

Examining the Options on When Adam Lived

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In this paper, I assume that Adam was one, real man who was the federal head of the human race, in agreement with Romans 5. My aim is then to ask when Adam lived, and who his progeny were, in the context both of Scripture and modern science. I do not assume that present theories of science are sacrosanct, but will refer to theories which have much stronger evidential support than others which may put pressure on our views.

The first question one must address is whether Adam was the first human that ever lived. The standard answer in church history is yes, but there are actually no direct biblical statements to this effect. If we say that he was not, but was still the federal head of the human race, we must choose among several other options which relate to that. We will discuss this option in Section II. For now, we examine the issues involved with taking Adam as the first human that ever lived.

Option I. Adam was the first human

This option does not preclude that other species of human-like creatures existed before Adam. In particular, there is strong evidence that Neanderthals were a separate species from modern humans.¹ Neanderthals are believed to have hunted with pointed sticks and used fire, but probably did not have language, although this has been debated.² They thus might resemble fairly closely the “orcs” (goblins) of Tolkien’s *Lord of the Rings* stories, and—who knows?—perhaps our tales of goblins are corporate memory of an earlier time when Neanderthals walked the earth along with humans and warred with them. Modern archaeology indicates that humans coexisted with Neanderthals and may have killed them off. There is also evidence that humans mated with Neanderthals, but that does not imply they were one species; cross breeding among different species can occur. Besides the Neanderthals, one could argue that even hominids that looked like modern humans were actually non-human, another species, due to some differences not preserved in the fossil record.

Although the Bible does not directly state that Adam was the first human who ever lived, there are verses which support this view. One obvious argument is simply that Adam is the first human we encounter by name in the Bible. But the possibility of a prehistory not told in the Bible is not ruled out; we know, for example, that Satan and the angels preceded Adam and Eve but learn nothing of the lives and wars of angels in the first chapters of Genesis; Satan simply appears on the scene (like Cain’s wife, a person we will discuss at

¹ See H. Ross and F. Rana, *Who was Adam?* (Navpress, 2005).

² A. Gauger, “Science and Adam and Eve,” (in press) lists arguments that Neanderthals shared many attributes with modern humans, and if cleaned up could not be distinguished from a modern human.

length below). We only find out later in the Bible, indirectly, that there were whole wars of angels.³

Other texts in support of Adam as the first human are the marriage precedent in Genesis 2:24, which seems to indicate that Adam and Eve are the founders of all marriage, and the name Adam gives to Eve in Genesis 3:20, “the mother of all living.” Genesis 2:5 also says “there was no man” in the “land”⁴ before Adam was created. There are alternative explanations for these passages, as discussed below, but it is certainly natural to take them in reference to Adam and Eve as the first humans.

On the other hand, this view also creates interpretive difficulties with some other passages. An obvious one which has confronted generations of students is that there are apparently two creation stories in Genesis 1 and 2. A natural reading is to see Genesis 1 and 2 as sequential, since there is no direct indication that Genesis 2 is going back in time, and detailed returns to previous stories are not common in the Old Testament.

The most common resolution of this is to take Genesis 2 as a return to Day 6 of the story of Genesis 1, with a more detailed focus on the story of Adam and Eve. There is nothing in the Hebrew grammar to indicate this, but also nothing that directly contradicts it. Furthermore, the beginning of Genesis 5 connects the Adam of Genesis 2 with the creation passage of Genesis 1:

This is the book of the generations of Adam. When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. Male and female he created them, and he blessed them and named them Man when they were created. When Adam had lived 130 years, he fathered a son in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth. (Gen 5:1-3)

Here, the wording is almost identical to that of Gen 1:26-27, but the person in view is clearly the man of Genesis 2-4 who had Seth as a son.

A more serious problem for this option is raised by asking where Cain got his wife, and who he was afraid of, in Genesis 4. The standard answer is that Cain married one of his sisters, and he was afraid of future children of Adam and Eve. Both of these answers are problematic. The problem of incest could be solved by supposing that there was an exception for the first generation, but in Leviticus 18:11, 24-25 the Lord says that such things disgust him, and that the land vomits out people who do such things: did God’s

³ Revelation 12:7-9. It can be argued, however, that this passage refers to a defeat of Satan and his armies after the incarnation and ascension of Christ, since these are mentioned right before this passage, in Revelation 12:5-6. However, Jesus says “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven” *before* his ascension (Luke 10:18). He may have been referring to an earlier battle, with Revelation 12:7-9 referring to a later one. In any case, the history of angels and demons is not strongly in view in the Bible, but is assumed.

⁴ As discussed in D. Snoke, *A Biblical Case for an Old Earth*, (Baker, 2006), the same word in Hebrew is sometimes translated as “earth” and sometimes “land.” The word is as generic as the English word “land.”

attitude change? Also, there are problems of timing. In Gen 4:16-17, Cain goes away from Adam and Eve, far away in the land of Nod, and then takes a wife. It is possible to imagine that he took his wife with him, but this would imply that he did not “know” his wife until after he got to Nod. It is also hard to imagine that Cain was so forward thinking that he anticipated numerous children of Adam and Eve pursuing him, even though they not had been born yet. Furthermore, Cain fears being driven “away from the land” (Genesis 4:14) where Adam and Eve lived. Would he not rather fear staying close to Adam and Eve, where their children would be, rather than going away from them where no one lived? Not only that, but the birth of Seth occurs after this story, in Genesis 4:25-26, and Seth is viewed as a direct replacement for Abel. No other children are in view between Abel and Seth. Of course, this story of Seth’s birth could be another case of going back to amplify an earlier event, as is argued for Genesis 1 and 2, but it is hard to avoid the sense that the birth of Seth follows in sequence after the story of Cain.

It is possible to explain away these problems, but the most natural reading of Genesis 4 is to take it that there are other people around besides the children of Eve when Cain kills Abel and is driven away. One could take these as another species, such as Neanderthals, as discussed above, although this would imply that the children of Adam and Eve were required to marry another species. They would essentially be animals, and the law of Moses forbids lying with animals.⁵

One last difficulty for this option is the mystery of the improper mixed marriages in Genesis 6:1-4. Some have taken the “sons of God” to be angels (or demons) who married humans, but this contradicts the teaching of Jesus that angels “neither marry nor are given in marriage” (Matthew 22:30, Mark 12:25). In addition, there are numerous problems with imagining spiritual beings marrying flesh and blood humans and having offspring. The support for this view comes from the use of the term “sons of God” to refer to angels in the book of Job (Job 1:6, 2:1, 38:7). But in Deuteronomy 32:8 the same term is used to refer to the nations outside Israel,⁶ and Deuteronomy is more connected to Genesis than Job. The interpretation is therefore more natural that the daughters of Adam are marrying someone outside their community they should not marry. But if everyone is a son of Adam, who are these other outsiders? One can suppose they were of the line of Cain, no longer counted as a son of Adam, but that is also speculation.

Taking Adam and Eve as the first humans, we have three options for their date.

⁵ Exodus 22:19, Leviticus 18:23, 20:15, Deut 27:21.

⁶ The Masoretic text has “sons of Israel” instead of “sons of God”, but the Septuagint and Dead Sea scrolls have “sons of God,” and this makes much more sense in view of the parallelism of this phrase with “the nations” of “all mankind” in the same verse, and in view of the fact that it makes no sense for God to allot the borders of the non-Israelite nations according to the number of Israelites.

Option IA. Adam lived around 120,000 BC or earlier

The appeal of this option is that it agrees with the archaeological dating for the origin of anatomically modern humans.⁷ The main problem with this view is the severe pressure it puts on interpreting the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11. Only ten generations are listed between Adam and Noah, and another ten between Noah and Abraham. It is well accepted that genealogies in the Bible often skipped generations deemed unimportant and counted grandfathers or great-grandfathers as the “fathers” of later generations. But the number of generations skipped to go from Adam at 120,000 BC to Abraham, who by all accounts lived around 2000 BC, would have to be enormous. Even assuming 100 years per generation as roughly given in Genesis 5, this would require an average of 60 generations, or 6000 years, to be skipped per *each line* in the genealogies. This is conceivable but without any other example in Scripture.

On the other hand, Deuteronomy 7:9 refers to “a thousand generations” (Deuteronomy 5:10 also is most naturally taken in parallel to this passage, and refers to “thousands”, i.e., at least 2-3 thousand generations.) Even at 40 years per generation, the standard number of years per generation in the Bible,⁸ a thousand generations gives 40,000 years. One could take these passages as hyperbole, or referring to Christ not returning for 40,000 years, but a natural reading would be to suppose that God is referring to at least 40,000 years of faithfulness.

Another problem for this view is that Genesis 2-4 refer to various aspects of culture, such as shepherding, farming, and towns, which did not exist, according to archaeology, in 120,000 BC or for tens of thousands of years afterward. One could say that the science is wrong, but the appeal of this early-date view is to agree with science on the date of the origin of humans.

Option IB. Adam lived around 50,000 BC

The appeal of this view is that it agrees with the archaeological dating for the sudden rise of modern human culture around 50,000 BC. While skeletons taken as anatomically the same as modern humans date to much earlier, most of what we consider modern culture (art, music, many tools, burials, towns, farming, etc.) all appear around 50,000 BC, with lots of artifacts. One could therefore suppose that the earlier skeletons were in fact not really human, just human-like, comparable to the Neanderthals, and the first real humans appear when culture appears in the record.

⁷ Some would put the date of Adam and Eve even earlier, notably Glenn Morton (*J. American Scientific Affiliation* **49**, 238 (1997); **51**, 87 (1999)) perhaps as far back as 1 million BC, to correspond to the origin of all “hominids”, that is, human-like creatures. But there seem to be clear differences biologically between modern humans and other hominids such as Neanderthals; such hominids had very small skulls and brains, for example.

⁸ E.g., Numbers 32:13.

This view still has a problem with many skipped generations in the genealogies, but it is not as severe. If Adam was 40,000 years before Abraham, and the average generation was 100 years, this would give a average of 20 skipped generations, or 2000 years, per line in the genealogies. As mentioned above, the 40,000 year number many actually agree with the literal interpretation of God's "a thousand generations" in Deuteronomy.

This view also has some problems with the culture of Genesis 2-4 including things like farming, shepherding, and cities, but the problem is much less severe. All of these things started in some form in the explosion of culture around 50,000 BC. To resolve this problem, Jack Collins has argued⁹ that although the language of these chapters of Genesis seems to refer to cultural elements contemporary with 4000 BC or later, this could be simply due to the fact that Moses and his sources used terms familiar to an audience of 1500 BC, using these terms to refer to roughly equivalent activities in an earlier age.

Option IC. Adam lived around 4000 BC

This option has the appeal that it assumes little or no skipped generations in the genealogies. (Skipping 2-3 generations per line, consistent with the type of skipping known to occur in other genealogies in the Bible, could move this date to as early as 10,000 BC.) It also would easily be consistent with the cultural aspects of farming, shepherding, towns, music, and iron tools described in Genesis 2-4. In addition, as geologist Carol Ann Hill has argued,¹⁰ it easily agrees with the where the rivers described in Genesis 2 would have been around 4000 BC; one of these rivers, the Pishon, no longer exists but has been found by satellite imaging and is estimated to have dried up before 2000 BC.

The main problem for this view is that there is a lot of scientific evidence for people with human culture before 4000 BC. It is possible to suppose that the people before 50,000 BC, who did not have these aspects of culture, were not really human, but instead another animal-like species like the Neanderthals. But literally thousands of digs indicate that the people from 50,000 BC to 10,000 BC had many aspects of religion and art, etc. Possibly all these sites have been dated wrong, or their artifacts have been misinterpreted, but to suppose so is a huge step of rejecting a lot of science.

Option II. Other people lived before Adam

Because of the appeal of putting Adam at a more recent date, several fairly conservative scholars have suggested that many problems could be solved if we allow that other people lived before Adam, but still view Adam as a real person who was the federal head of

⁹ See J. Collins, *Genesis 1-4: A Linguistic, Literary, and Theological Commentary* (Presbyterian and Reformed, 2006).

¹⁰ Carol Ann Hill, "The Garden of Eden: A Modern Landscape," *J. American Scientific Affil.* **52**, 31 (2000).

humanity. In this case, there is no problem with who Cain feared and how he found his wife, no problem with the culture of Genesis 2-4 being similar to that of 4000 BC, and no problem with hundreds of skipped generations in the genealogies.

This view also allows a natural solution to the puzzle of the mixed marriages of Genesis 6:1-4. The genealogy of Genesis 5 tracks a special “holy line” of sons of Adam who were blessed with extraordinary long life, possibly as a vestige of eating of the Tree of Life in the Garden. This special covenantal people intermarries improperly with the “sons of God,” which, as discussed above, is the term used for the Gentile nations in Deuteronomy 32:8. This is consistent with the pervasive theme in the Old Testament of warning against intermarriage with those outside the covenant community. It also supports a continuity between Genesis 5 and 6, with the “mighty ones” of Genesis 6:4 identified as the descendants of the people of amazing life span in Genesis 5.

The Old Testament also refers to people, such as the Horites,¹¹ who are not plugged into the genealogical lines of descent from Adam, and our experience also tells us that African, Asian, and American and Australian aboriginal races do not naturally fit into any of the lines of nations traced in the Bible from Adam.¹²

In this view, the special creation of Adam and Eve is akin to the virgin birth of Christ. God created something new, but a person looking at Jesus would not have been able to tell he had a physical nature different from others. The story of Genesis 2-3 is a real history of the real federal head of all mankind, but this federal head did not necessarily live before all other people, just as Jesus did not live after all other people (or before all other people). The actions of these two men are in some sense timeless.

As noted above, there are some passages that are less natural in this view than in the Adam-first option. Eve is called the “mother of all living” in Genesis 3:20. Clearly, this does not mean every living thing, although the same word for “living” refers to animals in many places in Genesis 1. The “living” here could simply mean all the people in the line of Adam, i.e., that she is the “great mother”, or it could refer to the promise just made by God in Genesis 3:15 that the woman’s “seed” would crush the head of Satan, that hers is the line of life. Adam’s naming of Eve in Genesis 3:20 also comes in conjunction with Genesis 3:21, in which God gives robes to Adam and Eve. This “giving of a robe” was culturally a sign of an inheritance, or special covenantal relationship, in Israel.¹³ The giving of the robes and the

¹¹ E.g., Genesis 14:6, Deuteronomy 2:12, 22.

¹² People have tried to link the African races to Ham, the son of Noah, and the Asian, Australian and American races to Noah’s son Japheth. But Ham is the father of the Canaanites, who were middle eastern contemporaries of the Israelites and not African. Another son of Ham, Cush, is the father of the Babylonians, another middle eastern, not African, nation. The Egyptians descended from Ham, though located in the continent of Africa, were not genetically similar to the southern African nations at the time of ancient Israel. Similarly, the sons of Japheth listed in the Bible are all known middle eastern nations, such as Magog, referred to in Ezekiel 38:2 and 39:6.

¹³ E.g., Genesis 37:3, 1 Samuel 2:19, 1 Samuel 18:4, Luke 15:22.

naming of Eve by Adam in these two adjacent verses are connected, so possibly both indicate a special covenantal relationship of life by grace.

Similarly, the marriage precedent of Genesis 2:24 may refer to a new covenantal sense to marriage, as opposed to earlier behavior which was perhaps as simple as grabbing a woman. The marriage of Adam and Eve may have been the first “true” marriage. One might also ask why God brought only animals to show Adam before he brought Eve, if there were other women around. All commentators agree that God was not bringing the animals as potential marriage partners; this was a demonstration to Adam of his uniqueness as a human. God did not bring other women because he intended this one woman to be his perfect mate.

Within this scenario of Adam coming after other humans, we must decide what we think about the relationship of these other people to God. Specifically, were they created in the “image of God”?

Option II.A. People before Adam did not have the image of God

If the people before Adam were not made in the image of God, then their relation to Adam and Eve and their children would not be much different from the situation considered above in Option I, in which Adam and Eve were the first “true” humans, with animal-like hominids such as Neanderthals which preceded and may have coexisted with Adam and Eve. In this view, although these humans without the image of God may have had various elements of culture such as cities and farming, they were not fully human.¹⁴

The appeal of this view is that it agrees with the tradition of Adam as the first of the line of humans, or at least, “true” humans, but also agrees with the science which shows many humans before 4000 BC and also with the cultural elements and genealogies in Genesis 3-5 which appear to date Adam around 4000 BC.

A problem for this view is that it would seem to support racism. There are two categories of people, those who are descended from Adam and those who are not, i.e., are not true humans and therefore presumably have no more rights than animals. It could easily be argued that Africans, Asians, and Australian and American aborigines did not descend from Adam’s line.

One might counter with the hypothesis that such races are all descended physically from Adam, and any people without the image of God who existed prior to Adam have all died off. This conflicts with science if we date Adam at 4000 BC, because science dates native American and other peoples to be around the globe by no later than 30,000 BC. One could

¹⁴ J. Vaughn has proposed that humans before Adam did not have the image of God but were fully human. In this view, “image of God” is simply a term for the special relationship of Adam and his line with God. Vaughn’s view is therefore equivalent to II.B below but with different terminology.

date Adam at 50,000 BC, as in Option I.B above, but that would make this view nearly indistinguishable from Option I.B in practice.

One might also argue that all people alive today have the blood of Adam because of intermarriage. Statistical studies¹⁵ have shown that 1000 years is long enough for any geographically connected people to intermarry enough times that everyone is related to everyone else. A racist might argue, however, that geographical separation prevented this in some cases, or might argue that even if intermarriage happened, some people have more of the blood (that is, genes) of Adam than other people do.

From an anthropological perspective, it is hard to say that people who built towns, farmed, had laws and religion were not “true” humans. There is much we do not know about the cultures of 50,000 to 10,000 BC, but a straightforward look at the artifacts makes them seem human.

Another problem for this view is that there is no creation story for them in the Bible. The creation of humans in Genesis 1:26-28 refers to people created in the image of God, as does the recap in Genesis 5:1-2. One can suppose that, like the angels, they have a history which is not given, but this seems easier to suppose in the case of different species with no language, like the Neanderthals. On the other hand, some people in the Bible have a story not given, such as the Horites mentioned above who are not connected to the genealogy of Adam, and Melchizedek, king of Salem.¹⁶

Supposing that there were people around without the image of God, we have to decide whether the children of Adam and Eve married them. As discussed above, the marriage between these people and the children of Adam was viewed as improper in Genesis 6:1-4, but how improper?

Option II.A.1. Adam’s children were meant to marry people without the image of God

It would presumably be physically possible but highly improper for a human with the image of God to marry one who was not “truly” human. Again, this raises the issue of “miscegenation” used by racists.

If God created Adam and Eve with the intent of their children marrying those without the image of God, this would seem to impugn his character. To avoid this problem, one could suppose that the “image of God” was just an extra blessing, and that people who lacked the image of God were still fully human. This case would then be the same as Option II.B below.

¹⁵ J. Chang, “Recent Common Ancestors of All Present-Day Individuals,” *Advances in Applied Probability* 31, 1002 (1999); see also Steve Olsen, “The Royal We,” *The Atlantic*, (May 2002.)

¹⁶ Hebrews 7:3 notes the fact that king Melchizedek has no recorded genealogy when he appears in Genesis 14:18.

Option II.A.2. Adam's children did not marry people without the image of God

If the children of Adam were not meant to marry others, the same issue of incest in the first generation arises, as discussed above for the case Adam as the first human. This option does solve the problem of who Cain feared, and may still explain the mixed marriages of Genesis 6:1-4, as physically possible but improper.

Overall, the view of people before Adam not having the image of God lends itself, like the "other species" view discussed under Option 1 above, leads to a view of "two humanities," while the Bible seems always to talk of one human race. We therefore turn to another option, in which people of all types have the image of God.

Option II.B. People before Adam had the image of God

This view has the appeal that one can take Genesis 1 and 2 as sequential: Genesis 1:27-28 talks of the creation of humanity generally, in the image of God, while Genesis 2 talks of the creation of the one man, Adam, specifically as the federal head of humanity. It also solves the problem of Cain's wife, and who Cain feared. It allows us to put Adam at around 4000 BC, in easy agreement with the culture assumed in the texts and the genealogies.

As discussed above, taking Genesis 1 and 2 as sequential instead of overlapping has the problem that Genesis 5:1-3 seems to connect the two; Adam, the father of Seth, is clearly in view, but the language of Genesis 1:27-28 is used.

A more overarching objection deals with the problem of these people dying before Adam and Eve sinned. Romans 5 says that death entered into the human race through the one man Adam.

One option, of course, would be to say that people before Adam did not die, and all had eternal life, but this flies in the face of all archeological data, and has no direct biblical support. I am not aware of anyone who takes this view.

If we assume that people with the image of God died before Adam, we then have two options on why this may have been the case.

Option II.B.1. People died naturally before Adam, and Adam started a new line of immortals.

In this view, the Tree of Life in the Garden of Eden represents a new, special covenantal blessing given to Adam. That fact that the Tree of Life existed only in one place, so that Adam and his children had no access to any more trees of life when they were kicked out of the Garden, means that the immortal life they had was a special blessing, not a generic one given to all people.

This view gives a natural reading to Genesis 5 and 6. The people of the genealogy of Genesis 5 are people with especially long life, due to their descent from Adam who ate of the Tree. They married the sons of God, who were other people who had the image of God, giving rise to the “mighty ones” who had the blood line of Adam, but diluting it.

It seems untenable to talk of people who are fully human, with the image of God, who do not have eternal life. Therefore, even though these people died naturally, like us, presumably they would still have life in heaven.

The main problem with this view is that the death of humans is everywhere discussed as a curse. One could argue that these people died because they sinned, but Romans 5:12 says “sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned.” This seems to clearly say that the cause of sin, and also of human death, was Adam’s sin.¹⁷

Alternatively, one could argue that Adam’s sin primarily brought about spiritual death, not physical death. This is consistent with the fact that Adam did not die physically in the day he sinned, even though God said “in the day you eat of it you shall surely die” (Genesis 2:17). Adam died spiritually that day, but his physical death was delayed. However, Romans 5 makes no distinction between physical death and spiritual death; all human “death” came from the one man’s sin.¹⁸

Option II.B.2. People died before Adam as a retroactive result of his sin

This view may seem strange at first, but actually has support in the parallel of Adam with Christ, and our understanding of how the work of Christ applies. Christ’s work applies not only to those after him, but also to those before him.¹⁹ Christ is not the last human who ever lived, nor the first. One can argue similarly for Adam, that his sin applies both to those after him and before him. Just as people before Christ did not understand what his work would be, but could still be saved by him, so people before Adam might not know what was the cause of their death, but still die because of the imputation of his sin.

Presumably these people also sinned, since sin in actuality comes from Adam in addition to the imputation of sin (Rom 5:12). This raises the question then of how Adam could be

¹⁷ One could argue that Rom. 5:13, which says “sin indeed was in the world before the law was given,” may refer to a time period before the covenant of law with Adam. But it is much easier to take this as referring to sin in the world before the law of Moses, after Adam; the “law” for Paul is almost always the law of Moses. Rom. 5:14 is intriguing, however, in saying that death reigned over those “who sinning was not like the transgression of Adam.” One might argue that this refers to people whose sin was not descended from Adam by birth.

¹⁸ I have previously argued that animal death is not in view in Romans 1 (or 1 Cor 15), and animal death before Adam is a natural reading of the Bible. See D. Snoke, *A Biblical Case for an Old Earth* (Baker Books, 2006), chapter 3.

¹⁹ Romans 3:25.

tested to never sin, in a world which already contained sin. A sort of circular logic occurs regarding which was really the cause of which. Even if we suppose that the Garden totally isolated Adam from these earlier sinners, we still have the conundrum of a world in which the effects of the sin of Adam were in existence, and could in some way influence Adam's choice of whether to sin; conversely, if Adam chose not to sin, what would happen to these effects already the world?

The same problem of circularity does not occur in the case of Jesus' grace extending retroactively. The existence of people saved by his grace did not remove the temptation for Jesus to sin, because there was plenty of sin still in the world. The difference between the two cases comes from the difference in the consequences. The people saved retroactively by Christ had their judgment suspended, so to speak, until after the work of Christ. Had Christ failed in his test, these people, who had already received temporal judgments due to the sin of Adam, would not have received the eternal blessing of life in heaven.

The Flood of Noah

Closely related to the dating of Adam is the question of date of the Flood of Noah. I have argued elsewhere²⁰ that the flood of Noah was local to the Mideast, though very large in scope. Working within this perspective, there are still two questions to be resolved. 1) Roughly what date did the event occur? 2) Did all other humans die except for the family of Noah?

If we take the view that all other humans besides Noah's family died in the flood, then the issues of dating become exactly the same as those we have discussed above for Adam, because Noah in this case becomes the new Adam from which all people are descended. This heightens the problem of reconciling the dates with the genealogies, because instead of twenty generations from Adam to Abraham, we have only ten from Noah to Abraham. Furthermore all their ages are much shorter, having children around age 30 as compared to over a hundred in the generations before Noah.

If we are to take the view that all other humans died in the Flood, then we must argue either for a global flood over the whole world, which has all the problems that I pointed out in my book, or we must argue that for the ten generations of the genealogy from Adam to Noah, no humans traveled outward to the ends of the earth, so that no one left the region affected by the Flood, but in the ten generations from Noah to Abraham, each with around 1/3 less years, they did. We must also argue that when Genesis 4 refers to descendants of Cain as the "fathers" of all who do such things as tents and livestock, music, bronze, and iron, that this means that all these methods were learned by the children of Noah. The sense of the text seems to indicate more than this, however.

If we take the view that not all other humans died in the Flood, then the date of the Flood can be much more recent. One argument for this view is the symmetry given to the Flood

²⁰ D. Snoke, *A Biblical Case for an Old Earth*, (Baker Books, 2006), chapter 8.

of Noah and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah in the New Testament²¹. Both are typological of the final judgment of the world by God, but the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah clearly did not affect all people.

The theologically weighty matters which arise in discussing whether Adam was the father of all humanity do not occur in the case of Noah. Noah is not presented as a federal head parallel to Christ anywhere in Scripture. The strongest argument to be made for all present people being descended from Noah is that the covenant with Noah in Genesis 9 applies to all humanity. This is making an assumption that is not stated in the text, however; the Bible does not say anywhere that this is a universal covenant. It could equally well be taken as a narrowing of the focus of God onto a special, chosen people, similar to the way that the covenant with Abraham selected out a subset of all humanity, in a further narrowing of the focus in Genesis. One can also argue that even if this was a universal covenant, it did not require every person to be descended from Noah; after all, the animals are also included in the covenant, and they certainly were not descended from Noah!

Conclusions

My general conclusion is that none of these options is completely crazy, although some differ from the historical positions of the church. Some of the positions, however, seem to me to invoke improbable or logically questionable premises.

Although there is an argument to be made that Adam's sin could have applied retroactively, I find the circularity problem to be substantial. If the test of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil was real, Adam could have chosen to not sin, but then there would be a logical conundrum of how there could be humans subject to sin and death in his world. I therefore conclude that Adam was the first "real" human.

This rules out a very recent date for Adam, in my opinion, because there is too much "real" human behavior found by archeology in the period between 40,000 BC and 4000 BC. One could argue all of that culture was done by humans who were not "really" human because they lacked a spiritual side, and then when Adam appeared, they all suddenly received a spiritual nature and the potential for eternal life (usually associated with the "image of God"), but the existence of artifacts that seem worship-related and the existence of high culture, such as art and music, do not seem to square with a picture of these people as not really human. There is no sharp boundary in the archeological record between the cultures before and after 4000 BC (or 10,000 BC).

On the other hand, trying to put Adam at the head of every hominid species, at 120,000 BC or earlier, seems too much of a stretch both biologically and in terms of the genealogies in the Bible. The most natural date is therefore around 40,000 BC, at the point in time when human culture exploded all over the earth, according to archeology. This time period does require stretching the genealogy in Genesis 5 to have many skipped generations, but it is on

²¹ Luke 17: 26-30, 2 Peter 2:5-6.

the high side of reasonable, given the very long lives of the people in that genealogy. I also find the argument that God was not speaking metaphorically when he talked of blessing “1000 generations” very compelling.

I would not rule out, however, that around 40,000 BC there were one or more non-human, hominid species with whom Adam’s descendents interacted. Such species need not have been completely devoid of all culture. We see even in animals today that many species mourn their dead, collect beautiful things, live in communities, and use tools. Angels and demons are examples of created intelligent beings without the image of God, so hominid races such as Neanderthals could have been in the same category.

In this scenario, it is not hard to imagine that Cain and his descendents found these quasi-people outside the Garden, found them fearsome, and also married some of them. These would also be the “sons of God” of Genesis 6 whom the daughters of Adam were not supposed to marry, but did anyway. I find it extremely hard to imagine that Genesis 6 refers to angels marrying people; Jesus clearly stated that angels do not marry, and the biological aspects of this are hard to even imagine.

The Garden of Eden was clearly located in the Middle East, according to the geological indicators of Genesis 2. The Bible does not place it in an imaginary place—it goes out of its way to say it was near the Euphrates and Tigris, and as discussed above, Carol Ann Hill has done a good job of locating it based on geological indications of ancient rivers, so that we can now identify all four rivers.

Starting in the Middle East, the descendents of Adam could have immigrated to Africa quite early, as it was just a few hundred miles away. Adam very likely was black, as Africans today have the most genetic diversity (although all humans are much less genetically diverse than almost all animal species—there is less genetic difference between all humans than between rodents of a single species in Madagascar). The word “Adam” in Hebrew actually comes the same root as the Hebrew word for “muddy” or “earthy”; it carries a connotation of “ruddy” or “dark red.”

The one issue which is problematic for my view is where Seth got his wife. If Adam’s children were not meant to marry the non-human hominids that Cain and his descendents married, did God intend for Seth to marry his sister, or did God specially create a wife for Seth as he had for Adam? Since there is no biblical record of the latter, the former seems likely, but we cannot absolutely rule out a second “Eve” created specially for Seth. (Seth having a child by his mother Eve is also technically a possibility, but raises more problems than having a child by his sister, and I know of no one who seriously argues this.)

Marrying cousins, of course, has been accepted throughout most of human history. One can also say that in a sense, Adam married a near relative, as Eve was made from his rib. But the language of Leviticus makes marriage to sisters seem more than just an arbitrary new prohibition under Moses; as discussed above, In Leviticus 18 it is classed in the same category as sleeping with animals, infant sacrifice, adultery and homosexuality.

The only views in the above which seem theologically problematic are those which deny a single Adam who acted as a representative of all humans. This is not just a problem with interpreting a few Bible statements, but gets at the core teaching of Christianity about the role of Christ himself. Christ can save us because he can represent all people as an individual. He is, in a very real sense, the second Adam.²²

²² Jack Collins has explored this relationship of federal heads at length in *Did Adam and Eve Really Exist? Who They Were and Why You Should Care*, (Crossway, 2011).