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THE SECOND CAINAN QUESTION

In recounting the genealogy of Jesus Christ, Luke states that He was "the son of Eber, the son of **Shelah**, the son of Cainan, the son of Arphaxad, the son of Shem" (Luke 3:35-36). The problem that this verse introduces for us is that this second Cainan (the first lived before the Flood) is not found in the Hebrew Old Testament of Genesis 11. Rather, Genesis 11 states that Shelah was the son or Arphaxad, skipping any "Cainan" altogether.

This is a question for Biblical chronology because if the second Cainan really lived, and was omitted in Genesis 11, then the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11 may not be complete at other places as well. Of course, that does not necessarily change the question of chronology, since genealogies and chronologies are not the same thing. For instance, Genesis 5:12 says that the first Cainan (Kenan) lived seventy years, and begat **Mahalalel**. Now, maybe **Mahalalel** was the first Cainan's grandson and there was another generation in between. It still would be true that the first Cainan "begat" **Mahalalel** when Cainan was seventy years old. The shortest period between father and son (or grandson) in Genesis 5 is sixty-five years, while Noah was 500 when he "begat" Japheth. Thus, there is plenty of room for generations in between. Even if there are other generations in between some of the names in Genesis 5, the chronology is not affected.

| Patriarch | Age at Birth of Son |
|------------------|---------------------|
| Adam | 130 |
| Seth | 105 |
| Enosh | 90 |
| Cainan (first) | 70 |
| Mahalalel | 65 |
| Jared | 162 |
| Enoch | 65 |
| Methusaleh | 187 |
| Lamech | 182 |
| Noah | 500 |

The problem is much more acute in the case of Genesis 11, because there is little room for an inserted generation or two between the names.

| Patriarch | Age at Birth of Son |
|-----------------|---------------------|
| Shem | 100 |
| Arphaxad | 35 |
| Salah | 30 |
| Eber | 34 |
| Peleg | 30 |
| Reu | 32 |
| Serug | 30 |

lived between Arphaxad and Salah, if Arphaxad begat Cainan when he was seventeen, and then Arphaxad begat **Salah** when he was seventeen. We can squeeze it in, but it is not very credible. It is more likely that Cainan never lived at all.

Did Cainan Ever Live?

If it weren't for the apparent testimony of Luke, the question would be easy to resolve. Last month we saw that it was the LXX translators who changed the numbers of the Hebrew Bible, not the other way around, and that they did so apparently in order to make the Jewish national heritage seem as ancient as what the Egyptians were claiming for themselves. Why, however, would they make up a new name and insert him into the list?

Some have suggested that they desired to form a second list of ten patriarchs from the Flood to Terah, corresponding to the list of ten patriarchs from Adam to Noah. Whatever the reason, it is clear that Cainan is indeed a later addition to the text. Not only does the Hebrew not have him, but neither does the Samaritan translation of the Pentateuch, which dates from several centuries before Christ. The Samaritan version also plays games with the chronology, but does not add this new name.

Moreover, in 1 Chronicles 1:18 and 24, most copies of the LXX have the name "**Cainan**" added, since this section recaps the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11. But the Hebrew Bible does not have it, and many copies of the LXX do not have it either.

Josephus omits **Cainan** in his list of the post-deluvian patriarchs, and by implication so does Philo, for he reckons ten generations before the Flood from Adam to Noah, and ten generations after the Flood from Shem to Abraham, leaving no room for Cainan in the second group. **Berosus** (c. 284 B. C.) and **Eupolemus** (c. 174 B. C.) represent Abraham as living in the tenth generation after the Flood, which again leaves no room for Cainan. Origen marks the name of Cainan with an obelisk in his copy of the LXX, to mark his rejection of it as not genuine. Other Church Fathers, including Irenaeus, Africanus, Eusebius, and Jerome reject it as an interpolation.

All of this evidence points to the fact that no such person as Cainan the son of Arphaxad ever lived. The name and his years have been stuck into the LXX text for reasons we can only guess at. (Sources for the material above: Martin Anstey, [Grand Rapids: Kregel, (1913) 1973], pp. 43f.; McClintock and Strong,

[Grand Rapids: Baker, (1967) 1981], articles on "Cainan" and "Genealogy.")

bility of when and why.

The first is that the only copies we have of the LXX are fairly late, which means that Cainan might not have been added by the original LXX translators, but have been inserted later on. The evidence that Cainan is a late addition to the LXX comes from the fact that so many of the Church Fathers questioned it. "It seems that the intrusion of the name even into the LXX is comparatively modern, since Augustine is the first writer who mentions it as found in the O.T. at all" (McClintock and Strong, "Cainan").

If it was added later, then by whom and why? In the late 19th century, John Gregorie, chaplain of Christ Church, Oxford, investigated this matter in depth, and posthumously his research was published as "The Disproof of the Second Cainan." Anstay summarizes his argument (Anstay, pp. 43f.): "The origin and motive of the insertion of the name of Cainan and his 130 years between Arphaxad and Salah, is amply explained by the enumeration of the years of the period from Adam to **Peleg** given in the writings of the Christian Chronologer **Theophilus** (Bishop of Antioch A.D. 176-186).

"In his days the leading writers of the Christian Church were dominated with the idea of six **millenary** ages of the world, which they regarded as equally divided into two periods of 3,000 years each at the 130th year of **Peleg's** life, when he begat his son Reu, **Peleg's** name signifying 'division.'" It was this late interest in a 6000 year scheme of history that made it necessary to bring the period prior to Reu up to 3000 years in length, and to this end the 130 years of Cainan were inserted in the text.

This suggests, of course, that the second Cainan was not present in the LXX originally, and may not even have been present in the text used by St. Luke. "It is believed by many, however, that the name of this second Cainan was not originally in the text even of Luke, but is an addition of inadvertent transcribers, who, remarking it in some copies of the Septuagint, added it" (McClintock and Strong, "Cainan").

Anstay writes, "It is just possible, of course, that Luke never wrote the word Cainan in Luke 3:36, for it is omitted in the Codex Bezae, the great Cambridge Uncial of the 6th Century, but the weight of traditional authority is in favour of his having taken the word from his copy of the LXX, for it occurs in all the great **Uncials** except the Codex Bezae D" (Anstay, p. 44). It also seems to be absent from the very early papyrus manuscript p75 (early 200s A.D.).

Another possibility is that Luke inserted the name Cainan, based on traditions unknown to us, and that it was from Luke that it found its way into the LXX. This viewpoint is mentioned by Henry Alford, (Grand Rapids: Guardian Press [1871] 1976) 1:475. Alford refers to Lord A. Hervey's study of the *Our* as presenting this position.

Conclusions?

We cannot formulate any sure conclusions to the problem at this time, but as we conclude this present essay, let me present in summary form the three major possibilities:

1. Cainan really lived between Arphaxad and Salah, being born when Arphaxad was about seventeen, and begetting Salah when he was about seventeen. The LXX writers used this tradition in expanding the chronology of Gene-

would so many Church Fathers question the name if it had gospel authority in their eyes?

2. Cainan was added by the LXX translators as part of their expansion of the chronology of the Old Testament. Luke, writing to Gentiles, simply quotes the Bible they know without worrying about it. Or perhaps Luke does not include Cainan, but a later hand added him in, in order to bring Luke into conformity with the LXX.

3. Cainan was added after the New Testament era by persons trying to fit the Biblical chronology into a millennial scheme, and was consistently added not only to the LXX of Genesis 11, but also to the LXX of Chronicles and the Greek text of Luke 3. Luke did not originally include Cainan in his list. This is the most attractive explanation, and would account for the fact that so many late witnesses (Josephus, **Origen**, etc.) reject the second Cainan.

a). Some other points can be added under this one, that we have not yet mentioned. The first is that Luke's genealogy is in a mess in at least one other place (v. 33), where there are several different textual variants. Bruce M. Metzger's

York: United Bible Societies, 1971), states regarding verse 33 that "faced with a bewildering variety of reading, the Committee adopted what seems to be the least unsatisfactory form of text" (p. 136). If Luke's genealogy has been tampered with in one place, it is credible to suggest that it has also been tampered with in verse 36.

b). If we omit Cainan, we have 3 x 7 generations from God to Abraham, 2 x 7 from Isaac to David, 3 x 7 from Nathan to **Salathiel (pre-exilic)**, and 3 x 7 generations from **Zerubbabel (post-exilic)** to Jesus, making a total of 7 x 11 or 77 generations from God to Jesus. We can keep the 77 generations by retaining Cainan and omitting God. We can also keep the 77 generations by taking one of the four-name versions of verse 33, and keeping Cainan, but if we do this we destroy the subdivisions of the scheme.

c). The issue in verse 33 boils down to whether there are four or five names there, and basically whether a certain **"Admin"** comes between Ram and Amminadab. No O.T. genealogies list this man, but the genealogy of Judah in Ruth 4 and other places is clearly abridged. See my discussion in Jordan,

World (Brentwood, TN: Wolgemuth & Hyatt, 1989), p. 307. There is no difficulty chronologically with including Admin in the list, because Perez was born about 200 years before the Exodus, and Nahshon about 80 years before the Exodus. If the others were born at 24 year intervals, it would come out fine (**Hezron** at -176, **Ram** at -152, **Admin** at -128, and **Amminadab** at -104). Chronologically, this is much easier to fit than is the second Cainan.

d). My preliminary conclusion is that originally Luke did not have the name Cainan in his list, but did have five names in verse 33. At some later date, the name Cainan was added to verse 36 in order to square it with the revised LXX, and so a name had to be dropped out of verse 33. This led to several versions of verse 33 floating around, and caused the Church Fathers to express reservations about the second Cainan.

Of course, this is only a working hypothesis. The bottom line for our purposes is that none of this changes the chronology of Genesis 11.