

Pre-Babel Confusion?

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I am amazed (and troubled) at how far some will go in order to accept the concept of the vast ages of time associated with evolutionary geology. It seems that, for many “Bible believers,” the overriding factor in interpreting God’s Word is no longer, “What does the Bible say?” but rather, “What do evolutionary dating methods indicate?” Sadly, for many people the deceptive evolutionary geologic timetable has become the father of modern biblical exegesis. Instead of the Universe and everything in it being created in six days (Genesis 1-2; Exodus 20:11), we are told it actually took billions of years—years that can be “found” in supposed “gaps” between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2, or between each of the creation days. And even though the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11 match up remarkably well with the genealogy recorded in Luke 3, and although Jude confirmed through inspiration that Enoch was indeed the seventh from Adam (Jude 14—just as Genesis 5 tells us), we are informed that many millions (or billions!) of years can be inserted (and should be, according to some evolutionary sympathizers) between Adam and Abraham.

As if we had not “heard it all,” some now are teaching that there was a great gap of time between Genesis 10 and 11. **Supposedly**, since Moses recorded that the descendants of Shem, Ham, and Japheth spoke different languages in Genesis 10 (vss. 5,20,31), and since Genesis 11:1 states that “the whole earth had one language and one speech,” **there must have been a gap between Genesis 10:32 and 11:1!** It is alleged that enough time must have passed in order for the descendants of Shem, Ham, and Japheth to begin speaking one language.

If you have ever read Genesis 6-11, you likely have questioned why the order of events seemed to indicate that the Earth’s population went from speaking one language (by the eight persons on the ark), to speaking a variety of languages and dialects (10:5,20,31), to then using one language again (11:1). It may be that you have asked the same question that I heard asked recently: “How can there **not** be a gap between Genesis 10 and 11?”

The reason that no gap of time exists between Genesis 10 and 11 is because the events recorded in these two chapters **were not written chronologically**. As Victor Hamilton remarked in his commentary on Genesis, “We have here the unusual order of effect (ch. 10) before cause (ch. 11), or result preceding explanation” (1990, p. 347).

The simple fact is, Bible writers did not always record information in a strictly chrono-

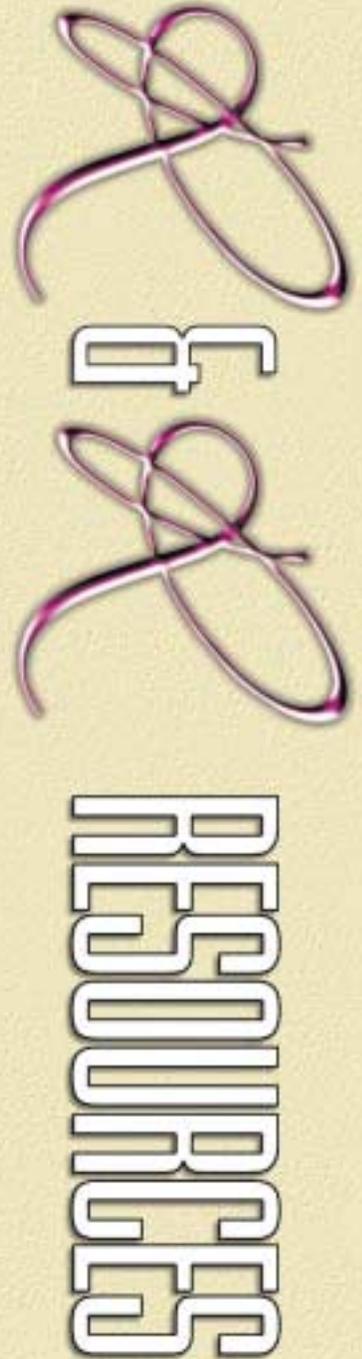
logical sequence. Genesis 2:5-25 does not pick up where chapter one left off; rather, it provides more detailed information about some of the events mentioned in chapter one. Several of the events in Genesis 38 involving Judah and Tamar occurred while the things recorded in chapter 39 and following were taking place. Making the (erroneous) assumption that the entire Bible was written chronologically, hinders the trustworthiness of the text. How will one explain the differences in the arrangement of the temptations of Jesus recorded by Matthew (4:1-11) and Luke (4:1-13) if we always must conclude that things are written in sequential order? If Jesus only cleansed the temple once, how does a person explain why John mentioned this event as having occurred **early** in Jesus’ ministry, while the other gospel writers placed it **later** in His ministry (John 2:12-17; cf. Matthew 21:12-17)? Obviously, the gospel accounts were not arranged to represent a strict chronology of Jesus’ life. Similarly, Moses jumped ahead of himself at times, inserting parenthetical material like that found in Genesis 10.

Aside from the languages mentioned in Genesis 10, there is another “clue” in the text that reveals the events recorded in chapter 11 occurred before the descendants of Noah began speaking different languages and spreading throughout the Earth. In 10:25, it mentions a man named Peleg (meaning “division”) who received such a name because “in his days the earth was divided.” This is an apparent reference to the confusion of languages at the tower of Babel described in chapter 11. The “earth” (viz., the people; cf. 11:1) was divided when God confused the languages (11:7-8). Thus, the division in Peleg’s day is linked contextually to the linguistic segregation at Babel (Genesis 11:1-9; cf. Miller, n.d.).

When Genesis 10 and 11 are read with the understanding that not all events are recorded chronologically, one can see clearly how the events revealed in these two chapters are entwined tightly with one another—so tightly in fact that those who seek to place a great gap of time between them are doomed to fail. Linguistically speaking, there was no “pre-Babel confusion.”

REFERENCES

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 Miller, Dave (no date), “Peleg, Pangaea, and Genesis 10:25,” [On-line], URL: <http://www.apologeticspress.org/rr/reprints/peleg.pdf>



Q. Was there too much activity on day six for it to have been a 24-hour day?

A. One of the reasons skeptics reject the validity of the biblical account of creation is because they find it impossible to believe that one man could name every single species of animal on the Earth in a single day. Considering there are only 86,400 seconds in a 24-hour period, we are told it is ridiculous to believe that an individual (who had never seen animals before the day he named them) could name several million species of animals in one day. Perhaps over a period of a few weeks he could accomplish such a task, but not in a single day—right?

The problem with such objections to Genesis 2:18-20 is that they are based on unfounded assumptions. The question that skeptics often ask, “How could Adam have possibly gathered and named all of the animals on the Earth in one day?” is misleading because the Bible places certain restrictions on the animals Adam named. Consider the following.

- Adam’s task did not include searching for and gathering all of God’s creatures. Rather, God “brought them” to him (Genesis 2:19). Likely, this was in some sort of orderly fashion in order to reduce the amount of time and human energy necessary to complete the process.
- Genesis 2:20 does not say that Adam named **all** of the animals on the Earth. The text says that “Adam gave names to all cattle, to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field.” Excluded from this naming process were sea creatures and creeping things mentioned earlier in the creation narrative (cf. Genesis 1:21,25).
- The beasts God brought to Adam are qualified by the descriptive phrase “of the field” (*hassadeh*). Although the pre-

cise limits of the term “field” are difficult to determine, it is possible that it refers only to those beasts living in Eden.

- If the beasts of the field were limited to those animals within the boundaries of Eden, then livestock and birds could have been similarly limited. This would greatly reduce the number of animals involved in the naming process, since it is very unlikely that all created animals lived in Eden. [If so, Eden would have been quickly overrun and destroyed.]
- Contrary to popular belief, Adam did not name millions of **species** of animals on day six (cf. Wells, 2001; McKinsey, 2000, p. 84). Genesis 1 states that the animals were created “according to their kind(s)” (vs. 21), not species. The Bible was written long before man invented the modern Linnaean classification system. The “kinds” (Hebrew *min*) of animals Adam named on the sixth day of Creation were probably very broad—more like groups of birds and land animals rather than specific genera and species. Adam would have given animals general names like “turtle” or “dog,” not special names like “pig-nosed soft-shell turtle” or “Alaskan Husky.”

These textual considerations suggest that the events of day six could have been accomplished quite easily within a 24-hour period. Adam was created with the ability to speak, to reason, and to carry out whatever task(s) God assigned him.

REFERENCES

McKinsey, Dennis (2000), *Biblical Errancy* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus).
 Wells, Steve (2001), *Skeptic’s Annotated Bible* [Online], URL: <http://www.Skepticsannotatedbible.com/1cor/index.html>.

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IN THE NEWS

Frequently, scientific research outpaces governmental laws and ethical practices. A good case in point would be a team of researchers from the University of Pennsylvania who discovered that mouse embryonic stem cells could be developed into **eggs** in culture dishes. Scientists do not yet know if these cells possess the ability to develop into embryos after fertilization. The stem cells developed spontaneously in dense cultures of embryonic stem cells. The trick was identifying which cells took on the characteristics of egg cells—a problem that researchers were able to remedy by using a fluorescent green marker (see Hubner, 2003).

In discussing the ramifications of this research, bioethicist Arthur Caplan said: “This paper is an ethical earthquake.” If scientists can generate eggs from embryonic stem cells, it would allow them to completely bypass egg donors. Via cloning, we no longer need males. Now, we may no longer need females, either!

REFERENCES

Hubner, Karin, et al., (2003), “Derivation of Oocytes from Mouse Embryonic Stem Cells,” *Science*, 300:1251-1256, May 23.

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RESOURCES

