting to address the Genesis genealogies.



### THE NATURE OF BIBLICAL GENEALOGIES

In modern times, genealogies are for the purpose of communicating detailed information about history and family relations. Our modern conception of genealogies is very different from how genealogies were used and understood in Biblical times. Some background information on genealogies is helpful in order to properly understand and interpret them. Biblical genealogies fall into three main categories according to their purpose: familial, legal-political, and religious.<sup>3</sup> Familial (or domestic) genealogies were primarily concerned about inheritance and privileges of firstborn sons. Legal-political genealogies are primarily centered on claims to a hereditary office, but other examples include establishing ancestry for land organization, territorial groupings, and military service. Religious genealogies were

primarily used to establish membership in the Aaronic and Levitical priesthoods. The function of a genealogy largely determines its structure and organization. In each of these cases, there is little reason or need to give a complete listing of names since it is ancestry, not the actual number of generations that is important.

Very short genealogies are typically for the purpose of identifying a person's tribal or genealogical grouping. The clearest example of this is the division of Israel into tribes according to which of the 12 patriarchs they were descended from. This tribal division was important for determining traveling arrangements (Num. 2; 10) and allocation of land (Josh. 13-21). Each tribe was subdivided into divisions and further subdivided into clans according to which son and grandson of the patriarchs they were descended from. For example, the Levites were assigned different duties according to which Levitical division they belonged to. So, it was usually sufficient to list only a person's tribe, division, and clan to identify someone. This interest in genealogical identification is also seen in the time of King David and again in the time of return from exile. At these later times, genealogies often were given in terms of other key historical figures (Aaron, Moses, David, etc.) rather than going all the way back to the patriarchs. For example, Matthew starts his Gospel with "Jesus, son of David, son of Abraham" (Matt. 1:1). This very terse genealogy is a prelude to Matthew's longer genealogy (Matt. 1:3-17). Some examples are give here.

- 1) Moses and Aaron (Exod. 6:16-20, Num. 26:57-59; and 1 Chron. 6:1-3; 23:6, 12-13) – With Moses and Aaron playing such central roles in the exodus, it is not surprising that their genealogy is given four different times in the Old Testament. This genealogy serves as a striking example of telescoping a genealogy to include only the tribe, division, and clan. The genealogies defining the divisions and clans of the Levites are given in Num. 3:17-37; 26:57-59 and 1 Chron. 6:1-3; 23:6-23. We see from these passages Moses and Aaron were of the tribe of Levi (the Levites), the division of Kohath (the Kohathites), and the clan of Amram (the Amramites). These genealogies were telescoped to only include the three generations needed to establish this. A more detailed study of these genealogies is given later.
- 2) Korah (Num. 16:1) – In the second census during Israel's desert wanderings, a few noteworthy individuals are listed along with each tribe's genealogy. Korah, son of Izhar, son of Kohath, the son of Levi led a rebellion against Moses during the desert wandering and was engulfed by the earth along with his followers. This genealogy specifies his clan (Izhar), division (Kohath), and tribe (Levi) and telescopes out the remaining generations between Korah and Izhar.
- 3) Dathan and Abiram (Num. 16:1; 26:5-9) – Along with Korah, Dathan and Abiram participated in the rebellion against Moses and died with him. Because of this notoriety, Dathan and Abiram are listed among the Reubenites in the second Israelite census. In this genealogy, we are given only their clan (Eliab), division (Pallu), and tribe (Reuben).
- 4) Zelophehads' daughters (Num. 26:28-32; 27:1) – Zelophehad and his daughters are listed as noteworthy among the Manassehites in the second census of Israel. Because he had five daughters and no sons, they came to Moses about the issue of inheritance. As a result, it became law that daughters would receive the inheritance if there were no sons (Num. 27). This genealogy, Zelophehad, son of Hopher, son of Gilead, son of Machir, son of Manasseh, son of Joseph is analogous to the preceding examples except that one more name is included beyond the tribe (Manasseh), division (Machir), and clan (Gilead).

## In the NEWS...

### [Footwear Dates to 40,000 Years Ago](#)

This RTB article by Fuz Rana discusses a study of ancient human remains in China that pushes the date of footwear use back to 40,000 years ago, thus supporting the RTB creation model. Go to <http://www.reasons.org/ttrtb/2008/07/17/first-footwear-dates-to-40000-years-ago/>.

### [New Day for Apologetics](#)

This *Christianity Today* article discussed how a there has been a resurgence in Christian apologetics as a response to challenges from militant atheists about Jesus, Christianity and the Bible. Go to <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2008/july/14.29.html>.

### [Atheist Antithesis](#)

Some atheists claim religion is adaptive and a by-product of our brain wiring. This article on the Discovery Institute website rebuts that claim and contends that religious belief is innate and a basic part of our human nature. Go to <http://www.discovery.org/a/609>.

### [Understanding the Trinity](#)

This Breakpoint article examines the mystery of the Trinity—the unique Christian belief that God is both transcendent to the creation and indwelling it—and why it is fundamental to the Christian faith. Go to <http://www.breakpoint.org/listingarticle.asp?ID=8013>.

### [Pew Report on Religious Practices](#)

This *Christianity Today* article discusses a study by the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life. As one sociologist puts it, the findings indicate it not's that Americans don't believe in anything, it's they believe in everything. Go to <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2008/juneweb-only/126-11.o.htm>.

### [The Coming Persecution](#)

This Breakpoint article discusses how same-sex marriage will harm Christians because it is not just about equality but about forcing religious believers to accept homosexuality or else. Go to <http://www.breakpoint.org/listingarticle.asp?ID=8089>.

## WORD MEANING

Another important difference between ancient and modern genealogies is vocabulary. In modern English, we have a whole host of words to describe precise familial relationships. For example, we have son, grandson, uncle, father, cousin, brother, and ancestor. Hebrew has a very small vocabulary, so only a few Hebrew words to carry all of these modern meanings. For example, the Hebrew words for “son” (*ben*, 1121) means son, grandson, great grandson, and descendent. Similarly, “father” (*ab*, 1)<sup>4</sup> means father, grandfather, great-grandfather, and ancestor. We find in Gen. 28:13 that God tells Jacob, “I am the LORD, the God of your *father* (*ab*) Abraham and the God of Isaac,” but Abraham was the grandfather of Jacob. Similarly, father (*ab*) can refer to multiple ancestors as in when Elijah cried, “Take my life, I am no better than my ancestors (*ab*)” (1 Kings 19:4). According to *Vine’s*, *ab* “may refer to the first man, a ‘forefather,’ a clan (Jeremiah 35:6), a tribe (Josh. 19:47), a group with a special calling (1 Chron. 24:19), a dynasty (1 Kings 15:3), or a nation (Josh. 24:3). Thus ‘father’ does not necessarily mean the man who directly sired a given individual” (*Vine’s* “father,” but see also HGKSB, p. 1574). Similar word usage also applies to the New Testament in Greek, such as the genealogies in Matthew and Luke.

The word “begat” (*yalad*, 3205) is another word that is commonly used in Biblical genealogies. (The NIV translates *yalad* as “became the father of” or “gave birth to.”) Like father (*ab*) and son (*ben*), this word has a much broader meaning than the corresponding English usage (*Vine’s*, “to bear”). An example of this broader usage is found in Deuteronomy 32:18, where God reminds Israel that He “begat” them. And similarly in Numbers 11:12, where Moses declares that he hadn’t “begotten” Israel and hence was not responsible for them.

Numerous examples of the broad use of genealogical terms can be given from scripture but a few clear examples are given here.

- 1) Dan. 5 – Belshazzar is described as the “son” of Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 5:22) and likewise Nebuchadnezzar is called his “father” (Dan. 5:2, 11, 18). However, Belshazzar was the son of Nabonidus and hence not even biologically related to Nebuchadnezzar. So, Belshazzar was “son” in the sense of legal heir of Nebuchadnezzar.
- 2) Ruth 4:17 – At the end of the book of Ruth, Boaz and Ruth have their first son, Obed (Ruth 4:13, 17). In verse 4:17, the people declare, “there is a son born to Naomi.” Clearly, Naomi was not the actual mother of Obed but is the mother-in-law of Ruth who is the actual mother of Obed. Naomi’s husband, Elimelech, and her two sons died leaving Elimelech and Naomi without heirs. Boaz married Ruth in fulfillment of the Levirate law, which was enacted to ensure sons to continue the family line (Deut. 25:5-6). The first son of a Levirate marriage was legally the son of the dead husband. In this case, since Ruth’s father-in-law, Elimelech, was also dead, Obed was also legally the son of Elimelech and Naomi. So, Obed was the legal son of

Naomi but the biological son of Ruth.

- 3) Matt.1:12 and Luke 3:27 – In both Matthew and Luke, Zerubbabel is listed as the son of Shealtiel. (Ezra 3:2, 8; 5:2; Neh. 12:1; Hag. 1:1, 12; 2:2 also say the same thing.) In 1 Chron. 3:17-19 we find that Zerubbabel was actually the son of Shealtiel’s brother, Pedaiah. While it is not stated in the Bible, it is reasonable to assume that Pedaiah died early and that his uncle, Shealtiel, adopted Zerubbabel. So, Pedaiah was the biological father of Zerubbabel but Shealtiel was his legal (adoptive) father.<sup>5</sup>
- 4) 1 Chron. 1:36 – This verse lists the sons of Eliphaz, the son of Esau. In the Hebrew text, seven names are listed without comment or connecting words, so it would be easy to assume that all seven people are the male children of Eliphaz. By comparing these names with Gen. 36:11-12, we see that the sixth name, Timna, was actually the concubine of Eliphaz and the seventh name, Amalek, was the son of Eliphaz by Timna. The Chronicler omitted this distinction for brevity since the readers would have been familiar with the listing in Genesis. The NIV inserts the word “by” in front of Timna and sets it apart from the preceding five names to make this clear to modern readers.
- 5) Gen. 48:1-6 – Shortly before Jacob (Israel) died, he adopted both of Joseph’s sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, as his own sons. Jacob told Joseph, “your two sons ... will be reckoned as mine” (Gen. 48:5 NIV). So both Manasseh and Ephraim were the biological sons of Joseph but were legally considered sons of Jacob. (This becomes significant later, when the Levites are set apart from the other tribes for priestly service. Joseph’s tribe was then split into two tribes, one for each son, to make up for the absence of the Levites and bringing the number of tribes back to 12.)

## TELESCOPING OF GENEALOGIES

When names are intentionally left out of a genealogy, it is referred to as “telescoping.” In a telescoped genealogy only the highlights are given, usually the names of the most important and relevant people. As an example, if we were to telescope “Abraham was the father of Isaac, who was the father of Jacob,” it might read in Hebrew, “Abraham was the father (*ab*) of Jacob” (e.g. Gen. 28:13). In English, this telescoped genealogy would be considered erroneous and should read “grandfather” instead. In Hebrew (and similarly for Greek), this telescoped genealogy would be perfectly true and acceptable because there is no separate word for grandfather in Hebrew and the word “father” (*ab*) includes the meaning grandfather.

Typically when a genealogy is telescoped, the number of names is reduced to an aesthetically pleasing number, usually a multiple of either seven or 10 and less important names are omitted until that number is reached. For example, the genealogy of Gen. 4:17-18 contains seven names. The genealogies in Gen. 5:3-32; 11:10-26; and Ruth 4:18-22 all have 10 names each. The genealogy of the nations

(Gen. 10:2-29; 1 Chron. 1:5-23) contains 70 names. Matthew arranged his genealogy (Matt. 1:2-17) into three groups of 14 names each. There are 14 names from Abraham to David, 14 from David to the exile, and 14 from the exile to Jesus Christ. To get the groups of 14, Matthew omitted at least four names (see below) and counted Jeconiah's name twice. Matthew clearly indicates in his gospel that that arrangement was intentional (Matt. 1:17). Whereas Matthew's genealogy is broken into sections, Luke's genealogy (Luke 3:23-28) is given as a single list. Luke has 14 names from Abraham to David, 21 from David to the exile, and 21 from the exile to Jesus Christ (in contrast to Matthew's 14 names each). Luke also has an additional 21 names from Abraham back to Adam.

While modern genealogies are generally intended to be complete, most Biblical genealogies are telescoped. So, while Biblical genealogies are generally not complete, they are still historically accurate. They correctly communicate everything that we need to know (ancestry) but not necessarily everything we want to know (absolute genealogical relationships). It is often very difficult or even impossible to know with certainty whether or not a given genealogy is telescoped. The genealogies themselves give little or no indication of whether or not they are telescoped. So the only way to establish the completeness of a genealogy is to compare it with other Biblical genealogies or against history. Such study is difficult, painstaking, and is often inconclusive. Below are listed a few well-known examples where we can definitively say that they are telescoped.

- 1) Matt. 1:8 compared to 2 Chron. 21:4-26:23 – Matt. 1:8 has Jehoram listed as the father of Uzziah but there were several generations between these men. The names Ahaziah (2 Chron. 22:1), Joash (2 Chron. 22:11), and Amaziah (2 Chron. 24:27) come between Jehoram and Uzziah.
- 2) Matt. 1:11 compared to 2 Chron. 36:1-9 – In Matt. 1:11 we read that Josiah is the father of Jeconiah (Jehoiachin). In 2 Chronicles, we see that Josiah is the father of Jehoiakim (2 Chron. 36:4) and grandfather of Jehoiachin (2 Chron. 36:8).
- 3) Luke 3:35-36 compared to Gen. 10:24, 11:12; 1 Chron. 1:24 – Luke contains the name Cainan between Shelah and Arphaxad that is missing in Gen. 10:24 and 11:12 and 1 Chron. 1:24.<sup>6</sup> Since all of the genealogies are true and Luke is the one with more names, then Luke must be more complete and the more rest telescoped. A more detailed discussion of these genealogies is given in the section on the Genesis genealogies.
- 4) Ezra 7:1-5 compared to 1 Chron. 6:3-15 – The genealogy of 1 Chron. 6:3-15 lists the descendants of Aaron down to Jehozadak (Jozadak). Ezra 7 lists Ezra's own genealogy going back to Aaron. Where the two genealogies overlap, 1 Chronicles contains 22 names and Ezra contains 16 names, making Ezra's genealogy no more than 70% complete.<sup>7</sup> Both genealogies span a time period of about 860

years from the exodus to the fall of Jerusalem, which suggests both genealogies are in fact highly telescoped. A thorough search of the Old Testament reveals that there were many high priests during this time period who are not included in either of these two genealogies, which provides additional evidence that these genealogies are not complete. The following high priests are known from the OT but are not included in these genealogies: Jehoiada (2 Kings 12:2), Uriah (2 Kings 16:10-16), possibly two Azariahs (2 Chron. 26:17, 20; 31:10-31), Eli (1 Sam. 1:9; 14:3) and Abiathar (2 Sam. 8:17).<sup>8</sup>

- 5) 1 Sam. 16:10-13 compared to 1 Chron. 2:13-15 – In the 1 Samuel passage, the prophet Samuel goes to Jesse to anoint one of his sons as the new king of Israel. Jesse has his seven eldest sons pass before Samuel but each is rejected. Finally, David, the eighth son is brought in and is anointed by Samuel as king. We find in 1 Chronicles, however, that David is listed as the seventh son of Jesse. One of David's brothers is omitted from the list to allow David to occupy the favored seventh position. This may seem a bit odd to modern readers but this was an accepted genealogical practice.

#### ESTIMATING THE DEGREE OF TELESCOPING

Based on the above discussion and Biblical examples, we can see that the telescoping of genealogies was a fairly common practice in ancient times. Such telescoping is perfectly acceptable and literal (based on Hebrew word usage)—even if it may be disconcerting to modern readers. We can also see that it is usually impossible to tell from the genealogy itself whether or not it is complete. For a few genealogies, we can establish specific names that have been omitted and where they belong in the list. In general, however, the genealogy only establishes a minimum limit to the number of generations spanned. We have to look at other portions of scripture or history to estimate the degree of telescoping involved. While the degree of telescoping in a particular genealogy may be uncertain, it is certainly not arbitrary or unlimited. Upper limits on how far a genealogy might be pushed can be reasonably estimated by looking at Biblical examples for which we can establish the time span involved. Conservative Bible scholars estimate that genealogies are generally not less than 10 percent complete (i.e. including only 1 name in 10) based on such analysis.

- 1) Ruth 4:18-22; 1 Chron. 2:5-15; Matt. 1:3-6; and Luke 3:31-33 – The genealogy of David given in the book of Ruth lists 10 names from Perez to David. The remaining three genealogies repeat these 10 names but also include Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Judah as the ancestors of Perez to round out the genealogy to 14 names. The time between Abraham and David spans more than 1,000 years. This time span is too long for the genealogy to be complete. One can estimate that the genealogy is about 20 to 50% complete.
- 2) Heman, Asaph, and Ethan (1 Chron. 6:33-47) – At the time of David, there were three head temple musicians, one from each of the three divisions of the Levites. There is Heman of the Kohathite division

(verses 33-38), Asaph of the Gershonite division (verses 39-42), and Ethan of the Merarite division (verses 44-47). In each case, the genealogies start with Levi, who was the father of Kohath, Gershon, and Merari and ancestor of these three men. So, we have three genealogies side-by-side extending from Levi to the time of King David, yet the genealogies contain 21, 15, and 14 names respectively for exactly the same span of time. This suggests that at least the latter two genealogies are highly telescoped.

- 3) Jeriah/Jerijah (1 Chron. 23:6, 12, 19; 26:31) – Jeriah (or Jerijah) was the head of the Hebronites (a Levitical clan) and put in charge of other men by King David. His genealogy is telescoped to only mention his tribe (Levite), division (Kohathite), and clan (Hebronite). This four name genealogy covers the same approximately 900-year of history as that of Heman, Asaph, and Ethan (see previous point). Since the other three genealogies contain 14 to 21 generations for this same time span, we can only conclude that this genealogy is no more than 15% complete.
- 4) Shebuel/Shubael (1 Chron. 23:15-16; 26:24) – Shebuel (or Shubael) was put in charge of the treasury in the time of King David. Both of these genealogies have Shebuel, the son of Gershom, the son of Moses. Both Moses and Gershom lived during the time of the exodus while Shebuel lived in the time of King David, some 400 to 500 years later. This is highly telescoped and was only for the purpose of identifying his ancestry from Moses and Gershom.
- 5) Ezra 8:1-2 – In this verse, Ezra lists a number of leading men of his time period according to ancestry. So Gershom was the son of Phinehas (who was the grandson of Aaron); Daniel was the son of Ithamar (who was the son of Aaron); and Hattush was the son of David. The first two examples span approximately 1,000 years of time, and the third spans about 500 years. Clearly, these genealogies are highly telescoped!

#### A DETAILED EXAMPLE: THE MOSAIC GENEALOGIES

The genealogy of Moses, Aaron, and Miriam illustrates all of the points made above and helps provide a clearer understanding of Biblical genealogies. Because of the central importance of these three figures, their genealogy is given four different times in scripture (Exod. 6:16-20; Num. 26:57-59; and 1 Chron. 6:1-3; 23:6, 12-13) and a lot of supporting information can also be gleaned from other scripture references.

Each of the Mosaic genealogies lists the same four generations (Levi to Kohath to Amram to Moses, Aaron, and Miriam). By cross-referencing with other scripture verses, we can clearly establish that these genealogies are telescoped. We know that both Levi and his son, Kohath, entered Egypt (Gen. 46:5-27; Exod. 1:1-4), which was 430 years before the Exodus (Exod. 12:40-41; Acts 7:6). Since Moses was 80 years old at the time of the Exodus (Exod. 7:7), from Kohath to Amram to Moses spans at least 350 years! A typical generation is 20 to 40 years, so one would expect that these genealogies to span between 10 and

20 generations. We find in 1 Chron. 7:20-27 the genealogy of Ephraim, son of Joseph, which covers the same period of history as the Mosaic genealogies. Joseph (brother of Levi) and his son Ephraim were alive when the Israelites settled in Egypt (Gen. 41:52; 46:27). There are 12 generations listed from Joseph to Joshua. Since Joshua was alive at the time of the exodus and was a contemporary of Moses, these 12 generations span the 430-year stay in Egypt. This would fit nicely with a generation being about 40 years. Thus, this genealogy gives (at least) 12 generations that correspond to the same time period as the four generations of the Mosaic genealogies. Yet, another evidence for telescoping is that Kohath's descendents at the time of Moses numbered 8,600 men (Num. 3:27, 28) of whom 2,750 were between the age of 30 and 50 (Num. 4:36). This number of descendents is inexplicable if this genealogy is not telescoped and Kohath was Moses' grandfather. Based on these arguments, we can conclude that the Mosaic genealogies are perhaps only 20 to 40% complete.

Was Amram the immediate father of Moses and Aaron, or was he their ancestor? A number of evidences show there were quite a few generations separating Amram and Moses.<sup>9</sup> (a) Kohath to Amram to Moses spans 350 years (as discussed above) and hence requires unnamed generations. (b) Amram and his wife, Jochebed, are mentioned in Exodus 6 as giving rise to Moses. Yet in the account of Exodus 2, the names of Moses parents are conspicuously absent. [They are instead referred to as “a man of the house of Levi” (vs. 2:1), “a Levite woman” (vs. 2:1), and “the baby’s mother” (vs. 2:8).] (c) Descendents of Amram are given in 1 Chron. 24:20 but don't mention Aaron, Moses, and Miriam neither does the Exodus account mention additional brothers for Moses. (d) Jochebed, Amram's wife, is referred to as the daughter of Levi (Num. 26:59) and Amram's father's sister (Exod. 6:20), which would place Jochebed at the entrance of the Israelites into Egypt. Thus, she would have to be at least 350 years old when she gave birth to Moses if there were no gaps in the Mosaic genealogies! Based on this evidence, we recognize that many generations separate Amram and Jochebed and their children, Aaron, Moses, and Miriam. In Exod. 6:20 and Num. 26:59, Jochebed is said to “bear” (“begat,” *yalad*) them while in 1 Chron. 6:3 and 23:13 describes them as “sons” (*ben*). Thus, both son (*ben*) and “begat” (*yalad*) are used synonymously here to refer to a distant descendent in a genealogy.

In conclusion, we find that the Mosaic genealogies are highly telescoped (perhaps 20 to 40 percent complete). Only the critical names—those corresponding to his tribe (Levi), division (Kohath), and clan (Amram)—are given, and the remaining names between Amram and Moses are ignored. Both the term “son” (*ben*) and “begat” (*yalad*) are applied interchangeably to the relationship between Amram and Moses, yet at least eight generations separate the two men (i.e. *ben* and *yalad* are being used to mean ancestor rather than the immediate son). This genealogy is highly telescoped yet the genealogy itself does not tell us if it is complete or where the gaps are. Only by cross-

referencing other Scripture verses or looking at historical sources were we able to determine whether or not it was telescoped.

## THE GENESIS GENEALOGIES

That many or even most Biblical genealogies are telescoped is not very controversial. However, the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11 differ in at least one respect. We see the repeated formula, “When X had lived Y years, he became the father of (i.e. ‘begat’, *yalad*) Z” (NIV), rather than simply “X was the father of Y” or “X the son of Y” as we see elsewhere in the Bible. So, some argue that our conclusions about other Biblical genealogies may not apply to Genesis 5 and 11. Those holding Ussher’s chronology estimate that Adam and Eve were created around 6,000 years ago on the assumption that the Genesis genealogies are complete. Nothing in the text, however, requires that these genealogies be complete. Biblical scholars who hold that the genealogies are telescoped would place the creation of Adam and Eve at around 10,000 to 30,000 years ago but perhaps as late as 60,000 years ago.<sup>10</sup> Some have tried to push the genealogies so far back that they suggest that Adam and Eve might have been Neanderthals (or *Homo erectus* or australopithecines); however, this can not be supported and is rejected by the vast majority of Biblical scholars. But who’s right? What should we conclude about these genealogies?

In the example of the Mosaic genealogies (above), it was possible to be very firm in our conclusions due to the abundance of Biblical and historical details surrounding these events. The opposite is true for the Genesis genealogies. From the time of Abraham on there is wide spread consensus regarding dates and chronology. However, for the time period before Abraham, which is covered by the Genesis genealogies, there is very little Biblical or historical information on which to build solid chronological details. Without such supporting information, we need to tread lightly and not be dogmatic in our conclusions. While we can’t be conclusive in regards to the nature of the Genesis genealogies, there are a number of points that can be made.

- 1) Examining Biblical genealogies show that ancient genealogies are generally telescoped rather than complete. Ancient readers, unlike modern readers, were concerned with ancestry rather than number of generations and so would generally not assume that a given genealogy was complete. Therefore, the burden of proof lies on those who hold that the Genesis genealogies are complete rather than the reverse.
- 2) Many, perhaps most, of the early church fathers held to a recent date for the creation of Adam, and hence held that the genealogies were complete (or nearly complete). However, their basis for this conclusion had little to do with the genealogies themselves. There was a wide spread belief that all of human history (from Adam to the return of Christ) would last exactly 6,000 years and could be used as a basis for predicting Christ’s return. This interpretation is

no longer accepted today, yet it had a strong influence on how the early church fathers interpreted the Genesis genealogies. Similarly, the dependence of the early church fathers on Greek and Latin translations of the Old Testament, rather than the original Hebrew, also led to a faulty understanding of these genealogies.

- 3) Henry Morris argues, “The record [of Genesis 5] is *perfectly natural and straightforward* and is *obviously intended* to give both the necessary genealogical data to denote the promised lineage and also the only reliable chronological framework we have for the antediluvian period of history” (emphasis mine).<sup>11</sup> As we have observed, Biblical genealogies are certainly not “obvious” or “straightforward” in the way that Morris and others argue. At the heart of Morris’ argument is the presumption that the genealogies should be interpreted through the lens of modern Western culture rather than based on careful exegetical analysis of Biblical and other ancient genealogies. This is an easy trap to fall into, because we are so immersed in our own culture and a proper grasp of Biblical genealogies requires a lot of patience and investigation.

If the author of Genesis 5 and 11 was attempting to give a precise genealogical framework as Morris argues, there should have been a summation of the years following the genealogy, but this doesn’t occur. (Contrast this to the numbering of the Israelites in Numbers 1, where the individual numbers are summed in verse 46.) Nowhere in Genesis 5, 11, or anywhere else in the entire Bible are these numbers even suggested to be for the purpose of establishing the time frame between Adam and Abraham.

- 4) If the presence of personal biographical information, specifically the age at fatherhood, is not for the purpose of establishing a chronological framework (as discussed in the previous point), what then is the purpose of this information? Again, we have to develop our understanding based on a systematic study of Biblical genealogies. A study on the inclusion of the age at death in genealogies reveals a distinct trend: it is only included if it is exceptional, specifically if it is 100 years or more. This trend is not surprising, since old age is a sign of blessedness. Inclusion of age at fatherhood seems to follow the same trend, i.e. it is included if it is truly exceptional. (A note of caution must be made here. The age at fatherhood is consistent with the trend, but there are so few examples that we cannot be conclusive.) Both the age at fatherhood and the age at death are certainly exceptional for all the individuals included in the Genesis genealogies.
- 5) Comparing the genealogy of Genesis 11 with Jesus’ genealogy in Luke 3, we find that Luke contains the name Cainan between Shelah and Arphaxad (as noted earlier in this paper). The inerrancy of scripture, therefore, demands that there is at least one name missing in Genesis 11, and so at least one of the two Genesis genealogies is telescoped. Despite this direct Biblical evidence, some still hold to the belief that Genesis genealogies are complete,

and hence that the inclusion of the name Cainan in Luke 3:36 is incorrect. One scenario would be that Luke based his genealogies on late copies of the Septuagint containing Cainan and so mistakenly added it to his genealogy.<sup>12</sup> This scenario obviously contradicts Biblical inerrancy and so must be rejected. Henry Morris argues for an alternative scenario, where the name Cainan is mistakenly added by those copying Luke's gospel rather than by Luke himself, thus avoiding problems with Biblical inerrancy. He argues that those first copying Luke's gospel added the name Cainan because they were either influenced by their familiarity with the Septuagint or miscopied it from Luke 3:37.<sup>13</sup> There is, however, no Biblical, historical, or manuscript evidence to support this claim, and therefore we should take Luke to be correct and the Genesis genealogies as telescoped.

- 6) The Mosaic genealogies share a large number of similarities with the Genesis genealogies, yet they contain a large gap between Amram and Moses. Points of similarity include: a) the genealogy bridging a large span of time between important Biblical figures; b) using "begat" (*yalad*) to connect generations; and c) inclusion of personal details, such as age at death. So none of these features of the Genesis genealogy can be used to argue for the genealogies being complete.
- 7) Both Genesis 5 and 11 use the verb "begat" to connect one generation to the next. In Exodus 6:20 and Numbers 26:59, this same verb connects Amram and his wife Jochebed to Moses even though there are many generations in between them. These verses demonstrate that "begat" can be genuinely used in precisely the way suggested for the Genesis genealogies.

## CONCLUSION

Understanding the Genesis genealogies requires a systematic understanding of the nature, style, and purpose of genealogies in the Bible. Even a cursory study of Biblical genealogies shows that Biblical genealogies are very different from their modern counterparts. Looking closer, we find that Biblical genealogies are commonly telescoped by leaving out less important names and that it is usually impossible to tell if a genealogy is complete simply by looking at it. While genealogies are typically skimmed over or ignored by most people, the Genesis genealogies have generated controversy because of their supposed connection to the age of the universe and the creation of man. The interpretation that the Genesis genealogies are telescoped and that Adam and Eve were created a few tens of thousands of years ago is no less a literal interpretation of scripture than Ussher's interpretation. Many prominent conservative theologians (see below) support this position.

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## THEOLOGIANS SUPPORTING THIS VIEW

- William Henry Green, "Primeval Creation," *Bibliotheca Sacra*, April 1890, pp. 285-303.
- B. B. Warfield, "On the Antiquity and Unity of the Human Race," reprinted in *Biblical and Theological Studies* (P & R, 1968), pp. 238-261.
- Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. II, pp. 40-41.
- James Oliver Buswell, *A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion*, Part II, Chapter IV.
- R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, pp. 147-52.
- Francis Schaeffer, *Genesis in Space and Time*.

## REFERENCE MATERIALS

- NIV = New International Version of the Holy Bible.
- Vine's = W. E. Vine, M. F. Unger, W. White, Jr., *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*, Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville.
- HGKSB = Hebrew Greek Key Study Bible by S. Zodhiates, World Bible Publishers, Inc, 1984.
- Word references in parenthesis are keyed to The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible, Thomas Nelson Publishers.

## FOR FURTHER STUDY

- NIV Study Bible*, Zondervan Bible Publishers, Grand Rapids, MI, 1985, "Introduction to 1 Chronicles: Genealogies" and footnotes on Gen. 4:17-18, 5:5, 11:10-26; 1 Chron. 6:4-15, 7:20-29; Dan. 5:1; Matt. 1:5, 8, 11, 12, 17; Acts 7:6.
- Norman Geisler and Norman Howe, *When Critics Ask*, Victor Books, Wheaton, IL 1992, p. 38-39.
- Hugh Ross, *Fingerprint of God*, 2nd Ed., Promise Publishing Co., Orange, CA, 1989, p. 159.
- Hugh Ross, *Creation and Time*, NavPress, Colorado Springs, CO, 1994, p 26-27.
- Hugh Ross, *Genesis Question*, NavPress, Colorado Springs, CO, 1999, p. 54-55, 107-110.

## REFERENCES

- <sup>1</sup> The interpretation of the Genesis genealogies is a separate and distinct issue from the interpretation of the length of the creation days. Young-earth and old-earth creationists can be found on both sides of the fence on this issue.
- <sup>2</sup> Biblical genealogies are important for more than just dry history. For example, Jesus' genealogy (Matthew 1:3-17; Luke 3:23-38) is central to Messianic prophecy.
- <sup>3</sup> A more detailed discussion can be found in the *NIV Study Bible*, Zondervan Bible Publishers, Grand Rapids, MI, 1985, "Introduction to 1 Chronicles: Genealogies."
- <sup>4</sup> Ab is the root of both Abram ("Exalted Father") and Abraham ("Father of Many [Nations]") (Genesis 17:5).

<sup>5</sup> See Gleason L Archer, *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI 1982, p. 216-219. Norman Geisler and Thomas Howe, *When Critics Ask*, Victor Books, Wheaton, IL 1992, p. 201-202.

<sup>6</sup> The name Cainan does appear in all three of these passages in some late copies of the Greek Septuagint. However, it is missing from the most reliable ancient texts: the Hebrew Masoretic text, the earliest copies of the Greek Septuagint, the Latin Vulgate, the Samaritan Pentateuch, and all other ancient translations of the Old Testament.

<sup>7</sup> Several of the six names that appear in the 1 Chronicles but are absent in Ezra appear elsewhere in the 1 Chronicles genealogy. Thus, it is possible that some or all of the extra names may have been the result of scribal error (name duplication) and so Ezra 7 might not actually be telescoped. (See Colin J. Humphreys, *The Miracles of Exodus: A Scientist's Discovery of the Extraordinary Natural Causes of the Biblical Stories*, Harper-SanFrancisco, New York, NY: 2003.)

<sup>8</sup> List taken from the *NIV Study Bible*, Zondervan Bible Publishers, Grand Rapids, MI, 1985, footnote on 1 Chronicles 6:3-15. See also a similar listing given S. Zodhiates, *Hebrew Greek Key Study Bible*, World Bible Publishers, Inc., 1984, p. 541.

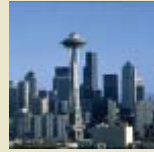
<sup>9</sup> Some theologians, such as Tiele and Keil, propose that there were two Amrams. One was the immediate son of Kohath and the head of the Amramite clan, while the other was the immediate father of Aaron, Moses, and Miriam. Even with this proposal, there are still gaps in the Exodus 6 genealogy.

<sup>10</sup> The maximum age of 60,000 years ago is based on the genealogies being no less than 10% complete (i.e. 1 name in 10 reported). This limit is based on studies of the estimated degree of completeness of other Biblical genealogies, such as the ones described in this paper.

<sup>11</sup> Henry M. Morris, *The Genesis Record*, Baker Books House, Grand Rapids, MI 1976, p. 154.

<sup>12</sup> The name Cainan first appears in Genesis 11:12 in very late copies of the Septuagint. See footnote 7 for details.

<sup>13</sup> Henry M. Morris, *The Genesis Record*, Baker Books House, Grand Rapids, MI 1976, p. 281-282.



## Seattle Chapter Reasons To Believe

### Who Are We?

The Seattle Chapter of Reasons To Believe is a local extension of the worldwide, interdenominational Reasons To Believe ministry. We exist to support our parent organization and foster local involvement in the ministry. We serve the Puget Sound area and are composed of Christians of different ages and backgrounds.

It is our conviction the same God who created the universe inspired the Bible. Therefore, what God says through His word must agree with the facts of nature. We reject the notion that science and the Bible are at odds and provide a scientifically-sound and Biblically-faithful alternative to Darwinism and young-Earth creationism.

### What Do We Do?

Our mission is to remove the doubts of skeptics and strengthen the faith of believers. We provide scientific, historical and philosophical evidence that supports the Christian worldview and helps remove barriers to a belief in God, the Bible and the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We carry out this mission by:

- Helping people access RTB and other scientifically and biblically sound resources.
- Bringing nationally-known speakers into the area to promote the scientific reliability of the Bible.
- Assembling a team of local apologists to address questions about science, the Bible and related topics.
- Working with teachers and homeschoolers to achieve a balanced approach to the teaching of origins.
- Building alliances with local churches, ministries and groups to maximize the exposure of the RTB ministry.
- Reaching out to unbelievers with gentleness and respect, encouraging them to evaluate their worldviews.

We welcome your involvement and support. For more information, contact us at [seattle@reasons.org](mailto:seattle@reasons.org). Tax-deductible donations can be sent to: Seattle RTB, PO Box 99683, Seattle, WA 98139-0683.

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