

# Which Bible Did Jesus Use?

## A Critical Examination of Septuagint, Masoretic Text, and Dead Sea Scrolls Variants and Their Implications for Sola Scriptura

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### Introduction: Three Competing Textual Traditions

When Protestants proclaim “**Scripture Alone**” (*Sola Scriptura*) as their authority, a fundamental question arises: **Which Scripture?**

There are three primary textual traditions for the Old Testament, each with significant differences:

#### 1. The Septuagint (LXX)

- **Date:** Translated from Hebrew into Greek c. 250-150 BCE
- **Origin:** Alexandria, Egypt
- **Usage:** The Bible of early Christianity, quoted by Jesus, apostles, and the early Church
- **Age of Hebrew Source:** Reflects Hebrew texts from 3rd-2nd century BCE
- **Preservation:** Older than any complete Hebrew manuscript by 1000+ years

## 2. The Masoretic Text (MT)

- **Date:** Finalized c. 700-1000 CE
- **Origin:** Produced by Jewish Masoretes
- **Usage:** Became basis for Protestant Old Testament translations (KJV, NIV, ESV, NASB, etc.)
- **Age of Manuscripts:** Oldest complete manuscript is Leningrad Codex (1008 CE)
- **Issues:** Edited and standardized centuries after Christ

## 3. The Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS)

- **Date:** Copied c. 250 BCE - 68 CE
- **Discovery:** 1947 at Qumran
- **Significance:** Oldest surviving biblical manuscripts in Hebrew/Aramaic
- **Content:** ~35% agree with MT, ~5% with LXX family, ~5% with Samaritan Pentateuch, ~55% non-aligned
- **Key Finding:** Often agrees with Septuagint **against** Masoretic Text

## The Timeline Problem

### Key Observation:

The Septuagint translation was made from Hebrew texts that were **1,000+ years older** than our oldest complete Hebrew (Masoretic) manuscripts.

Text	Date of Source	Date of Manuscript
Dead Sea Scrolls	250 BCE - 68 CE	250 BCE - 68 CE (originals)
Septuagint	Hebrew source: 3rd-2nd century BCE	Greek translation: 3rd-2nd century BCE
Masoretic Text	Edited/standardized: 7th-10th century CE	Oldest complete: 1008 CE (Leningrad Codex)

**The Septuagint reflects the state of the original text as it would have been found in the third to second centuries BCE, while the Masoretic text was edited up until the eighth century CE.**

This means the Septuagint is based on Hebrew texts that are **over 1,000 years older** than the Masoretic tradition.

## The Protestant Irony

**Protestant Bibles (KJV, NIV, ESV, NASB) base their Old Testament on the Masoretic Text—the *later, edited* Hebrew tradition.**

**Yet the New Testament authors, including Jesus, predominantly quoted the Septuagint—the *earlier* Greek translation.**

**This creates a profound problem:**

- **If we follow the New Testament's example**, we should use the Septuagint
  - **If we follow Protestant tradition**, we use the Masoretic Text
  - **The two often say different things**
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## **The New Testament Overwhelmingly Quotes the Septuagint**

### **Statistics**

**Of the approximately 300 Old Testament quotations in the New Testament:**

- ~212 diverge from the Masoretic Text
- ~185 diverge from the Septuagint
- **Conclusion:** The Septuagint is the main source for quotations by New Testament writers

**Protestant scholars Archer and Chirichigno identified:** - 340 places where the New Testament cites the Septuagint - **Only 33 places** where it cites the Masoretic Text rather than the Septuagint

**Approximately 2/3 of Old Testament quotes in the New Testament came from the Septuagint.**

### **Paul's Usage**

**Paul cited the Old Testament 93 times:** - 51 agree completely or virtually with the Septuagint (22 of these **against** the Masoretic Text) - 4 follow the Hebrew text against the Septuagint - 38 differ from both texts

**Paul overwhelmingly used the Septuagint, even when it differed from the Hebrew.**

### **Examples Where NT Follows Septuagint, Not Hebrew**

#### **1. Matthew 1:23 / Isaiah 7:14 — The Virgin Birth**

**Septuagint:** “Behold, a **virgin** (παρθένος, *parthenos*) shall conceive”

**Masoretic:** “Behold, a **young woman** (עַלְמָה, *almah*) shall conceive”

**Hebrew word for virgin:** בְּתוּלָה (*betulah*) — used 50+ times in the OT for “virgin”

**Issue:** - The Hebrew word *almah* means “young woman of marriageable age,” typically unmarried, but **not necessarily a virgin** - The Septuagint translates it as *parthenos* (“virgin”) - Matthew's Gospel bases the virgin birth prophecy on the **Septuagint reading**, not the Hebrew

**Implication:** - If the Masoretic Text is correct, Isaiah 7:14 **does not prophecy a virgin birth** - Matthew's use of this verse as messianic prophecy **depends on the Septuagint translation**

## 2. Matthew 9:13; 12:7 / Hosea 6:6 — Mercy vs. Goodness

**Septuagint:** “I desire **mercy** (ἔλεος, *eleos*) and not sacrifice”

**Masoretic:** “I desire **goodness/steadfast love** (חסד, *hesed*) and not sacrifice”

**Issue:** - *Hesed* has a broader meaning than “mercy”—includes loyalty, covenant faithfulness, loving-kindness - The Septuagint narrows it to “mercy” - Jesus quotes the **Septuagint version** in Matthew

## 3. Matthew 12:21 / Isaiah 42:4 — Gentiles vs. Isles

**Septuagint:** “In His name will the **Gentiles hope**”

**Masoretic:** “The **isles** shall wait for his law”

**Issue:** - The Hebrew word יַיִם (*iyyim*) means “coastlands” or “islands” - The Septuagint interprets this as referring to **Gentile nations** - Matthew's citation follows the **Septuagint's universalizing interpretation**

## 4. Hebrews 1:6 / Deuteronomy 32:43 — Angels Worship

**Septuagint (and Dead Sea Scrolls):** “Let all the **angels of God worship him**”

**Masoretic:** [Phrase is missing]

**Issue:** - The author of Hebrews quotes a clause that exists in the Septuagint and Dead Sea Scrolls but **not in the Masoretic Text** - This is a **Christological** statement about Jesus being worshiped by angels - The Masoretic Text **does not contain** the verse Hebrews is quoting

**Dead Sea Scrolls Support:** - **4QDeut** (Qumran manuscript) reads: “Rejoice, O heavens, together with him; and bow down to him all you gods” - Supports the longer Septuagint version - Suggests the Masoretic Text **deliberately removed** the reference to divine beings/angels

## 5. Acts 15:17 / Amos 9:12 — Edom vs. Adam (Humanity)

**Septuagint:** “That the **rest of humanity** (ἄνθρωποι, *anthropoi*) may seek the Lord”

**Masoretic:** “That they may possess the remnant of **Edom** (עֲדוֹם)”

**Issue:** - The Hebrew אָדָם (*adam*, “humanity”) and עֲדוֹם (*edom*, “Edom”) look nearly identical in unpointed text - The Masoretic Text speaks of **conquering Edom** (nationalist/militaristic) - The Septuagint speaks of **all humanity seeking the Lord** (universalist)

**The LXX translators read:** - Hebrew יִרְשׁוּ (*yirshu*, “possess”) as יִדְרְשׁוּ (*yidreshu*, “seek”) - עֲדוֹם (*edom*, “Edom”) as אָדָם (*adam*, “humanity”)

**Critical Theological Impact:** - James's argument at the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15) that Gentiles should be included in the church **only works** if you follow the Septuagint - The Masoretic Text speaks of Israel conquering Edom—not Gentiles seeking God - This textual difference was **pivotal** for early Christianity's inclusion of Gentiles

## **6. Romans 15:10 / Deuteronomy 32:43 — Gentiles Rejoice**

**Septuagint:** “Rejoice, O **Gentiles**, with his people”

**Masoretic:** “Rejoice, O **heavens**, with him”

**Issue:** - Paul quotes the Septuagint version in Romans 15:10 to support the Gentile mission - The Masoretic Text speaks of **heavens**, not **Gentiles** - Again, Paul's theology depends on the Septuagint reading

## **7. 1 Peter 5:5 / Proverbs 3:34 — Humble vs. Lowly**

**Septuagint:** “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the **humble**”

**Masoretic:** “He scoffs at scoffers and gives grace to **lowly**”

**Issue:** - Peter quotes the Septuagint version - The nuance differs between “humble” (attitude) and “lowly” (social status)

## **What This Means**

**If Jesus and the apostles predominantly used the Septuagint, and the Septuagint differs from the Masoretic Text in hundreds of places, including doctrinally significant passages, then:**

- 1. Protestant Bibles using the Masoretic Text are not using the same Old Testament Jesus used**
  - 2. Key New Testament theological arguments depend on Septuagint readings that differ from the Hebrew**
  - 3. “Sola Scriptura” becomes problematic when we can't agree on which Scripture is Scripture**
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## **Major Doctrinal Differences Between LXX and MT**

Beyond simple quotation differences, there are major textual variants that affect doctrine, interpretation, and theological understanding.

### **1. Deuteronomy 32:8 — Sons of God vs. Sons of Israel**

This is one of the most theologically significant textual variants in the Old Testament.

**Masoretic Text:** “When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance, when he divided mankind, he fixed the borders of the peoples according to the number of the **sons of Israel** (בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל)”

**Septuagint:** “When the Most High divided the nations, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the nations according to the number of the **angels of God** (ἀγγέλων θεοῦ)”

**Dead Sea Scrolls (4QDeut):** “...according to the number of the **sons of God** (בְּנֵי הַאֱלֹהִים)”

## Analysis

**The LXX and DSS largely agree:** The original reading was “**sons of God**” or “**angels of God**”

**Scholarly Consensus:** - The Masoretic Text represents a **minority variant** - The reading was **probably altered intentionally** to remove references to divine beings other than YHWH - The scribe thought this reference to other gods was theologically offensive

## Theological Implications:

**Original Text (LXX/DSS):** - God divided the nations at Babel and assigned each nation to a **divine being** (“son of God” / angel) - Israel was kept as **YHWH’s personal inheritance** - Implies a **divine council** theology—YHWH is supreme among divine beings

**Masoretic Alteration:** - Removes the divine council concept - Makes it about the **number of Israelites**, not divine beings - Reflects later Jewish theology that eliminated references to other gods/divine beings

**New Testament Connection:** - This divine council theology appears throughout the Bible (Psalm 82:1, Job 1:6, 2:1, 38:7) - Early Christianity retained this theology (Ephesians 6:12, Colossians 1:16, 2:15)

## 2. Psalm 22:16 — They Pierced vs. Like a Lion

This is perhaps the most famous Christological textual variant.

**Masoretic Text:** “For dogs encompass me; a company of evildoers encircles me; **like a lion** (כְּאַרִי, *ka’ari*) my hands and feet”

**Septuagint:** “For dogs encompass me; a company of evildoers encircles me; **they have pierced** (ὄρυξαν, *ōryxan* —“they dug/pierced”) my hands and feet”

**Dead Sea Scrolls (5/6 HevPs):** “...they have **dug** (כָּאָרוּ, *ka’aru*) my hands and feet”

## The Hebrew Textual Issue

**The difference is a single letter:** - כְּאַרִי (*ka’ari*) = “like a lion” (yod ending) - כָּאָרוּ (*ka’aru*) = “they dug/pierced” (vav ending)

**In ancient Hebrew (pre-Masoretic), yod and vav looked very similar.**

## Analysis

**Manuscript Evidence:** - **Majority** of Masoretic manuscripts: “like a lion” - **Minority** of Hebrew manuscripts: “pierced” - **Septuagint** (2,000 years old): “they have dug/pierced” - **Dead Sea Scrolls** (2,000 years old): “they have dug” (כָּאֵרוּ)

**Grammatical Problem with “Like a Lion”:** - “Like a lion my hands and feet” is grammatically incomplete in Hebrew - It requires supplying words like “[they are tearing]” or “[they maul]” to make sense - The sentence is awkward and unnatural

**Christological Interpretation:** - Christian tradition has always read this as “pierced my hands and feet” - This is understood as a prophecy of crucifixion - The Masoretic reading “**like a lion**” does not support this interpretation

**Historical Context:** - Early Christian translations (Septuagint-based) all have “pierced” - Jewish Masoretic tradition (post-Christian) has “like a lion” - This has led to accusations that Jewish scribes deliberately altered the text to remove Christological readings

**Scholarly Debate:** - Some scholars defend the Masoretic reading as original (based on majority of Hebrew MSS) - Others argue the Septuagint and Dead Sea Scrolls preserve the older reading - The textual and grammatical evidence favors “pierced”

### 3. Isaiah 7:14 — Virgin vs. Young Woman

We touched on this earlier, but it deserves detailed analysis.

**Masoretic Text:** “Behold, the **young woman** (הַעַלְמָה, *ha-almah*) shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.”

**Septuagint:** “Behold, the **virgin** (ἡ παρθένος, *hē parthenos*) shall conceive and bear a son, and you shall call his name Immanuel.”

#### Hebrew Word Analysis

**עַלְמָה (*almah*):** - Means “young woman of marriageable age” - Used 7 times in the Hebrew Bible - Can refer to a virgin, but **virginity is not inherent in the word** - Examples: Genesis 24:43 (Rebekah, who was a virgin but described with both *almah* and *betulah*); Exodus 2:8 (Miriam as a young girl); Proverbs 30:19 (young woman in a romantic context); Song of Solomon 1:3, 6:8 (maidens/young women)

**בְּתוּלָה (*betulah*):** - The standard Hebrew word for “virgin” - Used 50+ times in the Hebrew Bible - Specifically denotes virginity - If Isaiah wanted to emphasize virginity, this word was available

#### Greek Translation

**παρθένος (*parthenos*):** - Greek word specifically meaning “virgin” - Used exclusively for virgins in Greek literature - The Septuagint translators chose this word

**Why did the LXX translators use *parthenos*?**

**Possible Explanations:** 1. Their Hebrew source text had a different reading 2. They interpreted *almah* in its most restricted sense (virgin) 3. They understood Isaiah's prophecy as requiring a miraculous virgin birth 4. Cultural assumption: an unmarried young woman (*almah*) would be a virgin

### Matthew's Usage

**Matthew 1:23** quotes Isaiah 7:14 using the **Septuagint version**: "Behold, the virgin (ἡ παρθένος) shall conceive..."

**Matthew's interpretation:** - Sees Jesus' virgin birth as fulfillment of Isaiah 7:14 - Depends entirely on the **Septuagint translation** - The Hebrew text (*almah*) does not necessitate virgin birth

### The Problem for Sola Scriptura

**If the Hebrew text is authoritative:** - Isaiah 7:14 speaks of a "young woman," not necessarily a virgin - The sign to King Ahaz would be a normal birth - Matthew's use of it as virgin birth prophecy depends on a **Greek translation**, not the Hebrew original

**If the Septuagint is authoritative:** - Isaiah 7:14 does prophecy a virgin birth - Matthew correctly applies it to Jesus - But we're relying on a **translation**, not the original Hebrew

**Either way:** - The doctrine of the virgin birth **as prophesied in Isaiah 7:14** depends on which text you use - Protestant Bibles (MT-based) say "young woman" - Catholic/Orthodox Bibles (LXX-influenced) say "virgin"

## 4. Exodus 1:5 — 70 vs. 75 People

**Masoretic Text (Exodus 1:5, Genesis 46:27, Deuteronomy 10:22):** "All the descendants of Jacob were **seventy** persons"

**Septuagint (Genesis 46:27, Exodus 1:5):** "All the souls that came out of Jacob were **seventy-five**"

**Dead Sea Scrolls:** - 4QGen-Exod<sup>a</sup>: reads "**75 persons**" - 4QExod<sup>b</sup> 1:5: reads "**75 persons**"

### Stephen's Speech in Acts

**Acts 7:14:** "And Joseph sent and summoned Jacob his father and all his kindred, **seventy-five persons** in all."

**Stephen, speaking to the Jewish council, quotes the Septuagint version—75, not 70.**

### The Difference

**Septuagint adds** (in Genesis 46:20): - 3 grandsons of Joseph through Manasseh and Ephraim - 2 great-grandsons

**These 5 additional descendants are mentioned in:** - Numbers 26:28-37 (descendants of Manasseh and Ephraim) - 1 Chronicles 7:14-20 (genealogy)

**The Masoretic Text's count excludes them.**

### Analysis

**The Septuagint's count of 75 is more comprehensive**, including Joseph's Egyptian-born descendants.

**The Masoretic count of 70** may reflect a more restrictive definition of "those who came from Jacob's loins" (excluding those born in Egypt).

**The Dead Sea Scrolls support the Septuagint reading**, suggesting the LXX's Hebrew source text had "75."

**Stephen's use of "75" indicates:** - The Septuagint was the accepted Scripture for Greek-speaking Jews - Luke (author of Acts) saw no problem with Stephen citing the LXX number - The New Testament endorses the Septuagint reading

## 5. Goliath's Height — 9'4" vs. 6'4"

**Masoretic Text (1 Samuel 17:4):** "And there came out from the camp of the Philistines a champion named Goliath of Gath, whose height was **six cubits and a span**" (~9 feet 4 inches)

**Septuagint: "Four cubits and a span"** (~6 feet 4 inches)

**Dead Sea Scrolls (4QSam<sup>a</sup>): "Four cubits and a span"** (~6 feet 4 inches)

### Analysis

**The Septuagint and Dead Sea Scrolls agree:** Goliath was ~6'4"—tall for ancient times, but not impossibly gigantic.

**The Masoretic Text:** 9'4"—an extraordinary giant.

**Scholarly Consensus:** - The original reading was likely **4 cubits and a span** (6'4") - The Masoretic Text appears to have been **inflated** (possibly for dramatic effect) - A 6'4" warrior would still be impressively tall in ancient times (average height ~5'5")

**This demonstrates:** - The Masoretic Text is not always more accurate than the Septuagint - Later Hebrew texts sometimes contain exaggerations or errors - The Dead Sea Scrolls often support the Septuagint against the Masoretic

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## Dead Sea Scrolls: Vindicating the Septuagint

The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls (1947-1956) revolutionized biblical textual criticism.

**Before the Dead Sea Scrolls:** - Scholars debated whether Septuagint differences were due to: 1. Different Hebrew source texts (Vorlage) 2. Translation errors or liberties

**After the Dead Sea Scrolls:** - We now have Hebrew manuscripts that **agree with the Septuagint against the Masoretic Text** - This proves the Septuagint was often translating a **different, older Hebrew text**

## Classification of DSS Biblical Manuscripts

**Emanuel Tov's analysis of Qumran biblical manuscripts:**

Text Type	Number of Manuscripts	Percentage
Masoretic-like	56	~35%
Non-aligned	57	~35%
Septuagint-family	7	~4%
Samaritan Pentateuch-like	5	~3%
Other/Unknown	-	~23%

**Key Observation:** - Only ~35% of the Dead Sea Scrolls match the Masoretic tradition - ~65% represent other textual traditions, including Septuagint-type texts - This demonstrates **textual plurality** in Second Temple Judaism

## Specific Examples of LXX-DSS Agreement Against MT

### 1. Deuteronomy 32:8 — “Sons of God”

**MT:** “sons of Israel” **LXX:** “angels of God” **DSS (4QDeut<sup>a</sup>):** “sons of God”

→ **DSS supports LXX** (in substance) against MT

### 2. Deuteronomy 32:43 — Angels Worship

**MT:** [Missing the phrase entirely] **LXX:** “Let all the angels of God worship him” **DSS (4QDeut<sup>a</sup>):** “Bow down to him all you gods”

→ **DSS supports longer text** like LXX against MT

### 3. 1 Samuel — Extensive Agreement

**4QSam<sup>a</sup>** (Dead Sea Scrolls manuscript of Samuel) shows: - **Very close to the LXX readings - Diverges from the MT in 124 places** where it agrees with LXX - The Septuagint's Hebrew source text was **different from and sometimes superior to** the Masoretic tradition

**Examples:** - **1 Samuel 10:27-11:1** — DSS has **additional text** not in MT but reflected in LXX - **1 Samuel 17:4** — Goliath's height: **4 cubits and a span** (agrees with LXX, not MT's 6 cubits)

#### 4. Jeremiah — Two Different Versions

**4QJer<sup>a,b,d</sup>** (DSS Jeremiah manuscripts): - **Shorter text** like the Septuagint - **Different verse arrangement** like the Septuagint - Proves the Septuagint's shorter Jeremiah was based on a **real Hebrew textual tradition**, not translator abbreviation

**This means:** - Two versions of Jeremiah coexisted in antiquity - Both were considered Scripture - The LXX preserves an ancient Hebrew tradition lost in the MT

#### 5. Genesis 1:9 — Longer Text in LXX

**MT:** “And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so.”

**LXX:** “...and let the dry land appear...**and the dry land appeared**”

**DSS (4QGen<sup>k</sup>):** Has the **additional phrase** “and dry land appeared”

→ This indicates the longer LXX reading came from an **ancient Hebrew text** that the MT lost through scribal error (haplography—accidental omission due to similar endings)

#### 6. Exodus 1:5 — 75 People

**MT:** 70 people **LXX:** 75 people **DSS (4QGen-Exod<sup>a</sup>, 4QExod<sup>b</sup>):** 75 people

→ **DSS supports LXX** against MT

### What the Dead Sea Scrolls Prove

1. The Septuagint often preserves older, more accurate readings than the Masoretic Text
  2. Multiple textual traditions coexisted in Second Temple Judaism
  3. The Masoretic Text is not “the original Hebrew”—it’s one stream of transmission
  4. The idea of a single, pure “Hebrew Bible” is a myth
  5. The New Testament authors were using legitimate Hebrew-based texts (via LXX)
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## Evidence of Deliberate Alterations in the Masoretic Text

### The Tiquene Sopherim — “Emendations of the Scribes”

Jewish scribal tradition **openly acknowledges** making deliberate textual changes called **tiqqene sopherim** (“corrections of the scribes”).

**Traditional lists include 18 passages** where scribes **intentionally altered** the Hebrew text for theological reasons.

## Examples of Tikkune Sopherim

### 1. Genesis 18:22

**Original text:** “But YHWH still stood before Abraham”

**Altered to:** “But Abraham still stood before YHWH”

**Reason:** The original implied YHWH was standing in a subordinate position before Abraham (theologically problematic)

### 2. Numbers 11:15

**Original:** “...that I may not see my evil”

**Altered to:** “...that I may not see their evil”

**Reason:** To avoid Moses speaking harshly about God

### 3. Job 7:20

**Original:** “I have become a burden to you”

**Altered to:** “I have become a burden to myself”

**Reason:** To avoid suggesting that a human could be a burden to God

### 4. Zechariah 2:8 (MT 2:12)

**Original:** “He who touches you touches the apple of my eye”

**Altered to:** “He who touches you touches the apple of his eye”

**Reason:** To avoid anthropomorphism (God having an eye)

## Rabbinic Documentation

**These alterations are not hidden—Jewish sources document them:**

- Marginal notations in Hebrew manuscripts state: “**This is one of the eighteen emendations of the Sopherim**”
- Talmudic and Midrashic literature discuss these changes
- The scribes believed they were **improving** the text for reverence and clarity

**However:**

While these changes were made with **good intentions**, they demonstrate that:

1. **The Masoretic Text is not pristine**
2. **Scribes deliberately changed the text**
3. **Theological motivations influenced textual transmission**

## Possible Anti-Christian Alterations?

**Historical Accusations:**

From early Church Fathers (Justin Martyr, 2nd century) through Reformation figures (John Calvin, 16th century), Christians have accused Jewish scribes of **deliberately altering texts to obscure Messianic prophecies**.

### Examples of Suspected Alterations:

#### 1. Psalm 22:16 — “Lion” vs. “Pierced”

As discussed earlier: - LXX and DSS: “They pierced my hands and feet” - MT: “Like a lion my hands and feet”

**Christian Accusation:** - The MT reading was changed to **remove the Christological reference** to crucifixion

**Jewish Response:** - The MT preserves the original; Christians altered it to fit their theology

**Evidence:** - DSS supports “pierced” (or “dug”) - LXX (pre-Christian) has “pierced” - Grammatically, “like a lion” is awkward - **Balance of evidence favors “pierced” as original**

#### 2. Deuteronomy 32:8 — Removal of Divine Council

As discussed earlier: - LXX/DSS: “sons of God” / “angels of God” - MT: “sons of Israel”

**Motivation for Change:** - Later Jewish theology (post-Babylonian exile) emphasized **strict monotheism** - References to multiple divine beings became theologically problematic - The MT reading removes the divine council concept

**This was likely a Jewish theological correction, not anti-Christian**—it predates Christianity, but reflects theological development.

#### 3. Isaiah 7:14 — “Young Woman” vs. “Virgin”

**Could the MT have deliberately avoided “virgin” language?**

**Unlikely**, because: - The Hebrew word *almah* genuinely means “young woman” - There’s no evidence the MT changed from *betulah* to *almah* - The Septuagint translators **interpreted** *almah* as *parthenos*

**However:** - The MT pointing (vowels added by Masoretes, 7th-10th century CE) may have been influenced by anti-Christian polemic - By emphasizing the “*almah*” reading, Jewish scribes could deny Christian use of this verse

### Scholarly Assessment

**Most scholars agree:**

1. **The Tiqqune Sopherim prove deliberate alterations occurred**
2. **Theological motivations influenced textual transmission**
3. **Some variants may reflect anti-Christian polemic**, but most differences predate Christianity

4. **The Masoretic Text represents a late, standardized edition**, not the “original Hebrew”

**The critical point:**

If we **know** that Jewish scribes made deliberate theological changes (Tiqqune Sopherim), and we **know** that the MT was finalized centuries after Christ, then **we cannot assume the MT is pristine and unaltered.**

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## **Significant Textual Corruptions and Missing Text**

Beyond deliberate alterations, there are cases of clear **textual corruption**—places where the Masoretic Text is damaged, incomplete, or nonsensical.

### **1. 1 Samuel 13:1 — Saul’s Age Missing**

**Masoretic Text (literal translation):** “Saul was a son of **a year** in his reigning, and **two years** he reigned over Israel.”

**English Translations’ Dilemma:**

- **KJV:** “Saul reigned one year; and when he had reigned two years over Israel...” (awkward)
- **NIV:** “Saul was thirty years old when he became king, and he reigned over Israel forty-two years” (supplies missing numbers)
- **ESV:** “Saul lived for one year and then became king, and when he had reigned for two years over Israel...” (nonsensical)
- **NRSV:** “Saul was... years old when he began to reign; and he reigned... and two years over Israel” (**leaves blanks**)

**The Problem:**

- **The numbers are missing or corrupted** in the Hebrew text
- The verse literally says Saul was “one year old” when he became king and reigned “two years”—both impossible
- **This is a textual corruption**

**Septuagint:**

- **The verse is entirely absent** in most LXX manuscripts
- Some late LXX manuscripts supply “thirty” (borrowed from 2 Samuel 5:4, about David)

**Scholarly Consensus:**

- **The Masoretic Text is corrupted** at this point
- **The original numbers were lost** in transmission
- Modern translations **guess** or **leave it blank**

**Implication:**

**If the Masoretic Text is “inerrant,” why does it contain verses that are literally nonsensical?**

## **2. Judges 16:13-14 — Missing Text**

### **Masoretic Text:**

Delilah asks Samson how to bind him (Judges 16:13). Samson tells her to weave his hair into a loom. The text then says:

“So while he slept, Delilah took the seven locks of his head and wove them into the web. And she made them tight with the pin...”

**Problem:** The text doesn’t say **when or how Samson fell asleep**.

### **Septuagint:**

Contains **additional text** explaining that Delilah made Samson sleep and then wove his hair.

### **Dead Sea Scrolls (4QJudg<sup>a</sup>):**

Supports the **longer Septuagint reading**, with the missing text about how Samson fell asleep.

### **Conclusion:**

The Masoretic Text **lost text** due to scribal error (likely haplography—skipping similar lines). The Septuagint and DSS preserve the fuller, original reading.

## **3. 1 Samuel 10:27-11:1 — Missing Paragraph**

### **Masoretic Text:**

**1 Samuel 10:27** ends: “But some worthless fellows said, ‘How can this man save us?’ And they despised him and brought him no present. But he held his peace.”

**1 Samuel 11:1** immediately begins: “Then Nahash the Ammonite went up and besieged Jabesh-gilead...”

**Problem:** There’s an **abrupt transition**—who is Nahash? Why is he attacking?

### **Dead Sea Scrolls (4QSam<sup>a</sup>):**

Contains an **additional paragraph** between 10:27 and 11:1:

“Now Nahash, king of the Ammonites, had been grievously oppressing the Gadites and the Reubenites. He would gouge out the right eye of each of them and would not grant Israel a deliverer. No one was left of the Israelites across the Jordan whose right eye Nahash, king of the Ammonites, had not gouged out. But there were seven thousand men who had escaped from the Ammonites and had entered Jabesh-gilead. About a month later, Nahash the Ammonite went up and besieged Jabesh-gilead...”

### **This missing paragraph:**

- Explains **who Nahash is**
- Provides **context** for why he's attacking
- Makes the narrative **flow coherently**

**The Masoretic Text lost this entire paragraph** (likely due to homoioteleuton—skipping from one occurrence of “Nahash the Ammonite” to another).

### **Modern Translations:**

- **NRSV, ESV** include this paragraph in footnotes or appendices based on DSS
- **NIV (2011)** includes it in the main text based on DSS evidence

## **4. Psalm 145 — The Missing “N” Line**

Psalm 145 is an **acrostic poem**—each verse begins with successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet (22 letters).

### **Masoretic Text:**

- The verse that should begin with the Hebrew letter נ (**nun**) is **missing**

### **Dead Sea Scrolls (11QPsa):**

- Contains the **missing verse**: “God is faithful in his words and gracious in all his deeds”

### **Septuagint:**

- Also contains the **missing verse**

### **Conclusion:**

The Masoretic Text **lost a verse** through scribal error. The DSS and LXX preserve it.

## **5. Missing Books**

### **Books Present in Septuagint but Not in Masoretic:**

- 1 Maccabees
- 2 Maccabees
- Wisdom of Solomon
- Sirach (Ecclesiasticus)
- Tobit
- Judith
- Baruch
- Additions to Daniel (Prayer of Azariah, Susanna, Bel and the Dragon)
- Additions to Esther

### **These books:**

- Were part of the Septuagint (the Bible Jesus and the apostles knew)

- Are quoted or alluded to in the New Testament
- Were used by early Christians
- Were **rejected** by Jewish council of Jamnia (c. 90 CE, after Christianity emerged)

### Examples of NT References to Deuterocanonical Books:

- **Hebrews 11:35** — “Women received back their dead, raised to life again. There were others who were tortured, refusing to be released so that they might gain an even better resurrection.”
  - This references **2 Maccabees 7** (mother and seven sons martyred, believing in resurrection)
- **Matthew 27:43** — “He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now if he wants him, for he said, ‘I am the Son of God.’”
  - Nearly identical to **Wisdom of Solomon 2:18-20** about the righteous sufferer
- **James 1:19** — “Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry”
  - Echoes **Sirach 5:11**

**Protestant Bibles removed these books**, following the later Jewish canon, **not the Septuagint that the New Testament authors used.**

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## Chronological Discrepancies and Creation Dating

One of the most significant differences between the Septuagint and Masoretic Text involves **chronology**—specifically, the ages of patriarchs and the dates of creation and the flood.

### Genesis 5 and 11 — Patriarchal Chronologies

The genealogies in Genesis 5 (Adam to Noah) and Genesis 11 (Shem to Abraham) contain significant numerical differences.

#### The Pattern of Differences

**In many cases, the Septuagint ages are exactly 100 years greater than the Masoretic:**

Patriarch	MT: Age at Son's Birth	LXX: Age at Son's Birth	Difference
Adam	130	230	+100
Seth	105	205	+100
Enosh	90	190	+100
Kenan	70	170	+100
Mahalalel	65	165	+100
Jared	162	162	0
Enoch	65	165	+100

<b>Patriarch</b>	<b>MT: Age at Son's Birth</b>	<b>LXX: Age at Son's Birth</b>	<b>Difference</b>
<b>Methuselah</b>	187	<b>167</b>	-20
<b>Lamech</b>	182	<b>188</b>	+6

### **Cumulative Effect**

#### **From Creation to Abraham:**

- **Masoretic Text:** ~2,008 years
- **Septuagint:** ~3,394 years
- **Difference:** 1,386 years

#### **From Creation to the Flood:**

- **Masoretic Text:** 1,656 years
- **Septuagint:** 2,244 years
- **Difference:** 588 years

### **Creation and Flood Dates**

**Based on Masoretic Text (Ussher Chronology): - Creation: 4004 BCE - Flood: 2348 BCE**

**Based on Septuagint: - Creation: ~5554 BCE - Flood: ~3298 BCE**

**Difference:** ~1,550 years

### **Which Is Original?**

#### **Arguments for Septuagint's Chronology:**

1. **Ancient Christian scholars** (Eusebius, Julius Africanus, Ephraem of Syria, Jerome) **argued for the LXX chronology**
2. **Early Church used LXX dates**, not MT dates
3. **The pattern of +100 years suggests systematic alteration**—it's more likely the MT **reduced** ages by 100 years than the LXX **added** 100 years

#### **Arguments for Masoretic Chronology:**

1. **Samaritan Pentateuch** (independent tradition) often agrees with MT, not LXX
2. **Consistency:** The MT has fewer apparent inconsistencies
3. **Most conservative scholars favor MT**, though this may be due to tradition (Protestant Bibles use MT)

#### **Archaeological/Scientific Context:**

- **Archaeology and ancient history** support a **longer chronology**
- Egyptian, Mesopotamian, and Chinese civilizations have recorded history extending beyond 4004 BCE
- The Septuagint's dates fit better with ancient Near Eastern chronology

## Why the Difference Matters

### For Young Earth Creationism:

- YEC proponents typically use **Ussher's chronology** (based on MT)
- Claims Earth is ~6,000 years old
- If the **Septuagint is correct**, Earth would be ~7,500 years old (still young, but 1,500 years older)

### For Biblical Inerrancy:

- **If the MT and LXX give different dates, both cannot be correct**
- We must choose which textual tradition is accurate
- **There's no neutral "Scripture alone"—we must pick which Scripture**

### Historical Impact:

- **Early Church dated creation using LXX** (~5500 BCE)
- **Byzantine calendar** (Orthodox Church) uses Anno Mundi 5509 BCE
- **Jewish calendar** (based on MT) uses Anno Mundi 3761 BCE
- **Protestant chronologies** (Ussher, etc.) use MT dates

## The Evidence of Deliberate Alteration

The systematic pattern of +100 years suggests one tradition altered the numbers.

### Three theories:

1. **MT reduced ages by 100 years** to shorten the chronology (possibly to make the timeline fit known history better)
2. **LXX increased ages by 100 years** to lengthen the chronology (possibly to make patriarchs seem more impressive)
3. **Both altered a third, lost tradition** in different ways

**Most scholars lean toward:** The MT **shortened** the chronology, and the LXX preserves older, longer dates.

### Why?

- It's easier to explain a **systematic reduction** (to fit history) than a **systematic inflation** (for no clear reason)
  - The LXX predates the MT by centuries
  - Ancient Christian and Jewish sources testify to different chronologies
- 

## Books in Different Orders and Different Lengths

### Book Order: Masoretic vs. Septuagint

The order of books differs significantly between MT and LXX:

### **Masoretic Text (Jewish Tanakh) Order:**

1. **Torah** (Law): Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy
2. **Nevi'im** (Prophets): Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, The Twelve
3. **Ketuvim** (Writings): Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah, Chronicles

### **Septuagint (Christian Old Testament) Order:**

1. **Law** (Pentateuch): Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy
2. **Historical Books**: Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1-2 Samuel, 1-2 Kings, 1-2 Chronicles, 1-2 Esdras, Nehemiah, Tobit, Judith, Esther, 1-2 Maccabees
3. **Poetic/Wisdom Books**: Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Job, Wisdom, Sirach
4. **Prophetic Books**: Hosea, Amos, Micah, Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Baruch, Lamentations, Epistle of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel (with additions)

### **Significant Differences:**

- **Ruth**: After Judges (LXX) vs. in Writings (MT)
- **Chronicles**: After Kings (LXX) vs. at end of Bible (MT)
- **Daniel**: Among Prophets (LXX) vs. in Writings (MT)
- **Lamentations**: After Jeremiah (LXX) vs. in Writings (MT)

**Christian Old Testament follows Septuagint order, not Masoretic.**

### **Book Length Differences**

#### **1. Jeremiah — 1/8 Shorter in LXX**

**Masoretic Text:** - 52 chapters - **2,700 more words** than LXX

**Septuagint:** - 1/8 shorter - **Different chapter arrangement:** Oracles Against the Nations (MT chapters 46-51) appear after 25:13 in LXX

**Dead Sea Scrolls:** - 4QJer<sup>a,b,d</sup> support the **shorter LXX version** - Proves two versions of Jeremiah coexisted in antiquity

### **Significance:**

- **Two different editions of Jeremiah** existed in Second Temple Judaism
- **Both were considered Scripture**
- We don't know which is "original"

### **Examples of MT Expansions:**

- **Jeremiah 33:14-26** — Absent in LXX (promises about Davidic covenant)
- **Jeremiah 39:4-13** — Shorter in LXX
- **Jeremiah 52** — Entire chapter (about Jerusalem's fall) is shorter in LXX

## 2. Job — 1/6 Shorter in LXX

**Masoretic Text:** - 42 chapters

**Septuagint (Original Translation):** - ~400 lines shorter (about 1/6 of the book)

### **Difference:**

- The LXX translator **simplified and shortened** the book
- Removed repetitious speeches
- Made the poetic Hebrew more accessible for Greek readers

### **Later History:**

- Early Christians recognized the LXX Job was shorter
- **Origen** (3rd century CE) and **Jerome** (4th century CE) added the missing lines back from the Hebrew
- Most modern LXX manuscripts include these additions (marked with asterisks)

### **Significance:**

- Shows the LXX was a **functional translation**, not a wooden literal rendering
- Greek-speaking Jews and early Christians used this **shorter version** for centuries

## 3. Esther — Significant Additions in LXX

**Masoretic Text:** - 10 chapters - No mention of God's name

**Septuagint:** - **Six additional sections** (107 extra verses) - **God is mentioned frequently** - Includes prayers of Mordecai and Esther - Adds details about the king's edicts

### **The Six Additions:**

1. **Mordecai's dream** (before Esther 1)
2. **The edict of Artaxerxes** ordering destruction of Jews (after 3:13)
3. **Prayers of Mordecai and Esther** (after 4:17)
4. **Esther's appearance before the king** (expanded version of 5:1-2)
5. **The edict of Artaxerxes** permitting Jews to defend themselves (after 8:12)
6. **Interpretation of Mordecai's dream** (after 10:3)

### **Significance:**

- The MT version of Esther is strikingly **secular**—God is never mentioned
- The LXX additions make it explicitly **religious**
- Protestant Bibles exclude these additions (following MT)
- Catholic/Orthodox Bibles include them (following LXX)

### **Theological Problem:**

- Is the “real” book of Esther the secular MT version or the religious LXX version?
- They tell somewhat different theological stories

#### 4. Daniel — Three Major Additions in LXX

**Masoretic Text:** - 12 chapters

**Septuagint (and Theodotion):** - Includes three major additional sections:

1. **The Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the Three Young Men** (inserted in Daniel 3)
  - Prayers and hymns sung by Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the fiery furnace
2. **Susanna** (Daniel 13)
  - Story of Susanna accused of adultery, defended by young Daniel
3. **Bel and the Dragon** (Daniel 14)
  - Two stories: Daniel disproves that the idol Bel eats food; Daniel kills a dragon worshiped by Babylonians

**These additions:**

- Were part of the Septuagint Daniel used by early Christians
- Are absent from the Hebrew/Aramaic Daniel in the MT
- Became “Deuterocanonical” (accepted by Catholics/Orthodox, rejected by Protestants)

**Early Church Use:**

- These stories were widely read and influential
- The “Song of the Three Young Men” was used in Christian liturgy
- The story of Susanna was cited by Church Fathers

#### 5. Proverbs — Different Arrangement in LXX

**Masoretic Text chapters 30-31:** - 30: Sayings of Agur - 31: Sayings of King Lemuel, then the “Wife of Noble Character” poem

**Septuagint:** - Chapters 30-31 are **rearranged** - Different order of verses - Some verses in different positions

**Scholarly Assessment:**

- The LXX reflects a **different Hebrew source text** for Proverbs
  - Not a translation issue—the underlying Hebrew was different
- 

## Implications for Sola Scriptura

**Sola Scriptura** (“Scripture Alone”) is the Protestant principle that the Bible is the **sole infallible rule** of faith and practice.

**Martin Luther’s formulation:** > “Unless I am convinced by Scripture and plain reason... my conscience is captive to the Word of God.”

**The Textual Problem:**

## Which Scripture?

### The Fundamental Dilemma

1. If “Scripture Alone” is the authority, which textual tradition is “Scripture”?
  - Septuagint (used by Jesus, apostles, early Church)?
  - Masoretic Text (finalized centuries later by non-Christian Jews)?
  - Dead Sea Scrolls (which show textual diversity)?
2. If the Septuagint and Masoretic Text differ in hundreds of places, including doctrinally significant passages, both cannot be equally “Scripture.”
3. Protestant Bibles use the Masoretic Text for the Old Testament, but the New Testament quotes the Septuagint. This creates internal contradiction.

### Specific Problems for Sola Scriptura

#### Problem 1: The NT Depends on LXX Readings Not in the MT

##### Example: Matthew 1:23 / Isaiah 7:14

- Matthew bases the virgin birth prophecy on the **Septuagint’s “virgin”** (παρθένης)
- The Masoretic Text has “**young woman**” (הַעַלְמָה)
- If the MT is the authoritative Scripture, **Matthew misapplied Isaiah 7:14**
- If the LXX is authoritative, we’re depending on a **translation**, not the “original”

##### Example: Acts 15:17 / Amos 9:12

- James’s argument for including Gentiles **only works** with the Septuagint reading (“humanity seeks the Lord”)
- The Masoretic Text says “**possess Edom**”—militaristic conquest, not Gentile inclusion
- **The entire Jerusalem Council decision** depends on the Septuagint’s wording

##### Example: Hebrews 1:6 / Deuteronomy 32:43

- Hebrews quotes: “Let all God’s angels worship him”
- This phrase **exists in the Septuagint and Dead Sea Scrolls**
- It is **absent from the Masoretic Text**
- **Hebrews is quoting a verse that doesn’t exist in Protestant Old Testaments**

#### Implication:

**To accept the New Testament’s use of the Old Testament, we must accept the Septuagint’s readings—even where they differ from the Masoretic Text.**

**But Protestant Bibles reject the Septuagint in favor of the Masoretic Text.**

**This is internally contradictory.**

## **Problem 2: No Single “Original Text” Exists**

**The Dead Sea Scrolls prove:**

- Multiple textual traditions coexisted in Second Temple Judaism
- No single “pure” Hebrew text existed
- The Masoretic Text is **one tradition among many**

**Emanuel Tov (leading Dead Sea Scrolls scholar):** > “We now know that in the Second Temple period, there was no single Hebrew text that was considered the authoritative version.”

**Implication:**

**There is no “original Hebrew” to which we can appeal.**

**The idea of “Scripture Alone” assumes a stable, known text—but we have multiple competing texts.**

## **Problem 3: Authority Requires Interpretation**

**Even if we could agree on a single text, interpretation varies:**

- Different Christian traditions interpret the same passages differently
- Who has the authority to say which interpretation is correct?
- **“Scripture interprets Scripture”** still requires someone to do the interpreting

**Example: Baptism**

- **Baptists:** Believer’s baptism by immersion only (based on their interpretation)
- **Presbyterians:** Infant baptism by sprinkling is valid (based on their interpretation)
- **Pentecostals:** Baptism in Jesus’ name only, not Trinitarian formula (based on their interpretation)

**All appeal to “Scripture Alone”—yet reach contradictory conclusions.**

**Why?**

Because **“Scripture Alone” cannot function without:** 1. **A tradition** telling you which books are Scripture 2. **An interpretive tradition** telling you what Scripture means 3. **Textual decisions** about which manuscript tradition is authoritative

## **Problem 4: The Canon Itself Requires Extra-Biblical Authority**

**The Bible doesn’t contain a table of contents.**

**Who decided which books are Scripture?**

- Not the Bible itself (it can’t say “these 66 books and no others are canonical”)
- The **Church** decided through councils and consensus
- **Catholics** include Deuterocanonical books (following the Septuagint/early Church usage)
- **Protestants** exclude them (following the later Jewish canon)

### **Martin Luther's Dilemma:**

Luther wanted to remove James, Hebrews, Jude, and Revelation from the New Testament because they contradicted his theology. He called James “an epistle of straw.”

**On what basis did the Protestant church retain these books despite Luther's objections?**

- **Tradition**—the Church had always accepted them
- Not “Scripture Alone”—the disputed books couldn't validate themselves

### **Implication:**

**The canon of Scripture requires an authority outside Scripture to establish it.**

**“Scripture Alone” is logically incoherent without a prior authoritative tradition.**

### **Problem 5: Textual Criticism Requires Scholarly Judgment**

**Every time scholars choose between variant readings, they exercise authority over the text.**

#### **Example: 1 Samuel 13:1**

- The Hebrew text is corrupted/missing numbers
- Translators **insert** numbers (NIV: “thirty...forty-two”)
- Or leave blanks (NRSV: “...years old when he began to reign”)
- **Human judgment** is required—the text doesn't interpret itself

#### **Example: Inclusion of DSS readings**

- Modern Bibles (ESV, NRSV) now include readings from Dead Sea Scrolls when they differ from MT
- **Who decides** which readings to adopt?
- **Scholars**—exercising interpretive authority

### **Implication:**

**“Scripture Alone” cannot exist in practice without human authorities making textual and interpretive decisions.**

## **The Catholic/Orthodox Response**

**Catholic and Orthodox Christians argue:**

1. **Scripture arose from the Church**—the Church existed before the NT was written
2. **The Church determined the canon**—no “Scripture Alone” authority told us which books to include
3. **Scripture must be interpreted by the Church**—Tradition and Magisterium guide understanding
4. **Apostolic succession** provides continuity of authoritative interpretation

**2 Thessalonians 2:15:** “So then, brothers and sisters, stand firm and hold fast to the **traditions** that you were taught by us, either **by word of mouth** or **by our letter.**”

→ Paul affirms **both written and oral tradition**

**2 Peter 1:20-21:** “No prophecy of scripture is a matter of **one’s own interpretation...**”

→ Scripture requires authoritative interpretation

**1 Timothy 3:15:** “The **church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth**”

→ The Church, not Scripture alone, is the pillar of truth

## The Devastating Question

**If Jesus and the apostles used the Septuagint, which includes books Protestants reject and readings that differ from the Masoretic Text, then:**

**Are Protestant Bibles based on the wrong Old Testament?**

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## Implications for Biblical Inerrancy

**Biblical inerrancy** is the doctrine that the Bible, in its original manuscripts, is without error in all it affirms.

**The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy (1978):** > “Being wholly and verbally God-given, Scripture is without error or fault in all its teaching, no less in what it states about God’s acts in creation, about the events of world history, and about its own literary origins under God, than in its witness to God’s saving grace in individual lives.”

**The textual evidence creates severe problems for this doctrine.**

### Problem 1: Which Text Is Inerrant?

**If the Septuagint and Masoretic Text both claim to represent the Hebrew Bible, but they differ in hundreds of places, at most one can be inerrant—or neither.**

**Examples Where They Cannot Both Be Right:**

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Passage	Masoretic Text	Septuagint	Both Inerrant?
Exodus 1:5	70 people	75 people	✗ No
Genesis 5-11	Creation: 4004 BCE	Creation: 5554 BCE	✗ No
1 Samuel 17:4	Goliath: 9’4” “sons of Israel”	Goliath: 6’4” “angels of God”	✗ No ✗ No

Passage	Masoretic Text	Septuagint	Both Inerrant?
Deuteronomy 32:8			
Isaiah 7:14	“young woman”	“virgin”	✗ No

### Evangelical Response:

“Inerrancy applies to the **original autographs** (manuscripts), which we don’t have. The differences are due to copying errors or translation.”

### The Problem with This Response:

1. **We don’t have the “original autographs”**—they’re lost
2. **We can’t verify inerrancy of texts we don’t possess**
3. **The Dead Sea Scrolls show textual diversity existed *before* widespread copying errors**—there never was a single “original” Hebrew text
4. **If we can’t access the inerrant original, inerrancy is functionally useless**—we only have “errant” copies

## Problem 2: Deliberate Alterations Undermine Inerrancy

### The Tiquene Sopherim prove:

- Jewish scribes **deliberately changed** the text for theological reasons
- At least **18 documented alterations**
- If the text was divinely inerrant, **changing it contradicts inerrancy**

### Example: Genesis 18:22

- **Original:** “But YHWH stood before Abraham”
- **Altered:** “But Abraham stood before YHWH”
- The scribes thought the original was **theologically inappropriate**

### Question:

**If the original was inerrant (God-breathed), why did it need correction?**

**If the scribes “corrected” an inerrant text, they introduced error.**

**If the scribes corrected an actual error, the original wasn’t inerrant.**

**Either way, inerrancy fails.**

## Problem 3: Textual Corruptions Are Undeniable

**1 Samuel 13:1** — Numbers missing/corrupted

**The Hebrew text literally says:** “Saul was one year old when he became king, and he reigned two years over Israel.”

**This is nonsensical.**

**Inerrancy Claim:** “The original autograph was inerrant; copying errors introduced the problem.”

**The Problem:** - We don't have the “original” - We can't verify what it said - **All we have is a corrupted text** - If God inspired an inerrant original but allowed it to be lost/corrupted so we can't read it, **what's the practical value of inerrancy?**

## **Problem 4: Internal Contradictions in Numbers**

### **2 Samuel 24:9 vs. 1 Chronicles 21:5**

**2 Samuel 24:9:** “There were in Israel **800,000** valiant men who drew the sword, and the men of Judah were **500,000.**”

**1 Chronicles 21:5:** “In all Israel there were **1,100,000** who drew the sword, and in Judah **470,000** who drew the sword.”

**Both passages describe the same census.**

**Differences:** - Israel: 800,000 (Samuel) vs. 1,100,000 (Chronicles) — **300,000 difference** - Judah: 500,000 (Samuel) vs. 470,000 (Chronicles) — **30,000 difference**

### **Inerrantist Explanations:**

1. **Different counting methods** (one included officers, the other didn't)
2. **Rounding differences**
3. **Partial numbers** (one text gives partial counts)

### **The Problem:**

- These are **ad hoc** explanations without textual evidence
- The simplest explanation: **One or both texts contain errors**
- If we must invent elaborate explanations for every discrepancy, **is the text really “inerrant”?**

### **2 Kings 24:8 vs. 2 Chronicles 36:9 — Jehoiachin's Age**

**2 Kings 24:8:** “Jehoiachin was **eighteen years old** when he became king.”

**2 Chronicles 36:9:** “Jehoiachin was **eight years old** when he became king.”

**Ten-year discrepancy.**

**Which is inerrant?**

## **Problem 5: The New Testament Endorses “Errant” Septuagint Readings**

**If inerrancy requires precision, the New Testament's loose quotations and Septuagint-based readings create problems.**

**Example: Stephen's Speech (Acts 7:14)**

Stephen says **75** people went to Egypt (following the Septuagint).

The Masoretic Text says **70**.

**If the Masoretic Text is correct (70), Stephen was wrong.**

**If Stephen (inspired by the Holy Spirit, Acts 6:10) was right, the Masoretic Text is wrong.**

**You can't have inerrancy in both.**

**Example: Hebrews 1:6**

Hebrews quotes a verse that **doesn't exist in the Masoretic Text** (Deut 32:43 about angels worshipping).

**If Hebrews is inerrant, it's quoting an inerrant text—but that text isn't in the MT.**

**Either:** 1. The Masoretic Text lost an inerrant verse (undermining inerrancy of preservation), or 2. Hebrews is quoting a text that was never part of the original (undermining inerrancy of Hebrews)

## **Problem 6: Inerrancy Creates an Unfalsifiable Claim**

**Karl Popper's criterion:** A claim is scientific/meaningful only if it's **falsifiable**—you could potentially prove it wrong.

**Inerrancy as typically formulated is unfalsifiable:**

**Evangelical Formula:** “The Bible is inerrant in the original autographs.”

**Problem:** - We don't have the original autographs - We can't test them - Any error in existing manuscripts is dismissed as “copying error” - There's no way to **disprove** inerrancy because we can't access the documents claimed to be inerrant

**This makes inerrancy a matter of faith, not demonstrable fact.**

**Example:**

**Skeptic:** “1 Samuel 13:1 is nonsensical—it's an error.”

**Inerrantist:** “The original autograph was correct; this is a copying error.”

**Skeptic:** “Show me the original autograph.”

**Inerrantist:** “We don't have it, but it must have been inerrant.”

**This is circular reasoning—we believe the original was inerrant because we believe in inerrancy.**

## **Alternative Views**

**Infallibility, Not Inerrancy:**

Some evangelicals distinguish between: - **Infallibility**: The Bible is trustworthy and won't lead us astray in matters of faith and practice - **Inerrancy**: The Bible contains no errors of any kind (historical, scientific, numerical)

**Infallibility allows for:** - Minor historical/numerical discrepancies - Different perspectives in parallel accounts - Human limitations in the authors

**While maintaining:** - Theological reliability - Trustworthiness for salvation - Divine inspiration

### **Functional Authority Without Inerrancy:**

Many Christians affirm: - The Bible is **inspired** by God - The Bible is **authoritative** for faith and practice - The Bible **contains** God's Word - **Without claiming** the Bible is inerrant in all details

**This view acknowledges:** - The Bible is a **human product** inspired by God - God worked **through** human authors with their limitations - Textual variants and minor errors don't undermine the Bible's authority - The **message** is preserved even if every detail isn't perfect

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## **Conclusion: Which Scripture Is Scripture?**

### **Summary of Findings**

#### **1. The New Testament Overwhelmingly Used the Septuagint**

- ~2/3 of OT quotations in NT come from the Septuagint
- Jesus and the apostles quoted the LXX even where it differs from the Hebrew
- Key NT theological arguments depend on LXX readings not found in the MT

#### **2. The Septuagint and Masoretic Text Differ Significantly**

- Hundreds of textual variants
- Different book orders and lengths
- 1,386-year chronological difference
- Major doctrinal implications in several passages

#### **3. The Dead Sea Scrolls Support the Septuagint in Many Cases**

- DSS shows textual plurality in Second Temple Judaism
- Often agrees with LXX against MT
- Proves the LXX was translating real Hebrew texts, not making errors

#### **4. The Masoretic Text Contains Deliberate Alterations**

- Tiquene Sopherim: documented scribal "corrections"
- Possible anti-Christian changes (Psalm 22:16, Deut 32:8, etc.)
- Theological motivations influenced textual transmission

#### **5. Significant Textual Corruptions Exist**

- 1 Samuel 13:1: Missing numbers

- Judges 16:13-14: Missing text (preserved in LXX/DSS)
- 1 Samuel 10:27-11:1: Missing paragraph (found in DSS)
- Psalm 145: Missing verse (acrostic incomplete in MT, complete in LXX/DSS)

## **6. Chronological Discrepancies Are Substantial**

- Genesis 5 and 11: 1,386-year difference between MT and LXX
- Creation date: 4004 BCE (MT) vs. 5554 BCE (LXX)
- Early Church used LXX chronology; Protestants use MT chronology

## **The Fundamental Questions**

### **For Protestants Who Hold to Sola Scriptura:**

#### **1. Which Scripture is “Scripture Alone”?**

- The Septuagint (used by Jesus and apostles)?
- The Masoretic Text (basis of Protestant OT)?
- How do you decide?

#### **2. If the NT depends on LXX readings not in the MT, isn’t the MT insufficient?**

#### **3. How can you claim “Scripture Alone” when the canon itself required Church authority to establish?**

### **For Those Who Hold to Biblical Inerrancy:**

#### **1. Which text is inerrant—MT or LXX?**

- They contradict each other in hundreds of places
- Both cannot be inerrant

#### **2. If inerrancy applies only to “original autographs” we don’t have, what’s the practical value?**

#### **3. If scribes deliberately altered the text (Tiqqune Sopherim), how was inerrancy preserved?**

#### **4. If we have demonstrable textual corruptions (1 Sam 13:1, etc.), doesn’t this prove the text isn’t inerrant in its current form?**

## **The Way Forward**

### **Option 1: Accept the Septuagint as Primary**

- Follow the NT’s example
- Use the Bible Jesus used
- Accept the longer chronology, Deuterocanonical books, and LXX readings
- **This is what the Orthodox and Catholic churches do**

### **Option 2: Accept Textual Plurality**

- Recognize that multiple textual traditions existed

- Use critical editions that weigh variants
- Don't claim one tradition is "THE original"
- Be humble about textual uncertainties
- **This is what most academic biblical scholars do**

### **Option 3: Acknowledge Limitations of Sola Scriptura and Inerrancy**

- Admit that "Scripture Alone" requires interpretive tradition
- Recognize that inerrancy is an unverifiable claim about lost documents
- Affirm the Bible's authority and inspiration without claiming perfection
- **This is where many evangelical scholars are moving**

### **Option 4: Maintain Traditional Views Despite Evidence**

- Continue using the Masoretic Text
- Explain away contradictions as "copyist errors"
- Assert faith in the "original autographs"
- Defend inerrancy as a theological commitment regardless of textual evidence
- **This is where conservative evangelicals remain**

## **Final Observation**

**The textual evidence demonstrates:**

1. **There is no single, pure "original Hebrew Bible"**
2. **Multiple textual traditions coexisted and were considered authoritative**
3. **The New Testament authors used and endorsed the Septuagint**
4. **The Masoretic Text is a late, edited, standardized version—not the pristine original**
5. **Deliberate alterations and textual corruptions occurred**
6. **Doctrines like Sola Scriptura and inerrancy are difficult to sustain given textual realities**

**The choice is:**

- **Acknowledge these realities** and adjust theological positions accordingly
- **Ignore or explain away** the evidence to maintain traditional doctrines

**But one thing is clear:**

**The confident assertion "The Bible says..." becomes far more complex when we ask: "Which Bible? Which manuscript tradition? Which reading?"**

**And that complexity demands humility, not certainty.**

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## **Selected Bibliography**

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- **Masoretic Text (MT)** — Hebrew Bible, finalized 7th-10th century CE

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**Document prepared for critical examination of biblical textual traditions and their implications for Protestant theological doctrines.**