

King James Onlyism and Luke 3:36

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The King James Bible was published in 1611 and it has remained one of the finest translations serving English speaking Christians for nearly 400 years. However, there are some Christians who insist that the King James is more than an excellent translation. They argue that the King James is God's final authority never to be replaced by any other English translation. They further argue that the King James Bible represents God's pure, infallible word containing no textual or translational errors.

For example, David Cloud, missionary, pastor and vociferous KJV advocate has stated:

Let me hasten to say that I DO believe God had his hand upon the translation of the KJV in a marvelous way. I DO NOT believe there are mistakes in the King James Bible. The King James Bible has played a crucial role in preservation of the Word of God in the last four centuries because of the importance of the English language. God gave the English-speaking people an accurate translation. I do believe there are places which could be translated more clearly. I do believe there are antiquated words which could be brought up to date. To say, though, there are changes which could be made in the KJV in entirely different from saying there are changes that must be made, or that it contains mistakes. I believe the KJV is superior to all other English versions – superior in its textual basis, superior in its method of translation, superior in its scholarship of its translators, superior the time of its translation.¹

Likewise, KJV only apologist, D.A. Waite, has written a rather extensive book entitled *Defending the King James Bible* in which he argues for the veracity and superiority of the King James Bible over all other English translations. In fact, the cover of Dr. Waite's book proclaims the King James as "God's Word Kept Intact in English." In appendix C of his book, where Dr. Waite answers common questions raised against the King James Bible and his KJV only position, he writes in response to a question asked about translational error and the King James:

I would say regarding translational errors that I haven't found any either in the Old Testament Hebrew or in the New Testament Greek...It is my **personal** belief and faith that the HEBREW/ARAMAIC and GREEK TEXTS that underlie the KING JAMES BIBLE have been PRESERVED by God Himself so that these texts can properly be called "**INERRANT**" as well as being the very "**INSPIRED and INFALLIBLE WORDS OF GOD**"!!²

Even without the highlights and all caps, those are some bold assertions about the King James Bible as a translation. These men, who happen to represent a large host of like-minded individuals, are basically claiming that the King James translation absolutely stands apart from any other language translation because it is free from all translational error. Maybe there is need for an occasional updating of the old, Elizabethan English to reflect modern usage, but in regards to other areas of translation, the King James is impeccable.

But, can we say with all certainty that these statements are accurate and based upon fact? D.A. Waite stated that it is a matter of belief and faith, but God never calls His people to believe with a blind faith. Faith is always based upon God's Word affirmed through His work in redemptive history that can in turn be witnessed by His people. God has told us He would protect His inspired Word as contained in the Bible from being lost. That, I believe, He has plainly done if anyone were to study the historic facts of our Bible's transmission over time. However, did God determine to preserve His Word to mankind in only one Bible translation? Has He moved with divine providence in such a way so as to prevent any copyist's error from slipping into the original language text

from which the KJV is translated and kept the final published KJV free from any translational spoilage? I do not believe so, and I believe it can be proven with a number of examples. I will limit this study to just one: The name of Cainan found in Luke 3:36.³

The latter portion of Luke chapter 3 is Luke's genealogical account of Christ's lineage traced from His birth all the way back to the first created man, Adam. Luke's genealogy is stunningly accurate when compared to the other major genealogies found in the Old Testament. However, the KJV has the name Cainan listed as a son of Arphaxad in Luke 3:36. This is an oddity, because Cainan is nowhere mentioned as a son of Arphaxad in any of the major OT genealogical tables found in Genesis 10:24, 11:12 or 1 Chronicles 1:18, 24. John Gill, the eminent Baptist theologian, states in his commentary on Luke 3:36:

This Cainan is not mentioned by Moses in (Genesis 11:12) nor has he ever appeared in any Hebrew copy of the Old Testament, nor in the Samaritan version, nor in the Targum; nor is he mentioned by Josephus, nor in (1 Chronicles 1:24) where the genealogy is repeated; nor is it in Beza's most ancient Greek copy of Luke: it indeed stands in the present copies of the Septuagint, but was not originally there; and therefore could not be taken by Luke from thence, but seems to be owing to some early negligent transcriber of Luke's Gospel, and since put into the Septuagint to give it authority: I say "early", because it is in many Greek copies, and in the Vulgate Latin, and all the Oriental versions, even in the Syriac, the oldest of them; but ought not to stand neither in the text, nor in any version: for certain it is, there never was such a Cainan, the son of Arphaxad, for Salah was his son; and with him the next words should be connected.⁴

Since Gill comments were written, **P 75**, the oldest existent manuscript of Luke's gospel, has been unearthed and the name Cainan is not found in it. The source for the name, as Dr. Gill pointed out, is the Septuagint (LXX), the Greek translation of the Hebrew text.

The question, then, is asked: how did the name come to be in the KJV translation of Luke's gospel? There are some simple explanations. According to John Gill's comments, the discrepancy was caused when a negligent copyist of Luke's gospel accidentally replicated the name. That is easy to happen, seeing that the genuine, historic Cainan is mentioned in verse 37, right below verse 36. An accidental slip of the eye in copying could duplicate the name on the wrong line. Later transcribers of Luke's gospel saw the "extra" Cainan in verse 36, and amended their editions of the LXX to conform to Luke's genealogy.

It is also probably that the source for the discrepancy is the LXX itself, because the name is found in the major genealogies of Genesis. One needs to keep in mind that the LXX is a translation, just like the KJV is a translation. Translational errors can occur, as well as copying errors of that translation. If it is the case that the LXX had the original "extra" Cainan, then more than likely, good intentioned Christians copying Luke's gospel with knowledge of the LXX genealogies containing the name, conformed their copies of Luke's gospel to the corrupted LXX. We may never know for sure the original source of the discrepancy, but one thing is for sure, the name of "Cainan" is a fake, he never existed, and to insist upon the addition to Luke's gospel is creating a problem in the accuracy of the genealogies of scripture.

The problem of Cainan, then, provides a bit of a difficulty for the belief that the KJV is error free. Moreover, it exposes some terrible inconsistencies on part of the unyielding KJV defender. Consider, for instance, Dr. Waite's comments quoted earlier. On one hand, he is dogmatic that the original language texts of the OT and the NT underlying the KJV are inerrant, meaning "free from error." Yet, on the other hand, the Hebrew text does not

contain the name Cainan in any genealogy of the OT. This is solely a translational addition found in the LXX. That means that Dr. Waite, and other KJV advocates, would have to appeal to the LXX as the source of authority for the insertion of Cainan in the gospel of Luke. But, if Dr. Waite maintains his stance that only the Hebrew is inerrant, then he has to explain why God did not preserve the name Cainan in the original Hebrew, only to have it restored to its place within Christ's genealogy by Luke. Did God previously fail to preserve it?

Rather than admitting that the King James translation is in error for retaining the inferior textual reading at Luke 3:36 that mistakenly adds the name Cainan, KJV advocates invent clever "problem solutions" designed to help explain why God preserved the name in Luke's gospel as contained in the KJV. The insufferable Peter Ruckman is one such KJV only advocate who has written an entire book called *Problem Texts* that is his collection of supposed problem solutions to such difficulties. Though the book is supposed to be devoted to demonstrating how the KJV is completely error free, it is more the bombastic ramblings of a troubled mind, rather than true substantive Christian scholarship and serious Bible study. Commenting upon Luke 3:36, Mr. Ruckman suggests what he considers to be three legitimate ways of understanding the insertion of the name Cainan into Luke's gospel, without having to acknowledge the truth of an ancient translator's mistake:

1. Cainan married into Arphaxad's family, so he was his son-in-law, or.
2. Cainan was not the direct son of Arphaxad, but a distant great-grandson, or.
3. Cainan was simply omitted by Moses for some unknown reason only to be re-inserted in Luke's gospel.⁵

Though one can appreciate Mr. Ruckman's desire to protect the scripture from the charge of containing errors, under closer scrutiny, his three solutions are not satisfying. His first example is unsupported by the Bible itself. He writes, "You will have to prove that the expression 'so-and-so was OF so-and-so' has to be direct father and son relationship....Cainan could have married one of Arphaxad's daughters."⁶ This could be a possibility; however, it is easy to see from just a cursory reading of the genealogies in Genesis and 1 Chronicles that the relationship is father to son, not one of father-in-law to son-in-law. In fact, this is so explicitly clear that there can be no denying it. In Genesis 11:12, 13 for instance, the chronology states Arphaxad was 35 years of age when the next significant link, Salah, was born. The text then goes on to say that Arphaxad lived 403 years. This is the same genealogical pattern we witness in the earlier chapters of Genesis where the age of the father is stated at the birth of the next important son, and then the total age of the father is recorded at his death. Moreover, there is nothing within the genealogies of Genesis 4, 5, 10 and 11 to suggest there are any major gaps, interruptions or additions that are out of the ordinary.

Additionally, KJV advocates explaining the absence of Cainan in the Hebrew text fail to recognize how the biblical writers will alert the reader to any important changes in the genealogical list of names. In all of my conversations and written dialogues with KJV advocates concerning the name of Cainan in Luke 3:36, none of them take into account how the Bible will record any anomalies that may occur to the list. This is seen, for example, in Genesis 38 where God kills two of Judah's sons, Er and Onan. When we come to the genealogy in 1 Chronicles 2:3, the recorder of scripture makes reference to the Genesis account and tells us that Er was the firstborn, but was killed by the Lord. His name isn't skipped to the next link, thus keeping the reader in suspense as to what happened to him. A similar record of Er and Onan is found in Numbers 26:19 as well. Hence, the idea that biblical writers will

just insert phantom men into the record who were absent in previous genealogies is nowhere witnessed in all of scripture. The Bible never leaves the reader guessing as to the origins of names in its genealogies.

Then second, Mr. Ruckman appeals to the italics of Luke's gospel to offer another option of looking at the problem. He writes, "You will have to prove that if these italics are to be retained that a son has to be a direct son and not a grandson. This is difficult to in view of the fact that Joram BEGAT Uzziah (Mt. 1:8) and Uzziah is Joram's great-great-grandson."⁷ There are a couple of holes with his argument. First, a reading of Matthew's genealogies reveals that he is not intending to be exact. Matthew intentionally skips generations so as to make his list 3 sets of 14. Mr. Ruckman overlooks that important nuance in Matthew's writing. Furthermore, Matthew is only recording the genealogies from Abraham to Christ. The name in question, Cainan, is *before* Abraham and thus irrelevant to Matthew's purpose in writing. It would have been helpful for Mr. Ruckman's position if he provided some examples from before Abraham, as well as from the OT where this genealogical skipping takes place. One quote from Matthew, who has a totally different purpose for his genealogical list than Luke, does not establish his case.

Then, in his third attempt, Mr. Ruckman employs an argument that has become typical among KJV advocates trying to make excuses for translational errors in the King James text: cross referencing a group of non-related passages. He writes, "You must prove that Moses, by an omission, contradicted Luke which will be very difficult in view of the fact that Mark omitted a blind man mentioned in Matthew..."⁸ This passage is not an example of genealogies. The two blind men are completely irrelevant to his argument. Similarly, other KJV advocates appeal to Paul's citation of Jannes and Jambres in his second epistle to Timothy as an example of NT writers including information perhaps omitted in the OT. Neither of these men is mentioned in the Exodus account when Moses confronted Pharaoh and his court magicians. It seems to be assumed by KJV advocates that Paul affirms the historicity of the two men out of sheer inspiration by the Holy Spirit whispering "write Jannes and Jambres" in his ear. Yet, God did not reveal the name of these two magicians to Paul for the first time in recorded redemptive history. Jewish tradition, the Talmud for instance, records that Jannes and Jambres were the two main magicians opposing Moses when he confronted Pharaoh. Paul is drawing the name of these two false prophets from the annals of Jewish antiquity. The name of "Cainan" has no affirmation in Jewish antiquity, and hence, Luke would not have included it in his genealogy.

As I draw this brief study to a close, I believe it is crystal clear that the name Cainan, as it appears in the text of the KJV at Luke 3:36, is a transcriber's error. There can be no doubt about this in light of the overall OT evidence. Hence, the insistent belief that the King James Bible is the only English translation free from any scribal or translational errors is not only mistaken, but genuinely misguided. Moreover, the textual solutions offered by King James advocates in the form of Bible studies to explain why the name Cainan is original with Luke's gospel and should not be removed are contrived at best. In fact, I would say the problem solutions are detrimental to the integrity of the Bible, because they ignore what we have witnessed the OT stating about genealogies and casts doubt on God's ability to keep His word preserved. Thus, the solutions provided by KJV advocates are not produced to defend the Bible as an infallible and inerrant document, but to keep alive King James only myths.

End Notes

¹ David Cloud, “Is the King James Bible Inspired,” *O Timothy*, vol. 10, issue 10, 1993, p. 5 (emphasis his)

² D.A. Waite, *Defending the King James Bible* (Collingswood: The Bible for Today Press, 1995), pp. 245-246 (emphasis his).

³ It is my goal to produce a series of articles that will examine some of the examples of translational errors found in the KJV English translation. I also hope to interact with the problem solutions KJV advocates put forth in order to “excuse” such errors as being errors and supposedly defend the KJV as God’s perfect Word in English.

⁴ www.freegrace.net/gill/

⁵ Peter S. Ruckman, *Problem Texts*, (Pensacola: Bible Institute Press, 1980), p. 33.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.