

97-08-10a

As we prepare to worship the Lord this morning in our Sunday worship, let's begin by going to the Lord in prayer. Father, we thank you for the many ways that you have blessed us and provided for us. We thank you for the innumerable demonstrations of your faithfulness that we observe and are beneficiaries of each and every day.

We thank you for our Savior, Jesus Christ, and for the hope for the present and for the future that we have through him. We thank you that we have relationship with you. We have the privilege of approaching you directly and representing ourselves before your throne.

We thank you for the provision of your Spirit, the divine power that enables us to live in a way that pleases you. We thank you for the gift of your Word, which imparts to us wisdom and an understanding of your character, your person, and your plan for history and your plan for our lives. We pray this morning as we study and resume our observations in the book of Genesis that God the Holy Spirit will lead us into all truth and that our study will not only satisfy our curiosity about the origin of things and portray for us your mighty acts of creation, but that it will also contribute to the transformation of our souls and the equipping that we know is a part of our calling and our purpose so that we will be thoroughly furnished for all good works.

We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen. We have begun this very intriguing book of Genesis.

As I mentioned last week in the introduction, this book not only gives a historical record of the account of creation, but it is the starting point for the majority of themes and threads that run throughout Scripture, throughout the 66 books of the Bible. In it, God is first revealed in all of the many facets of his deity. Of course, it begins with the account of creation.

We have other references to creation in our Scripture reading this morning. Remember last week we were in Psalm 104, which is a beautiful poetic account that refers to God's acts of creation. We have another more brief account in Psalm 148.

Psalm 148 is our Scripture reading for this morning. Psalm 148. The psalmist says, Praise the Lord, praise the Lord from the heavens.

Praise him in the heights. Praise him, all his angels. Praise him, all his hosts.

Praise him, sun and moon. Praise him, all you stars of light. Praise him, you heavens of heavens and you waters above the heavens.

Let them praise the name of the Lord, for he commanded and they were created. He also established them forever and ever. He made a decree which shall not pass away.

Praise the Lord from the earth, you great sea creatures, and all the depths, fire and hail, snow and clouds, stormy wind fulfilling his word. Mountains and all hills, fruitful trees and all cedars, beasts and all cattle, creeping things and flying fowl. Kings of the earth and all peoples, princes and all judges of the earth, both young men and maidens, old men and children.

Let them praise the name of the Lord, for his name alone is exalted. His glory is above the earth and heaven. And he has exalted the horn of his people, the praise of all his saints, of the children of Israel, the people near to him.

Praise the Lord. It's a fascinating summary, another poetic reference to the purpose that begins in Genesis, begins with creation and the setting in motion of the wheels of human history on this planet and continues through to the very end of time and the establishment of God's eternal kingdom. And it is to extol the characteristics, the essence of God himself.

And it's interesting to see in this psalm that both animate and inanimate objects are exhorted to praise the Lord. And in what sense can the sun and the moon praise the Lord? Well, there are poetic overtones here that we will examine more closely when we get to the creation of the heavenly bodies on day four of creation. But it is sufficient here to see that as we observed in Romans chapter one, the presence of God, the person of God, his omnipotence and his eternal deity are manifest in creation.

And the heavens declare the glory of God. As the Psalms say elsewhere. And in that sense, praise comes to God because of what we see in creation.

Creation is one of the means of self-revelation that God engages in. And of course we have the historic record of that in Genesis chapter one. As I mentioned last time, the focus of Genesis is to reveal God.

And in many ways this was a great contrast to what had been current in the ancient Near East as far as cosmology or cosmogony, depending on how scholarly you want to get. There were a lot of ideas about where everything came from and an explanation of why people were on the earth and why my people are better than your people and why the Sumerians are the best or why the Babylonians are the best or why the earth is in the state of confusion and decay that people observe around them. And so when Genesis came out, when it hit the book stands, of course it was an internal document for the nation of Israel.

It wasn't published, it wasn't copied and disseminated abroad. It was a communication inspired by God for the benefit of the nation of Israel. It wasn't designed to be a polemic or a tract or some sort of an evangelistic tool to awaken the nations that surrounded Israel to God and so forth or to refute their view of the world.

It was designed specifically for the emerging nation of Israel as they left bondage in Egypt. Moses is the human inspired author. In some ways he is an editor because as we will see he is bringing together previously existing documents.

But it is a composition by Moses inspired by God for the nation of Israel. And in addition to providing them answers to the questions about the origins of the universe and origins of mankind, it is also the origin of their unique relationship with God, their place in human history, their role as the chosen people, the covenant people of God. And it has that specific purpose.

And in accomplishing that purpose it refutes parallel ideas, the ideas that the nations had, the myths and the cosmology that existed in Mesopotamia and in Babylon and in Canaan and in the surrounding nations. And it is important for us to keep that in mind as we read the account. We are in a different context.

A. We are not Israel. We are not the new Israel. We do not have the covenant relationship with God that Israel had.

Not to say we don't have a covenant relationship, but it is not the same. We are in a far more distant age than Moses and the children of Israel were in 1440 B.C. And we tend to bring our questions and our presuppositions and our worldview to the book of Genesis when we look at it. It is right there in Genesis 1.1. In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

What do we think of when we think of heavens and earth? Well, in my mind it is like being in the planetarium. You've got the vastness of space and the stars and you've got this spherical earth there hanging in space. And God created space.

And I think of it in terms of cosmos. I think of it in terms of astronomy. In terms of all of the things that we've learned about the solar system and the galaxies and so forth.

Well, we are free to keep that in mind. There is nothing limited about the revelation of God. And this is probably as good a time as any to bring up what I call the poor slob's view of theology.

There is a poor slob's view. This is just my own construction of it. But I call this the poor slob's hermeneutic.

And the idea is, and this is very prevalent. This is what you will be taught if you go to seminary. That when you go back and look at the Old Testament, you can't bring to it the vast wisdom and knowledge that we have because we are modern people in a technological and scientific age.

We have to try to dumb ourselves down and become agrarian bearded shepherds and think in very simplistic terms. And God so accommodated the scriptures to these

agricultural, nomadic, sheep herding people that we must adopt that mindset in order to understand the scripture. And that if we can't read the New Testament into the Old, we can't see Christ in the sacrifices, we can't take advantage of our wonderful wise perspective as people of a later age, we have to say, no, you can't see Christ here.

You can't see the universe here. You can't, when the scriptures talk about the circle of the earth, you can't think of that in terms of God knowing that the earth is round instead of flat and so forth because these people didn't understand that. The poor slob's hermeneutic says, you are not allowed to see or understand anything in scripture that a goat herd in 3000 BC could not have understood.

Or that the original recipients of a book could not have understood. So much of current scholarly work and interpretation of Old Testament scripture in particular concerns itself with how much did the original recipients understand? What was their world view? What was their ability to comprehend? And we are only allowed to see in scripture as much as the original recipients could have understood. Anything beyond that, you're doing eisegesis.

You're reading in later theology, later revelation. And this is defended and taught in scholarly circles as the only right hermeneutic, the only right way to interpret scripture. And if you're doing anything beyond that, you might as well just be allegorical and fanciful and read anything into it that you want.

And it's very unfortunate because what it does is, it fails to recognize God's historic purpose in revelation. It pretends that God did not know that there would be later people looking at these scriptures, that God was focused completely on the original recipients of the Pentateuch and of the prophets and of the writings, and that he had no thought that there would be future people and later generations who would look at these things. Well, that's just plain unscriptural.

We're told several times in the New Testament that the Old Testament scriptures were written for our instruction. All these things were recorded for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. God had a purpose.

He tells Daniel, seal up the words of the prophecy. Don't go into an explanation now. These things are going to be revealed at a later time.

But there's the idea that anything that Daniel could not have understood, anything that Isaiah could not have understood, when it says, Behold, a virgin will conceive and bear a son, well, he could have had no concept of the virgin birth of the Messiah. Therefore, that cannot be anything that we see or are aware of in Isaiah 7.14. I think because most of us have a more traditional background, that sounds very strange to us. But what we believe sounds very strange and inaccurate to people who adopt this view.

So, we need to be aware that God has a purpose for us in the Genesis account. We are supposed to see the unfolding of God's plan and the Genesis of it, the origin of it, the beginnings of these things that are going to run throughout not only the book of Genesis, but through the Pentateuch, through the history of Israel, through the prophets and the writings, clear through to the New Testament, where the one who will bruise the head of the serpent is revealed and where that great victory is portrayed and the account is given for us. And we do have the advantage of historical perspective, and that's a good thing, not a bad thing.

The poor, slob hermeneutic says, oh, that's a bad thing. You're tainting your interpretation by being aware of anything in the Bible later than what we're looking at. It is, at the same time, helpful in a balanced sort of way to remember what the original recipients had as a frame of reference because it helps us to not go far astray in what we see in the Scripture and to remember that this had to make sense to someone in that first audience.

It cannot have a meaning that is only understandable to us and would have been cryptic and unknowable to them. We need to understand everything that they were able to understand plus the unfolding of revelation that is ours because of our perspective. Let me give you, at this point, a brief outline of this book so that as we continue to study the first acts of creation on God's part, we see where it is that we're going.

Genesis divides into two broad sections. The first section is chapter 1 through chapter 11 and the second section begins in chapter 11 and extends through chapter 50, through to the end of the book. Now that first section, chapters 1 through 11, can be further divided into two parts.

We have the account of creation in Genesis 1.1 through Genesis 2.3 and then we have the second section beginning in Genesis 2.4 and extending through Genesis 11.26. The origin of the universe, of earth, of everything that we see around us is detailed in that first section. It is the beginning of the environment around us. The second part of that first section, Genesis 2.4 through 11.26, gives us the origins of mankind, God's initial dealings with man.

It's the time before the patriarchs. This is Adam through Shem and his immediate descendants. The pre-patriarchal age, this is where the nations came from.

This is where the lineage that will eventually result in Abraham. It gives us the background and the origin of those things. Beginning in Genesis 11.27, we have the history of the patriarchs.

We have Abraham's immediate family detailed and we have the account of Abraham. If you look at the proportion in the book of Genesis, what does most of the book deal with? We have slightly more than one chapter that gives us the account of creation. We

wouldn't necessarily say Genesis has as its focus and its emphasis creation.

We have roughly ten chapters giving us the origin and dispersion of the nations, of the early peoples, the account of the flood and so forth. But 39 of the 50 chapters of Genesis concern themselves with the patriarchs, God's dealings through covenant with his chosen people. It begins with Abraham and we have a number of chapters dealing with Abraham.

Then we have Isaac, his account is relatively brief. Then we have the story of Jacob, which takes up numerous chapters. Then we have Joseph and we have the prediction of the bondage in Egypt that will be resolved in the next installment of the Pentateuch, the next book in the set, which is Exodus.

So this gives us a broad outline. Furthermore, the book of Genesis is divided into 11 sections and each of these sections is marked by a particular word, a particular phrase, *ele-toledot* in Hebrew. The word *toledot*, which if you transliterated it into English would be T-O-L and then a small upside down E, which means you just have a little bit of a vowel sound there, and then D-O-T, T-O-L-E-D-O-T, *toledot*, is a word that has been variously translated generations or account.

It's related to the Hebrew verb *yeled*. The Y disappears and the T appears at the beginning of that when it goes into the noun form. But *yeled* or *yelad* is the word that is translated *beget* or *begat*.

And so it has the idea of origins. This is the generation, this is the account, this is where someone came from. And that word *toledot*, when it came over into Greek in the Septuagint, was translated *geneseos*, G-E-N-E-S-E-O-S, which is where our English title for the book came from.

Geneseos or *Genesis*. And that word first occurs in Genesis 2.4. Remember I said in that first section, the dividing line is right there at Genesis 2.4. This is the account or these are the generations of the heavens and the earth, as it says. And we have this phrase recurring and dividing the book into sections.

So we have the account or the history or the generations of the heavens and the earth, starting in Genesis 2.4 and extending through 4.26. And that dividing line, of course, separates the first section of the book, which is Genesis 1.1 through 2.3. That's the account of creation proper. That's our first section. Then we have this phrase occurring.

Ele toledot, these are the generations, or this is the history, as it says in the New King James, of the heavens and the earth when they were created, and the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens. And that second section, which is prefaced by that phrase, goes from 2.4 through 4.26. Then we have in Genesis 5.1 the second occurrence of that phrase. Now these are the generations, or this is the history, this is the book of

the genealogy, it says in the New King James, in the day that God created man.

You have an echo of what you saw in 2.4 there in Genesis 5.1. So this third section in Genesis, marked off by the toledot formula, extends from chapter 5, verse 1, through chapter 6, verse 8. So the three sections we've seen thus far, creation, Genesis 1.1 through Genesis 2.3, the account of the heavens and the earth, 2.4 through 4.26, and then the account of Adam, 5.1 through 6.8. The next section, the next occurrence of this formula, is in Genesis 6.9. This is the genealogy, or this is the account of Noah. And that goes from Genesis 6.9 through Genesis 9.29. Now this takes the form of sort of a laundry list here. I'm going to give you all of these sections, and it's going to be tedious and dry, but there's a reason for it.

And it has to do with the way this book came into existence. So if you'll bear with me, as soon as we finish detailing these 11 sections, we're going to see why this even matters. Why do we need to know this? Well, bear with me.

The next occurrence of this formula is in Genesis 10.1. God does these things for a reason, and here in 10.1 we have yet another occurrence of this formula. Now this is the account, the genealogy, the history, of the sons of Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. And this account runs from Genesis 10.1 through Genesis 11.9. So that accounts for our first five sections.

The sixth section begins in Genesis 11.10. This is the genealogy of Shem, and it gives a list of his descendants. And it goes through verse 26. So the sixth section is Genesis 11.10 through Genesis 11.26. And beginning now at Genesis 11.27, we have this large second portion of the book that we talked about.

We have creation and the origin of the pre-patriarchal nations and so forth in that first section. But beginning at Genesis 11.27, we can draw kind of a bold line, dividing line through the book. And now we're going to have the account of the patriarchs.

And here we also have six sections. So there is a symmetry. We have six sections before this dividing line, and we're going to have six sections afterward.

Beginning in Genesis 11.27, this is the genealogy of Telah. Why is Telah important? Because he is the direct ancestor of Abraham. Telah begot Abram, Nahor, and Haran.

Haran begot Lot. So immediately we find out the relationships that are going to define a lot of what we see in the patriarchal section. This goes from 11.27 through 25.11. It's a pretty big section.

This is the Abraham section, Genesis 11.27 through 25.11. This is the seventh of our sections, and it's perhaps the largest of these sections. Following that, in Genesis 25.12, just when we had despaired of seeing this formula again, it occurs. And in 25.12, this is the genealogy of Ishmael, Abraham's son, whom Hagar the Egyptian, Sarah's

maidservant, bore to Abraham.

This section is very brief, Genesis 25.12 through 25.18. The role of Ishmael in the history of God's chosen people is also exceedingly brief. But then in 25.19, this is the genealogy of Isaac, Abraham's son. And this is another large section that extends from Genesis 25.19 through Genesis 35.29. The choices that those two individuals made, Ishmael and Isaac, in part are responsible for the relative brevity of the former section and the length of the latter.

But then in Genesis 36.1, this is the genealogy of Esau, who is Edom. You might expect that there's going to be a similar pattern of brevity. We saw how small Ishmael's section was and how large was Isaac's.

Well, Esau's genealogy, Esau's section, goes from Genesis 36.1 through 36.8. Just eight verses. Then we have a second instance of his name. Esau's phrase is repeated.

And in Genesis 36.9, it says, and this is the genealogy of Esau, the father of the Edomites in Mount Seir. And that goes from 36.9 through 37.1. And the rest of chapter 36 is an account of all of the Edomites, who are the cousins of the Israelites. Then in Genesis 37.2, this is the history of Jacob.

37.2 through the end of the book, 50.26. Genesis 37.2 through Genesis 50.26 gives us this final section, the twelfth section. We have eleven dividing lines that divide Genesis into twelve parts. Twelve is an important number in Old Testament Scripture, isn't it? As well as in the New.

But we want to keep these in mind as we travel through the book. And also as we think about the authorship of the book, the way that it was recorded. As you know, there are a lot of genealogies, a lot of records of numbers of years, and of specific details that take place throughout the book.

And it has been a puzzle to interpreters and readers of this book as to how Moses was able to record all of these things accurately. How did he know that Methuselah lived 969 years and then he died? How did he keep straight all of the names of the descendants? One theory was that these things were passed down through oral tradition, that it was memorized and given from one generation to the next. Did you ever see this movie that came out several years ago, back in the 80's I think, called *Enemy Mine*, where there was a spaceman that gets marooned on a small asteroid or rock or something up there.

And it turns out that there's an alien who has also been marooned. And he's kind of a lizard-looking fellow. I believe Louis Gossett Jr. played the alien.

And I forget the name of the actor that played the sort of American astronaut. But in the course of the movie, this alien dies in the act of giving birth. And they've become close friends as they're marooned together, stranded on this asteroid or whatever it is.

And in his dying request to his friend from Earth, he says, I want you to be able to pass on my history. I want my son to know where he came from. This is what defines us and makes us who we are.

And so this lizard man teaches his genealogy to the Earth man. And then this young lizard man grows up and when he reaches age, the astronaut teaches him his genealogy, his history, as sort of a rite of passage. And he recounts generation after generation.

And it was a great act of friendship to pass on this heritage because the parent of this creature could not do so. Well, this was a common practice in the ancient Near East to verbally recount and pass on around the fireside stories of one's ancestors and one's genealogy. And so people thought, well, this carried down all the way from Seth and his immediate descendants and down through the days of the flood.

Shem taught his sons the account of the pre-flood days. And it was handed down from father to son and father to son until it was finally set down in writing. And it takes nothing away from that to recognize that that's not the way this book came into being.

Those things did take place, but that's not how Genesis was formed. That's not where the content came from. These markers that we have just seen, these 11 markers that divide the book into 12 sections, El Etoadote as a formula is not unique to the book of Genesis.

This formula has been found in cuneiform tablets from the ancient Near East, from Mesopotamia, from Ebla and Nuzi and Mari and other ancient libraries that have been uncovered by archaeologists. It's really fascinating because most of these tablets, by the way, have never been translated. There are so few men who know cuneiform, and there are so many thousands of these tablets that have been unearthed that there are hundreds and hundreds of them that have never been translated.

And it's not like it's a great loss. A lot of them are contracts and records of marriages, and the same kind of things you would find down at the county courthouse. They're interesting in terms of telling us about culture and telling us names of places and names of people.

They have found in these ancient caches of tablets, they found a big library at Ur. They found tablets at Ur, where Abraham is from. And there are names very similar to those in Abraham's family.

The name Avram itself is found in these tablets. It was not unique to him. It became unique when God renamed him.

But one of the things we see in these tablets is that often, when it is a narrative account or when it is the account of a genealogy or when it is the story of something that's been set down, at the bottom of the tablet in cuneiform will be a notation that says, This is the

record of so-and-so. And then it will give the scribe's name or it will give the subject that this tablet deals with. It's always at the bottom of the tablet.

It's not a title. It's sort of a postscript. You see sometimes in our English Bible in the Textus Receptus, there will be a little notation.

This is a letter from Paul written from Rome, or this was taken by the hand of Eutychus to whomever. There will be a little postscript. These cuneiform tablets have these postscripts.

And it is evident that Moses was uniquely positioned by God to take advantage of written records that have been passed down through the generations. Perhaps they, too, were cuneiform tablets. They may have been written in the same or similar language to the ones that have been found in Ur and in Ebla and other places.

But these, in a way, are footnotes. Moses has included, in many cases, the length of these sections corresponds to just about what you could fit on a clay tablet or a set of clay tablets to record these histories. And so the short answer to this is it isn't necessary to believe that there was some sort of direct dictation from God to Moses to set down these dates and years.

It's very likely that writing was known before the flood, that the early generations were taught this skill and recorded things, and that these tablets came across with Noah and were passed down to his sons, especially to Shem. We know from looking at the lifespans that Shem overlapped with Abraham. They met in the Melchizedek celebration of the victory over the five kings that we'll see later on in Genesis.

And it is not a great leap of logic to see that whatever family records existed would be in the hands of the patriarch of the family. Shem could very easily have passed these to Abraham, who very easily could have passed them down to Isaac and to Jacob. Jacob goes down and dies in what land? In Egypt.

Who is the second most powerful man in Egypt at that time? It's Joseph, who has access to the Egyptian libraries and all of the royal accoutrements there of scribes and record keepers and so forth. It's Joseph. And Joseph very likely deposited the records of his history and his family, the things that had come down to him through his father, in that library.

And 400 years later or 210 years later, however long the slavery in Egypt lasted, you have another Hebrew who has access to everything in the palace because he's been adopted by the princess, he's been adopted by the pharaoh's daughter. He's grown up and educated in Egypt, educated by those tutors and by those scribes and from those libraries. And it's very easy to see how these materials would come to hand to Moses and be treasured as long lost family records, the heritage of his people and his lineage.

And he took that opportunity to render those into the Hebrew tongue and to write them down under the inspiration of God. So it's a wonderful thing to see the way God uses various means of preservation, both natural and supernatural, to bring us this account. And these Elethodot formulas that we see throughout the scriptures here, in the view of many, are reminders that these came from written sources, from tablets that had these notations at the bottom.

And it's also interesting to see that members of the family kept track of one another and cared for one another. Jacob preserved the records of Esau and the Edomites, and has those in his possession and passes them down to his children so that they know who their cousins are and they know what became of the people who did not pursue covenant relationship with God. So it's fascinating to see the way that God wove these factors together to create and preserve for us this wonderful account.

We find ourselves here seeing this book written under the direction of the Holy Spirit by the hand of Moses, and as soon as it is set down, and as soon as it brings all of these unique facts together and presents them to the emerging nation of Israel, it immediately makes a stark contrast. It flies in the face of what the common world view is. And the interesting thing for us is, Genesis does the same thing today.

It flies in the face of our common world view, of what is accepted by the majority of people in our culture and in our time. The reasons are different, but the effect is the same. And the power of the truth of God to refute and to put in place these false ideas about origins, these false ideas about the role of man in the universe, false ideas about the existence of God, the nature of God, the purposes of God, the nature and purpose of human existence, these are still today, so many thousands of years, some 3,400 years after the writing down of these things, Genesis still has the same power to stand conventional wisdom on its head.

And what I'd like to do is give you just a little bit of an idea of what kind of a cultural setting Genesis entered into when Moses wrote it down and began to preach it to the nation of Israel in the 1400s B.C. We have preserved for us down to the present several different early accounts of what people thought happened in creation. There are flood stories. I'm just going to detail three of these for you, which are somewhat contemporaneous.

The first of these, if you go along and read Biblical Archaeology Review or you read some commentaries, there's a wonderful interesting book called Ancient Near Eastern Texts. It's always abbreviated A-N-E-T in the scholarly literature, and we just call it ANET for short. But Ancient Near Eastern Texts is a collection of inscriptions and tablets and things that have been found, have been translated, and a lot of times there will be a picture of the tablet in there and then they'll give these very ancient records, whatever it might be, a story or a contract or a letter from one person to another.

Once you pick that thing up, it's very hard to set it down because it's a peek into life thousands of years ago. A man who's taking a journey and has left some days before and he's writing a letter back to his wife talking about how much he misses her and the things that he's brought on the journey and so forth. Here you have this long lost letter thousands and thousands of years later and you get a glimpse into lives and times gone by.

But in some of these, you also have very important cultural documents like their creation accounts or their mythologies. One of these is Enuma Elish. E-N-U-M-A is the first word, Enuma, and the second word is Elish.

Our record of this, the tablets that have been found that record this story, come from about 1100 B.C. This would be about 100 years before the time of David. It would have been during the period of the judges in Israel. This is a Babylonian account.

It's a Babylonian creation story. It's very interesting, the parallels and the differences that it has with Genesis. Enuma Elish includes in its creation story the creation of light, creation of the firmament, the appearance of dry land, the creation of the luminaries, the head of the bodies, and the sequence of these is the same as what we're going to see in Genesis.

It also mentions that the god or gods involved rested on the seventh day. Those are the similarities in that creation account, but there are also some great differences. If you read this account as it's been reconstructed and translated, its purpose and the atmosphere in it is completely different.

The whole purpose of this account is to glorify the Babylonian god Marduk, M-A-R-D-U-K. He's the senior, he's the Zeus, if you will, the head god in the Babylonian pantheon, which is populated with gods of various sorts. The whole purpose of the Enuma Elish story is to glorify Marduk and show what a great god he is among the gods and to justify his supremacy as the Zeus of that pantheon.

And creation, even though these details are similar, creation is sort of an accident in this account. It's not really the point of the account, it's just something that is kind of a detail. And his real claim to fame, the purpose of this account, is not to show creation, it's just sort of a detail.

The real purpose of it is to show Marduk's victory over the great arch nemesis, the great anti-god Tiamat. Tiamat is the god of chaos. It's actually a goddess, I think.

And I'm not totally up on Babylonian mythology and gods and so forth, but Tiamat is the yang to Marduk's yin. They're two sort of equal and opposite forces. And in this early account, Marduk wins out and prevails over Tiamat.

We have two other accounts that are similar. These are somewhat older, about 500

years old, or at least our copies of them. One is called Atrahasis.

This is a Mesopotamian account. Mesopotamia, of course, is where Ur is, Ur of the Chaldees. And circa 1600 B.C., again, we have a creation account.

In many ways, this one is a little closer to Genesis. There is a sequence of events similar to what we see in Genesis. There's creation followed by divine displeasure.

The god or gods become unhappy with the way man is turning out. And then you have destruction by a flood. And you have the preservation of an individual through that flood.

You may have heard of the Gilgamesh epic. Gilgamesh is a flood account. Well, Gilgamesh is an extract, kind of a variation derived from the Atrahasis account.

It's just the flood portion, but it parallels it in many ways. And the 11th tablet of the epic of Gilgamesh has this flood account where the individual is preserved through the flood. Many of the details are the same.

A bird is sent out to see if it's safe to come out of a boat. And after they do finally emerge, there's a sacrifice to the gods. Very many parallels to what we find in Genesis.

But there are also many differences. Finally, we have the Sumerian flood epic. Sumeria, S-U-M-E-R-I-A.

The Sumerians were one of the ancient civilizations. This is also circa 1600 B.C. It's been reconstructed from two or three different tablets that we've found. There's a tablet found in Ur, Abraham's hometown.

There's one found in Nippur. And then there's a later version from the Library of Ashurbanipal, which is circa 700 B.C. But putting these together, they've reconstructed this Sumerian creation account. Also has many parallels.

Creation of man and animals. Man has a sad plight. He's in dire straits and needs something.

There's no irrigation canals. Man has no clothes. There's no fear of wild animals in this early stage, such as snakes.

The goddess Nintur, N-I-N-T-U-R, the mother of mankind, has devised a plan. She wants to solve man's sad plight to end his nomadic existence. Get him some clothes and help him out and so forth.

But her plan fails and things go into chaos. Kings arise. Cities are built.

Worship of gods is instituted. In the process of all of this building and so forth, man gets very noisy. This annoys the pantheon of the gods.

They get very upset about this. So they say, this mankind thing is a bad idea. Let's just wipe it all out.

It's noisy and bothersome. But one of the gods doesn't agree with this plan. So he gets his little special guy and preserves him through the flood.

That sort of betrays the pantheon to save his little special man. This man wants to save civilization. So he brings craftsmen and artisans and people who have various skills and puts them on his little boat so that they'll be preserved.

This is the sort of common belief system that prevailed in the days when Genesis came into being. We're going to pause here and take our break. When we come back, we're going to see how Genesis is unique.

Many people have tried to argue that Genesis is just an outgrowth and reweaving of these accounts. We're going to see that it was a startling contrast and refutation of these when we come back. Let's pause and take a break.