

On the Originality of the Septuagint's Numbers in Genesis 5 and 11

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-QwNxySf0C8&t=2s>

Henry:

I'm Henry Smith and I am with the Associates for Biblical Research. We're currently excavating at the site of the Shiloh where tabernacle was for 300 years. And we have some other research projects that we've been engaged in. One of them is this key project of the Genesis 5 and 11 project which I've been working on for probably six or seven years.

I'm really glad to talk to you about it. I do want to warn you in advance it is so difficult to condense this subject that at times it is going to feel like a fire hose of information. I just want to remind you to that I'll be referencing a couple of resources on our website, which have a lot of what I'm talking about there. So if this subject interests you and spurs your interest, visit [our website](#) and check out the resources that are available.

I'm going to try to mention some sources because I don't know exactly where your level of familiarity is with a lot of this, especially the Septuagint. But I will try my best to be clear. Some of it will be a little bit heavy at times. But together hopefully we'll be able to walk it through.

Let's get started so we can enjoy our time together as much as we can. As I mentioned, this project has been going on for quite a while and the resources are found on the ABR website.

I should mention on that on our website there are some videos that look similar to this one that are available for you where I sketch out some of these arguments. There's some overlap. The video at the bottom you see there is on the subject of Kainan, which is a unique problem. We'll talk about that a little bit later. There are two other videos which are sort of a synopsis of my research from three years ago.

We're going to be talking about the Septuagint today, which is a massive, massive academic subject. I won't be able to give you the background of the Septuagint and its complexities just because of time. It's impossible to do so. But if it's of interest to you, if you just want to get a broad overview of the Septuagint, we have a television show called *Digging for Truth* and we did a two-part series called "What is the Septuagint?" with William Ross. Will and I were students at Westminster Seminary, and he went on to become an expert in the Septuagint. He does a nice job in these two episodes explaining it and giving you a sketch.

If it's fairly unfamiliar to you, this is a good starting point. They're about 24 minutes each. It's very digestible material. If you just want to begin to dive deep, *Invitation to the Septuagint* by Jobes and Silva is a great starting point. It's a very, very well done, easy to read book. All the Greek and Hebrew is explained to the reader, if you're not trained in Greek and Hebrew.

We're talking about the genealogies in early the chapters of Genesis, particularly 5 and 11. There's been a lot of ink spilled over the history in Judaism, and the early church, and the church history on this subject. There's a lot of opinions that have floated around out there about how to interpret these texts.

So, I'm going to give you three main areas that have been the areas of focus of the research. The first is establishing a doctrinal and hermeneutical foundation for interpreting the numbers. Anyone who's read through these understands that the description of someone living to be 950

years old, such as Noah, compared to our lifespans today is rather incredible. In the history of the church there's been those who have grappled with this. Of course, those outside the church don't believe those numbers are historical or literal.

But the question is, "how do we interpret them?" How do we interpret these texts? We have to exegete them very carefully. And what is the hermeneutical method that we use to help us understand that. Is it something that is a construct that comes from outside Scripture, which many evangelicals attempt to do? Or does Scripture itself generate its own infallible hermeneutic? The principle of Scripture interprets Scripture through careful exegesis of the text.

So in various places the argument that I've made is these texts should be interpreted as actual ages and there's a number of arguments for that. You'll find the methodologies in evangelical circles that argue for non-literal or non-historical interpretations have great implications for the doctrine of Scripture and for hermeneutical method. In my judgment these assumptions have not been analyzed closely enough, through carefully enough of what the implications are for taking this position in terms of interpreting the text.

That's not going to be the thrust of our conversation today. But I'm just giving you a broad overview of the large areas of consideration when you're talking about Genesis 5 and 11. Because among other things, we're dealing with a clash of worldview paradigms. If it is indeed true that men lived to be over 900 years old, that's a complete worldview game changer, complete scientific game changer, anthropological game changer, worldview game changer, if it's in fact the case that God's revelation tells us that these men lived to be these ages.

So I can't emphasize the importance enough of getting this right in terms of our understanding the history of man and anthropology and worldview.

The second is, if you are familiar with some debates in sort of circles of influence or thought, that believe that the world is created in six days and the Flood was global. If that is your view of the early chapters of Genesis, which is mine, there's a debate about whether or not Genesis 5 and 11 should be interpreted chronologically.

If you if you've read anything about this, you'll read that some people say that there's gaps in the genealogies. There's a number of arguments that are made in the appendix to *The Genesis Flood* by Whitcomb and Morris. That's an idea that goes back to William Henry Green of Princeton in the late 19th century.

We deal very in depth with that particular issue by exegeting the text. After many years of consideration, I've drawn the conclusion that the historical interpretation is in fact correct. For 2,000 years this is how it was interpreted. It was interpreted chronologically, and that tradition of interpretation is actually justified by a very close analysis of the Hebrew text itself and even in the Greek.

So that has been the second major component of this. I went back and forth for many years about this issue—gaps, no gaps, gaps, no gaps, gaps, no gaps—over and over again. Reading different arguments. One of the reasons why I did this project is because I wasn't satisfied with the answers I was finding, and I didn't like oscillating back and forth. I wanted some level of certainty.

Because I believe that the Word of God is clear in terms of its inherent objective clarity, that uncertainty and ambiguity is not how God speaks. And there had to be some better understanding than being on this sort of yo-yo of interpretation that I was on. I know others have been as well,

who've examined this issue and it's understandable to some degree because there's a lot of voices out there trying to explain what the text means. So that was the second component.

Then the third component that we're going to focus on today has to do with the three textual traditions that exist. We have the Masoretic Text, the Hebrew text, which is the standard text that underlies all of the major English translations. We have the Samaritan Pentateuch, which was in control in the Samaritan community in antiquity. And then we have the Greek translation, the Septuagint. In each of these traditions we have divergences in the numbers. We're going to get to that in a minute.

We have different chronologies and so the millennia-long question has been, "well which chronology is the original? Which numbers are preserved originally and why were the other numbers changed?" And who changed the numbers? We're going to talk about that in a bit.

This is a multi-layered project, but this is the area we're going to focus on today in talking about the numbers in Genesis 5 and 11. One of the conclusions that I've drawn in this that's important to understand is whoever changed the numbers and however they were changed, we have to have a viable theory that can explain all of the data.

There's a lot of data out there. There are external witnesses such as Josephus, ancient authors, that refer to the numbers. It has to be able to adequately explain the large-scale alterations of the text. Who did it? Why did they do it? Often in the literature you'll see sort of writing it off to what I call renegade scribes.

You know, some guy just decided to change the numbers here and then some guy changes the numbers there. That's an inadequate explanation because these texts were disseminated into the religious communities and accepted as authoritative. That means that whoever changed the numbers had to have the authority to do so and had to have the means to disseminate those numbers and that chronology into their religious community. The rabbis who controlled the Masoretic Texts, the Samaritans who controlled the Samaritan Pentateuch, and you have the Greek text, which after it was translated was controlled by no one. So at least not one single group anyway.

There's a lot there, but we have to in developing any theory, it has to be a forensic investigation. That was another area that I was dissatisfied with. I would start reading about a theory and the theory looked like it would work for a while, until I started considering other data. Then the theory would begin to fall apart. So I found myself perpetually dissatisfied with the answers that I would find in the literature.

That's sort of the focus of our lecture today, to focus on number three and that is the numbers and explaining the data.

Now I can't do that exhaustively today because of time limitations, but my goal is to give you a sketch of why I think the Septuagint preserves the original numbers by and large. There's some exceptions to that. So we're just going to walk through that and part of this will be sort of hopefully to educate you on some of these issues related to text and textual traditions as well, because there's a lot of factors that play into all this.

It's probably hard to read this chart on the screen. You can read this in [my ICC article](#). Any research you do on the subject you'll find the numbers listed in the chart. There are divergences amongst the three textual traditions, as I mentioned. This is sort of the fundamental list of them. But I'm going to give you a synopsis here for the sake of time.

Numbers usually make us our eyes glaze over in a presentation, so I'm going to try not to do that to you too much. But here's the overview. You'll see at the top the Masoretic Text, the period from Adam to the Flood, the Flood to Abraham, and the Total.

You can see in the Samaritan Pentateuch. The total years are within a couple hundred years, but the two epochs are significantly different.

Then when we move to the Septuagint, we have also differences amongst the three traditions. The total is different. From Adam to the Flood period is much longer than the Samaritan Pentateuch by almost a thousand years. From the Flood to Abraham differs as well, although there's close similarities between the Septuagint and the Samaritan Pentateuch in the post-Flood period.

You can see that if we want to understand history before Abraham and we want to synchronize external evidence with the biblical chronology, we have to get the biblical chronology right, otherwise we're going to come up with wrong answers and bad apologetics. The goal here has been to get to the truth. Once we do that, then we can develop good solid apologetic arguments correlating the external evidence with the biblical text.

That's the way that I've been conceptualizing this from the beginning.

The biblical text controls the discussion in terms of understanding the external evidence because of its authority and its origin as being the speech of God. These numbers are God-breathed just as all the rest of Scripture is. The question is which ones are the God-breathed numbers? That's the question that we're trying to answer.

We're going to just reduce our conversation between the Masoretic and the Septuagint because of time, but you can see you've probably heard or read before the Ussher Chronology is the classic chronology from before the 20th century where creation was about 4004 BC and the Flood at 2300 BC or so. And then the Septuagint you can see yields different dates, which is, of course, what you would infer from the data I gave you before.

These are BC dates. These are correlated with the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 BC and you just work backwards from the biblical material. Obviously, the date of the Flood is a critical component of this because our archaeology would be considered for the cataclysmic flood of all post-Flood remains. So trying to sort all this out is of major importance for us.

In the numbers we do have these two phenomenon that are taking place. The first phenomenon we have is these large-scale alterations, which I've already emphasized and then in some cases we do have some accidental errors. Masoretic Text has a couple of numbers that have been corrupted by accident that you can reconstruct based on other evidence.

Then the Septuagint has more of these accidental errors because there were so many manuscripts distributed all throughout the ancient world, particularly in the era of the church. So they just weren't under a particular authority or control. They were disseminated very widely and copied extensively and so you have some numbers that are corrupted as a result of that accidental copying.

Particularly Genesis 5 and 11. There's a lot of numbers and there's a lot of repeated syntax. So when you're copying a manuscript, it would be easy to make mistakes copying numbers. Sometimes in the Septuagint they actually use abbreviations for the numbers, which only compounds the problem.

So liberal scholarship, when I've read through the literature, they have useful information at the micro-level, but their overarching theories about the Old Testament lead to conclusions that are incompatible with a high view of Scripture.

That can be critiqued at the philosophical level. I'm going to be doing that in my book somewhat, but more on the lines of referring to other people who have dealt with that.

Here's a fairly typical statement from Ronald Hendel. He says that the problems in Genesis 5 and 11 are accounted for by the theory that a redactor incorporated the *sepher toladot Adam*, that's the Book of the Generations of Adam, Genesis 5:1, into a pre-existing text. So what's he saying? All these pieces of Genesis 1 to 11 were written by human authors and when somebody put it together, the chronology got all messed up because there was no original author coherently putting the text together.

There is no Moses. There is no Holy Spirit guiding the process. And therefore, you've got a jumbled mess when it gets put together at the end. So that the Genesis text we have now is the result of human work, redactors, and jumbled chronology. That can be critiqued, but it's a more fundamental critique, particularly about the Documentary Hypothesis and its influence on the way that people understand the Book of Genesis.

So it gives you an idea of the liberal critical thinking. We're not going to critique that as much as we're going to talk more about from a high view of Scripture standpoint that the original text is historically accurate and consistent and mathematically correct.

Now perhaps you you're thinking, well I don't know if I like this idea of people playing or toying or messing with the text as much as you're describing, Mr. Smith. I don't know. That troubles me. It is troubling when people deliberately fudge with the Word of God.

We do have a general sketch of a doctrine of preservation that's given to us in Scripture, but it's not detailed, it's not mechanical. The sense we get from the doctrine of preservation in Scripture is that God superintends providentially over preservation of His Word. One of the inferences is how can we obey His Word if it's not preserved? That's a very simple understanding.

The Bible does not give us a specific mechanical way that preservation takes place, only that it does take place. Therefore, we're free to understand that in the context of multiple manuscripts, translations, external witnesses, and so on. To God's glory I would say, because only He gets the credit for providentially overseeing the errors of men, the schemes of men, but also the faithfulness of those who wanted to preserve the Word correctly. So we can rest in that.

If that's of interest to you, you can check out our episode of *Digging for Truth* on the [doctrine of preservation](#). Richard Brash is an expert on that. He gives a nice sketch overview of the doctrine.

That's part of our thought process. when you take on a subject like this, there's a lot of different factors that go into understanding how do we understand this preservation.

Some people object to my argument that the Septuagint preserves the numbers because they insist it must be the Hebrew text because of a particular view of the doctrine of preservation. My pushback to that has been I don't think Scripture demands that that be the case. If you want to dig deeper, you can read [William Combs's article](#) in the *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* where he gets into this in great detail. I agree with Combs's sketch of this subject, his analysis of the subject. That's where I'm coming from.

My point of all that is as students thinking about when I assume that the Word of God has been preserved, what does that look like? And what does the Bible actually say about its own preservation? Not what we think preservation looks like. That's something that we have to think through. This has forced me to do that.

I'm going to shift gears a little bit. Another issue that we have to deal with is the credibility of the Septuagint has been pummeled very badly in the Young Earth Creation community. But when you read the literature, it's just that Septuagint is just slandered mercilessly, that it's unreliable and we ought not even consider it. I bought into that for a very long time myself until I actually started looking closely at the subject.

I found a couple of fallacies involved with that. One subject that's used to pummel the credibility of the Septuagint which is the issue of Kainan in Luke 3:36.

Again another reference for you if you're interested in that. We have two articles. This is a [layman's article](#) in *Bible and Spade*. It's got some really nice photographs of manuscripts where I sketch out an argument for Kainan's authenticity.

And then if you really, really, really want to dig deep, an article I co-authored with Kris Udd "[On the Authenticity of Kainan](#)". I wanted to tackle this issue because this is another subject that's a subset of the research. In the pummeling of Kainan and the Septuagint because it has Kainan in it in Genesis 11 has been part of the reason why the Septuagint's been dismissed.

The second reason why it's been dismissed is because in a number of Septuagint manuscripts Methuselah lives past the Flood. So, therefore, the conclusion is well, the Septuagint teaches that Methuselah lived past the Flood. That's not possible and therefore the Septuagint should be dismissed.

So I try to take on this issue in [an article](#) I wrote in the Answers Research Journal dealing with that. You may have heard these things if you're familiar with the subject. But these have been used as ways to discredit the Septuagint. In my research I've kind of pushed back and said I don't think that attempt to discredit the Septuagint in that way is legitimate.

Q&A

Q: I would like to know what are the defenses for Methuselah what is your defense from Methuselah not living after the Flood?

A: In that article I referred to, I sketched that out in detail. Basically, I believe that there are some manuscripts that put Methuselah's death past the Flood, but there's others that don't. When you take a look at the full matrix of evidence, it seems very clear to me that the numbers in the Septuagint got corrupted and put his begetting age at 167. The original should be 187, which is what's in the Masoretic Text. The Masoretic Text is right for Methuselah. Some manuscripts of the Septuagint have the 187, putting his death in the year of the Flood.

So, I do an analysis there and deal with evidence from antiquity and sort of put together an argument. And then I reconstruct how I think the number got corrupted from 187 to 167. You can kind of weigh that out and see if you think my argument makes sense.

If one of these traditions preserves the original numbers or largely preserves them, then that means the other two have been changed in some way. The Septuagint ... [unintelligible] And so the million-dollar question has been "who did it?" Who changed these numbers and why?

I've identified three major ways of arguing about this sort of like a courtroom case. If you want to find the guilty party, and by the way, somebody has to be accused of this, so this isn't a finger-wagging operation. It's just the logical reality of having to resolve the problem. What was the motivation? Who had the means to change the text? And, did they have historical circumstances in which it was possible for them to do so?

Those are sort of the categories that I developed after I started reading about this. Motivation is a big thing because they were handling sacred texts and they believed the texts were sacred. So if you're motivated to the point to change the numbers, then you have to have a compelling reason to do that because you're convinced these are sacred texts.

So now that doesn't mean you're being faithful. Obviously if you're changing the text deliberately, you're not being faithful to it. But you have some belief that the text is sacred because it's happening in religious communities who are trying to preserve and teach the Old Testament text to their people.

So you have that issue going on. This isn't just some wild scribe changing the numbers on his own. This requires several layers of sort of influences that have to take place, if you want to say it that way.

Let me give you the number one argument that's floating out there about the Septuagint because most of the literature, or a good portion of it, will say what I call the Inflation Hypothesis.

The argument is the Masoretic is the original and the Septuagint numbers have been inflated to expand the chronology. That's the hypothesis and it's all over the literature. I mean I probably have 30 or 35 different sources at least where I've documented that they make this claim.

The general argument has been that the motive was to reconcile it with Egyptian chronology known at that time, particularly the chronology of the Egyptian priest Manetho or Minetho?? This is a very common argument that's found out there.

Others will make the comment more generally, "ah, they were just trying to match Egyptian chronology." So one of the difficulties with the theory is that contemporary Jews used the Septuagint for several centuries starting in the third century BC all the way up through the history of the church.

If the numbers were inflated, and that would mean all of the Hebrew texts that were circulating outside of Egypt would have had the Masoretic's numbers. So the Septuagint would have been identified very quickly as being fraudulent. It would have been very difficult in those historical circumstances to get away with that because the Septuagint was disseminated widely amongst the diaspora of the Jews who were experiencing the supplanting of their original language. They were using Greek in a lot of cases.

It's really difficult to see how they could have disseminated this over a very large area. It would have been very difficult to get away with doing it because of the history and the time period with which this allegedly took place. That's one reason why I think it doesn't work.

Second, is we don't have anybody from antiquity saying that this is what happened. That's a helpful piece of evidence. I'll talk about that later when I talk about the Masoretic Text. There

are ancient testimonies that say that the Masoretic Text was changed. There are none that say that Septuagint was changed. Again, that's not enough in and of itself, but it's a piece of evidence. It's part of the matrix.

Another reason why the theory doesn't work is because it doesn't achieve the specified goal. If you read a Eusebius, Julius Africanus, in particular, they document what the Egyptians claimed about the length of their antiquity. It was far greater than what the Septuagint gives you in terms of dates. Far greater. Julius Africanus said something like "the Egyptians say they've been around for tens of thousands of years" or something like that.

The Septuagint just doesn't give you that kind of chronology. It's eight or nine hundred years longer than the Masoretic Text, but it's not enough to accommodate Egyptian chronologies in antiquity. And it doesn't accommodate Manetho's chronology, as you can see from this quote up here on the screen.

So the hypothesis doesn't achieve the very goal that's claimed that it was done for.

That is a major problem because it doesn't have any apologetic value if it doesn't show the Bible to have a greater antiquity than the Egyptian chronologies that were already in existence during that time.

If the goal was to equal them, then as I said, the Septuagint's chronology has to be longer than what it is. In fact, if you wanted to expand the Septuagint chronology, you could have expanded it much further in the pre-Flood period. You could have inflated the beginning ages if you wanted to move them up all close to Noah's age. Because Noah was 500 after his three sons were born.

If you wanted to expand the pre-Flood chronology, they did a really lousy job of it. Because they could have expanded it by probably a couple thousand years, because of the length of the life spans and Noah's begetting age as an analogy, in that context. If Noah could have children at 500, certainly Adam could have. And therefore, give him higher begetting ages and stretch the chronology out further to try to match the Egyptian chronology.

We don't see that in the Septuagint. We also don't see any significant conformity to Egyptian worldview claims in the Septuagint text. We do see evidence that there's an Egyptian influence on the language and the syntax in Genesis. There's no doubt about that, which supports the argument that it originated in Egypt. But not a worldview imprint that's so strong that the translators would have radically altered their translation. There's just no ancillary proof that's consistent with the theory that they would have changed the text in such a manner.

That's an important consideration. If they were willing to fudge the chronology to try to match Egyptian worldview claims, then there should be some analogy to that elsewhere and there's not in the Genesis translation.

One of the things that I did in my research, by the way, was I wanted to read as much as possible about the Septuagint of Genesis more broadly. What do the scholars say about the translation as a broad statement? All of them that I've read say they were conservative with the text. They tried to be faithful to the Hebrew text underlying it.

Yes, there's some anomalies here and there. There's some embellishments to try to get the language transferred over from Hebrew to Greek, but by and large they did not have the freedom to make large-scale alterations.

This quote on the screen from Hanhart is one example of many that I found in literature. To my thinking was, outside the numbers do we have evidence that the Septuagint translators radically changed their translation from the Hebrew? The answer is no. There's an indication of faithfulness by the translators by and large.

A sixth argument, I also looked at Old Testament and Septuagint scholars who deal with the numbers and all of them believe based on these arguments that the numbers were found in the Hebrew text that they were using.

So, now where those numbers originated before that is a separate question. But the point is, you're sitting down with the Hebrew text. You're translating it and it's universally understood that the numbers we read in the Septuagint were by and large in the Hebrew text that they had before them. And that's consistent with the way they treated the text more broadly in the Book of Genesis.

It should be not attributed to the translators. In other words, the translators didn't invent these numbers. They were in the Hebrew text that they were using. And so if that's correct, then that points us to Hebrew manuscripts in the third century BC that the longer chronology. That's an important consideration as we're weighing the arguments.

Here's Emanuel Tov, who's a well-renowned world expert on the subject. I'm just providing this quote to support what I'm saying. I've documented this in a couple of different places. So he's just saying, "look we've looked at the way that Genesis is translated. There's just no evidence that they altered the numbers in such a fashion." And then he goes on to say that the list in Genesis 11, which is the post-Flood numbers, has much in common with the Samaritan Pentateuch.

So they're independent traditions that match, and many of the numbers match. So that means the Samaritan Pentateuch was not influenced by the Septuagint. It's a Hebrew text. And so in Genesis 11, those numbers by and large go here with the Septuagint. The argument doesn't work very well.

And as I mentioned here, it can't explain these matching ages. They would have to arise independently and separately of one another. So if you have a conspiracy by the translators to inflate the chronology in Genesis 11, how did it also end up in the Samaritan Pentateuch, which is a Hebrew text? It has nothing to do with the Septuagint translation. I think that seems almost impossible.

That all is an important consideration. I think you get the idea here. I tried to be as judicious as I could in terms of reading the academic material because I really wanted to understand this. But once I started understanding how the experts viewed the translation, I came to realize that I couldn't follow this theory anymore, which I followed for quite a number of years. This theory I'm explaining to you I believe that this was the explanation along with the Methuselah question.

Another piece of information for you to consider is also the internal evidence. So what does the internal evidence look like in the text? Does it look like it's been deflated or inflated? We're going to talk about that a little bit when we talk about the Masoretic Text. But that's another consideration. I'll explain what I mean by that in a little while.

Then the final piece of this is the extra, what I call external witnesses, authors in antiquity, who recorded numbers from Genesis 5 and 11. What did their manuscript that they were using read when they recorded them? Because this is a snapshot. You don't have their biblical manuscript.

Say you have Josephus writing in Rome in the first century. He's recording numbers from Genesis 5 and 11. He's got a biblical manuscript before him. He's a witness to a text from the first century and he's recording those numbers. So what kind of text was he using? And, what are the numbers that he used? Those are the kind of important questions. He's giving you a snapshot from 2,000 years ago of biblical text. These external witnesses are extremely important in the forensic investigation.

Let me talk quickly about these witnesses that I just mentioned and their significance. We have a witness called *LAB*. I'll explain that to you in a moment. We have Josephus. And we have the Jewish aristocrat Eupolemus of Jerusalem, all from antiquity. Witnesses to the Genesis text.

Let's talk about *LAB*. *LAB* is pretty unknown by most people. This is from the Pseudepigrapha. It was written in the first century. It was written in Hebrew. It was written by somebody who was well versed in the Hebrew Bible. It is a sort of a Midrash, a sort of exegetical commentary on certain aspects of the Old Testament Hebrew Bible. It is from Adam to Saul.

Scholars don't know if there was more to it than that, but if there was, it's been lost to history. It has parallels. It extensively quotes the biblical texts and comments on it in a variety of ways. It is a highly useful witness to the first century thinking of pharisaic rabbinic Judaism. It's a very helpful witness to this period. There are volumes of literature that have been written on this, so I've been very fortunate. I had to read as much of it as I could.

But it's a blessing because I could mine it for lots and lots of treasures as I was trying to figure out this problem with the numbers. One of the treasures of it is that what we find here is an early part of *LAB*. *LAB* records the begetting ages and the remaining years, which is somewhat unusual, because most authors in the ancient world were concerned with the begetting ages so they could develop a chronology and the life spans because they were fascinated with how long they lived.

This witness preserves the remaining years of life after the named ancestor is born, from Seth to Lamech. You'll recall what I said, that this originated as a Hebrew text recorded from the Hebrew Bible by somebody living in Israel during the first century AD. That's the conclusion from the scholarship.

You can see from the second column the remaining years are all in accord with the Septuagint's chronology. There's some scribal errors in the tradition that you got to go back and take a look at, a couple manuscript divergences. But by and large it reflects the Septuagint's chronology in Genesis 5 and 11. But ultimately it was a Hebrew witness to the text of Genesis 5 and 11.

This is a really, really important witness. It also points to the fact that the inflation hypothesis by the Septuagint translators is not possible if these numbers existed in the Hebrew text. This is Genesis 5. This complements the Samaritan Pentateuch very well in Genesis 11.

You can see from the numbers there, the lifespans are in brackets because you have to add them together. They're not stated explicitly in the text. Adam's begetting age is also not stated, just his remaining years. But it's a powerful and important witness to the numbers in Genesis 5 and 11. And it's a first century witness.

As I mentioned, it originated in Israel possibly before the time of Jesus. Some scholars think it was the temple some literature about that.

Now some have tried to argue, “no they were just copying the numbers from the Septuagint”, but when you read the academic material on *LAB*, Jacobson’s quote here is a classic response to that. He said, “listen, this guy was skillful at Hebrew prose. He was an expert in the knowledge of the Hebrew Bible. There’s no reason for us to think that he had any need for a Greek translation.” This guy knew his Hebrew and he knew it well. There you have it. And a number of other scholars as well have made the same kind of argument.

Another reason why we should not conclude that this witness was recorded from the Septuagint is because of Lamech’s begetting age of 182, which is what’s in the Masoretic Text. I do believe this is the original number. It’s a complicated argument that I can’t develop with you today. This is one number in the Septuagint that I do think is actually incorrect, as a result of a very complicated error that was made.

In the Septuagint his begetting age is 188. In the Hebrew text it’s 182. It’s also 182 in *LAB*. I think this supports the argument that *LAB* came from a Hebrew text. We only find 182 in Hebrew texts of Genesis 5 describing Lamech’s begetting age when Noah is born.

Again, another part of sort of tricks of evidence that we want to put together.

Let’s move here to our second witness. We’re going to talk about Josephus. I’m going to shorten this a little bit because I’m seeing how the time is getting away from me.

Let me give you the synopsis. I have a lot of text on the screen but I’m going to try to be a little bit more concise with it for you.

A lot of people dismiss Josephus because they just say he was parroting the Septuagint’s numbers. All he’s doing is writing what’s in the Septuagint. That doesn’t help us resolve the problem. But actually when you look very closely at the Josephus scholarship, you find a couple of things. One is Josephus said that he was translating from the Hebrew Bible. The second is that he makes statements that demonstrate he was using the longer chronology. He says the period of 5,000 years for the sacred Scriptures that would be from Adam to Artaxerxes, for example, about 400 years before Josephus was born.

Scholars who have studied Josephus universally argued that he was using a Hebrew text of Genesis when he wrote *Antiquities*. That is another major consideration.

This area took me months to sort out because there were so many conflicting opinions about Josephus on Genesis 5 and 11. I finally got fed up with it after about a month and I had to spend months digging into it to try to get what I thought was closest to the real answers and the truth as I possibly could.

So that involved actually looking at scholars who actually have looked at the Josephus manuscripts for *Antiquities*. Those include:

- Henry Thackeray, who says that he used the Genesis text that was in Hebrew.
- Louis Feldman, who died just a few years ago, but is an expert on ancient Judaism. And,
- A French scholar named Nodet.

So I had to sift through all of that material to try to get to the truth of the matter. In my academic paper at the ICC, I spend quite a bit of time arguing for Josephus’s longer chronology as being his original chronology in his manuscripts when he wrote them in the first century. And mind you, this is in Rome because he’s part of the Roman court at this point in time. And possibly

Josephus says that he received a gift of books from the Temple from the emperor. It is possible that he was using Temple scrolls when he wrote *Antiquities of the Jews*, at least the early part of it. It's a very fascinating, intriguing reference in his work.

So I'm going to skip over this but the point is simply to say that in the case of Josephus, I think the evidence is pretty strong that he used the Genesis text and it had the longer chronology in it. Again, this is a significant witness from the first century AD.

Another witness that doesn't detail the numbers but gives an overarching chronology for the early period is Eupolemus of Jerusalem. He's an aristocrat. He is probably the Eupolemus who's mentioned in the book of Maccabees. He goes to Rome as an ambassador. He writes a chronology that can only be explained by the longer Genesis 5 and 11 chronology. He dates Creation to about 5300 BC. He was familiar with Greek and Hebrew texts. He was an aristocrat. He probably had access to the Temple scrolls.

So whether he was using the Septuagint or the Hebrew text for Genesis 5 and 11, we're not 100% clear. But we know that he knew both languages from studies from Eupolemus. Therefore, if he was using a fraudulent chronology, he would have known it and not used it. But yet nonetheless he used a longer chronology.

He was in a position to determine what the authenticity of the text would have been. So even though he doesn't give us the detailed numbers for each of the patriarchs, he's early 160 BC, he reports longer chronology. And he's a guy who's in the know. He's an important aristocrat and he belonged to one of the leading families of Jerusalem.

So, I think he would have had access to the Hebrew scrolls in the Temple library, if he wanted to get his chronology right. And if the Septuagint diverged from that, he would have followed the Hebrew scrolls in the Temple. It seems logical to me that that would have been the case. Now I can't prove that he doesn't say that. He does that, but you can infer that and draw a reasonable conclusion that that's the case. We know from studying his text that he knew Hebrew and Greek. There's no doubt about that. So, he is an extremely important witness because he's second century BC.

Altogether when we look at the witnesses, they're all pointing to a Hebrew text that had the longer chronology in the first century or earlier. This is all important in terms of trying to reconstruct what happened to the numbers and trying to put it all together.

We're going to shift the discussion because the natural question for you is, "Well Mr. Smith, if the Septuagint has the original numbers, then how did the Masoretic Text get deflated?" "Who did it?" "Why did they do it?" "Did they have the motive, means, and opportunity to do so?"

I'm going to give you a survey of my arguments for this. This is a little scandalous because the Masoretic Text is so important in terms of how well it's been preserved. But that's not an absolute well preservation. There are deficiencies in the Masoretic Text that have been shown to be the case particularly in the Book of First Samuel, for example, and in other places. The doctrine of preservation allows for the possibility of the numbers being preserved somewhere else.

The rabbis controlled the text of the Masoretic Text after the destruction of the Temple. So, we lay out this argument in a couple different places in the research that I've done. I'm going to give you a synopsis of this again.

Motive, means, opportunity. Let's think about the rabbis in the post-70 AD period. First of all, we have to have a context of a motive to change the numbers. Who would change them? Why would they change them?

What we had in the second Temple period is a phenomenon called Chrono-Messianism. What is that? That is the phenomenon that based on several texts of the Bible, including Genesis 5 and 11, you could calculate when the Messiah would arrive.

This was a common debate in antiquity. It was based on the book of Daniel. It was based on dating from Creation and trying to figure out when's the Messiah going to come.

These ideas developed in inter-testamental Judaism based largely on the belief that each day of Genesis meant each period of history was going to be a thousand years long. So, the question was, when will the Messiah come? 4,000 years from Creation? 5,000 years from Creation? 6,000 years from Creation? Those were sort of the views that were out there with variations.

Then after that the church got involved in this debate with the rabbis and there were church fathers who bought into this construct, which I don't think is a legitimate construct. Eusebius fought against it. Julius Africanus seemed to advocate it, as an example.

But the idea here was that this idea developed in inter-testamental Judaism. So part of the argument here is, is there an ideological context that would create the conditions to change the text?

In these Messianic schemes, numbers are very important. As I said, some thought that the Messiah would come around 5,000 years after Creation. Others held that it was 4,000 and this idea is in the rabbinic literature that comes later.

Here's the synopsis of my arguments. Very concise argument.

The Jewish rabbis were facing a cataclysmic crisis. Judaism had been obliterated by the Romans. The temple had been destroyed and the church was thriving. They wanted to discredit Jesus as the Christ. One of the ways that they could do that was offering an alternative chronology of history. By offering their own authoritative chronology, which is called the *Seder Olam*, they could put Jesus' time outside the time of the Messiah. No, no, no. This Jesus of Nazareth came too soon.

Here's a bunch of other arguments against Him as the Messiah. You stole the body from the tomb. Remember the end of Matthew and a whole long list of apologetics against Jesus as the Christ?

My argument is, add this to the list. Add this one to the list. No, we know from chrono-Messianism that the Messiah is going to come around 4,000 years from Creation and it's too early. Your Jesus is a false Messiah. That's fundamentally the argument that I've made.

This is a powerful motive. It has profound theological support. Think about what the Pharisees were like and what their followers were like after them, that they were willing to murder their Messiah. They were willing to put their traditions over the text of Scripture. You can see that in Mark chapter seven. I would encourage you to go read that. Read the spirit that's coming out of that first century.

Would they have been adequately motivated to alter the text of Scripture? Some have said, "no way. They wouldn't have done that." I say they crucified their Messiah. I think they would have

been willing to do just about anything to discredit the church. And, in fact, Justin Martyr says this very thing. You send men out into the world to discredit the preaching of the resurrection. So we know in the second century that's exactly what was happening.

We have an authority figure, Rabbi Akiba. He had the power to control the manuscripts in the temple that survived the destruction of the Temple. And he had the authority to institute new ones. We find this in the rabbinic literature and through research that's been done on Akiba's life.

So I'm giving you a very broad sketch of the argument. It sounds like I'm just asserting it, but I've worked this out. We've written about it, and I've got it developed in my book, as well, that they had a unique historical opportunity. If someone was going to alter the text, they were sitting in the right circumstances to do it. There was only a few manuscripts left. They knew nothing of the Dead Sea Scrolls, right? They controlled the tactic. They controlled the tradition. And after the Temple was destroyed, all the other sects of Judaism disappeared.

So we have one sect, the pharisaic rabbinic tradition and they control the manuscripts. If there was an opportunity to change the text, they had it and they had the authority to disseminate it into their religious community.

While it's difficult for some, and I've had interaction with folks on this who say "I just can't accept that they did that. I can't accept that." And I was the same way. I have got to just be honest with you students. When I first read this idea in the literature, I said, "nah, I'm not getting this conspiracy stuff. There's got to be another explanation for this."

But the evidence kept pointing me back to it. Then after a period it took me a couple years, to be very honest with you. So I'm dropping this on, understanding that it took me like two years to really accept that this was the best explanation for the difference between the Masoretic and the Septuagint. And when I began to formulate the whole argument, it began to make more and more and more sense to me.

That's a key component. But no matter what you do, you've got to ascribe to someone the accusation that they changed the numbers, because they're obviously different. Here we don't want to do it just with finger wagging. We want to have good evidence and good motive and good opportunity. I think we have that with the rabbis.

We also have some ancient support. I just want to mention there's some witnesses from antiquity in the medieval period who say the rabbis changed the Masoretic Text. This supports the argument.

I'm just going to point to one because the sake of time. Here's a Syriac author. Jacob of Edessa was an expert in Greek, Hebrew, Syriac—three languages. He was a prolific biblical scholar. He argued that the rabbis changed the Masoretic Text in Genesis 5 and 11 and claimed that there were manuscripts circulating still that confirmed the Septuagint's chronology.

This guy was no slacker. He was a prolific Syriac scholar. This is an important witness to not only the motive, from sort of the early medieval period, but someone who really knew their languages and was familiar with the manuscripts that were circulating during that time. He's an important witness.

When I've wrestled with this, and you as students, whatever you end up studying, when you put forth a theory, you really got to look at everything—bring the goods— whatever argument you

make, whatever your interest is, because it's important to try to bring all the evidence to bear upon it. That was one of the lessons that I learned from doing all this. You got to dig into everything if you're really going to go deep, if you want to get to the truth, especially on a subject like this.

We're going to skip over the question of the Samaritan Pentateuch because of time. I'm not skipping over it because I'm trying to avoid it, but just because of time constraints. I want to point to you one more thing and then we can talk.

One of the final reasons why I think the Masoretic's been altered is because you can look at the internal evidence. If you look very closely at the chronology of the post-Flood period, you have actually errors produced by the Masoretic chronology.

Genesis 25:8 says that Abraham died in a good old age, an old man and full of years. Let's imagine he's a guy living to be 90 today. That kind of description would be ascribed to Abraham today, 90 years old. But yet in the Masoretic chronology, Eber was still alive at age 464. Shem had only died 25 years before at the age of 600.

Noah died at 950, two years before Abraham was born. And the text of Genesis indicates that the patriarchs had other sons and daughters. They would have lived to the same kind of time periods as Eber and Peleg and others. So the surrounding world would have been filled with people living to three and four hundred years old when Abraham died. Abraham would not have been an old man and full of years. He would have been a 35-year-old man compared to a 90-year-old man. So the statement in Genesis 25:8 is contradicted by the Masoretic chronology in the post-Flood period.

In my judgment, if you have a high view of Scripture and you believe that Scripture is internally consistent because the Holy Spirit is speaking, this points to a four-point contradiction. I haven't found a way to get around this problem. So this is I think, powerful internal evidence that shows that there's something amiss with the post-Flood chronology for the Masoretic text.

And it points to a more likely scenario that the Septuagint better fits because Noah would have been dead for a thousand years and Shem and Eber. When Abraham was 175 in the post-Flood chronology of the Septuagint, he would have truly been an old man in full of years. It doesn't make sense in terms of the Masoretic chronology. I don't think it can be internally reconciled.

This is one of the areas that I've looked at, is the internal evidence, not just the external, but the internal.

That has been a major mouthful of data and I know I ran it up against the clock. I'm going to stop doing all the talking now and I would love to talk about it, have a conversation, add to it. Feel free to agree, object, question, but let's talk if you would like.

Q&A

Q: If the masters were changing chronology to change when the Messiah would show up, did they change Daniel also?

A: Yes, that's a great question. I thought about that. Now let's specify the culprit. I don't think it was the Masoretes because the Masoretes were later. The Masoretes would have inherited the

text from the early rabbis. The Masoretes were the ones that added the vowel points and the cantillation marks and the reading and the tradition in the vowels.

So we're talking about earlier alteration, probably second century BC. Just to clarify the who. The question of Daniel 9 is interesting because see Daniel 9 doesn't ... In Genesis 5 and 11 you can't get away from the force of the numbers and the chronology. So if you believe that the Messiah is coming at a certain period of time, you got to change the numbers. There's no getting around that. It's a pretty simple proposition.

Daniel 9 has been the subject, is not so much about altering the text, it's about interpreting it. There's been many different opinions about how do you interpret the Hebrew text of Daniel 9. The rabbis in the early post-Temple period shifted to an alternative interpretation and that was they wanted to associate the cutting off of the Messiah with the destruction of the Temple instead.

But that didn't require them to change the text. That just required them to come up with a different exegetical rationale for associating Daniel 9 with the Temple's destruction instead of the cutting off of the Messiah.

As I've thought through that question, and that is an excellent question, by the way, I don't think it would have been necessary for them to alter the text itself, just present a different interpretation of that. Make sense?

Q: My questions are going to be a little more controversial. But, first of all, I really appreciate everything. The fact that you've studied this area in such tremendous depth, Genesis 5 and 11, those are the chapters no one reads. It's like that's the least important of all theological doctrines out there in the whole world. It's the least important and yet if they're wrong, it's caused these issues that I think have kept many people from coming to Christ. Because it's like I look at the Jews who do not believe that there ever was an Exodus and it's like "oh, but if we get these numbers right, if we get the chronology right here, if we get the Egyptian chronology right," it's like "oh no there is an Exodus and things fit." So I see this issue that you're studying could have a profound impact on a lot of issues like that.

Thank you. One thought I had and this is where it's a little more controversial. The end of Revelation, which is not Genesis, although Genesis and Revelation are a lot alike. Their classes I remember in Bible College that they teach Genesis and Revelation together because they so much over comprehended. But the end of Revelation says God gives a curse and whoever takes away or adds to the words of this Book, He's going to take away his name of the Book of Life. Of course, that's the Book of Revelation.

Although this Book could be taken broader and say this is the conclusion of the Bible and it was started in Genesis. And it's almost like what they did here is they took away from the words and they added to. And specifically they did take away, they added to, take away, the numbers they added to, is like huh, it's almost like this is where God is saying that these people are doing this. This is a horrible thing to do. I can't say that curse applies to them, but yet it just seems to me like there's a correlation there.

A: You're certainly making an inference that, there's some logic to the inference, that can't be denied. It certainly communicates at the very minimum that deliberately changing what God has said is a serious crime. I mean it really is. It's a crime against God. Now we could just flip that

around. Let's just say I made the argument today that the Masoretic preserves the original and the Septuagint was changed. Well, whoever changed the Septuagint would be committing an equally egregious crime.

I think that's what makes grappling with this so difficult because it's so egregious.

The young man who asked a question about Daniel 9. It's one thing to come up with an alternative exegetical interpretation or you could examine the motives for that. It's another thing to change the sacred text. That's taking it to another level.

It's just a reminder to us, I think that what man is capable of doing in terms of self. A self-deception is part of this, too. This sort of deceiving oneself into believing that God would somehow be okay with this. That's a component.

But again, then go back to also what I said at the beginning. The wonderful miraculous gracious providence of God in subverting the schemes of man to try to change His Holy Word. If it's true that the rabbis did this, if I'm right, well God preserved His Word elsewhere so that we would have it. That's something that we can rest in.

Ultimately, I trust that even if I'm completely wrong, which obviously I don't think I am, but if I turned out to be completely wrong, I still trust that God has superintended over this in some manner, that we have His original words and intention. So it's just a matter of in this issue of discovering that. Anyway, I hope that's helpful.

Q: Are the dates disputed in each, are they similar or are they different in between the Septuagint and the Masoretic? Are the dates disputed? Are they similar? Or are they different ones?

A: Now when you when you say dates, are you talking about the dates that they yield such as the date for the Flood or the dates of the manuscripts?

If you're referring to the dates that they yield, I'll go back to this early slide for you and then we can go from there and see if that's what you're looking for. Is this what you mean? The number of years between the two events?

Q: Yes. I think.

A: So here's what the numbers yield in each of these three traditions, on the screen here. So you can see the differences are significant from a historical standpoint, especially the post-Flood period. The world before the Flood was destroyed and wiped out. So that's important, but not accessible through like archaeology and anthropology.

But the post-Flood period is extremely important for that purpose. If you're interested, you can find all these dates on the website in the articles that I've written. It's all laid out there.

Q: Now you're going to do the same thing with Benito's chronology and correct it for us, too?

A: [Laughter]. That's a whole other dissertation in and of itself. No, I'm not about to figure out Egyptian chronology, especially before the time of Abraham. That's somebody else's lifetime.