

Myths, Genealogies, and Scripture Alone

1 Timothy

1Tim 1:1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope,

² To Timothy, my true child in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

³ As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus so that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine,

⁴ nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith.

⁵ The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.

⁶ Certain persons, by swerving from these, have wandered away into vain discussion,

⁷ desiring to be teachers of the law, without understanding either what they are saying or the things about which they make confident assertions.

(1:1-7, cf. 4:6-7)

Myth: A Four-Letter Word?

To modern people, especially many Christians, one of the **worst four-letter words** you can speak aloud is the word “**myth**.”¹ Using this word positively could easily result an unwanted diatribe in a chat room, a punch in the nose from

¹ On the demythologizing of Scripture from an Evangelical see **van Gemeren** (1981).

a friend, or a Christian being kicked out of their church. **What is a myth?** I think most conservative people would say that they are those “silly stories” of the old pagan world, rooted in pseudo-history, inaccuracy, make-believe, satanic lies, untruths, and deception. These are stories deliberately told to lead people away from the truth.² I suspect the some of the same people would probably love to have that discussion with you right after they finish watching *Avengers: Endgame* for the 27th time.

Do you know anyone who refused to take an elective on Greek mythology because it was dumb make-believe? I’ll raise my hand not as someone who heard of someone else, but as that person himself. Have you heard of some homeschoolers never taking such a class because it is evil? Have you ever heard someone say that anyone who believes in myth is a Liberal who denies the truth and history of God’s word?

The Apostle **Paul uses this word (*mythos*) negatively** four times, all in the pastoral letters. The first time he uses it is at the very beginning of 1 Timothy, our passage today. **Peter also** uses the word negatively, thus rounding out the total usage of the word in the Bible (five times) as all something to stay away from. Our passage is **a warning to Timothy**, the

² For a series of books on how this could actually be the case, but in a way most have never considered, see **Johnson** (2002, 2003, 2004, 2007).

elder at Ephesus, about **false teachers** in his church. He skips the usual niceties at the beginning of most of his letters and moves straight to the point—an urgent plea for Timothy to remember. “As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus so that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine, nor to devote themselves *to myths...*” (1Tim 1:3-4). Hearing this in the context I just provided, it is quite natural that we would **read our understanding of myth into Paul and Peter**. But is our understanding really what they had in mind?

Let’s look at some **modern thinkers on myth**. Bruce Lincoln gives what I think is a good working definition of myth as most people think of it today. “**Myth most precisely signifies, in its pejorative and condescending usage, a story that members of some other social group (or past era) regard(ed) as true and authoritative, but that the speaker and members of her or his group regard as false.**”³ This is an interesting definition to me. Notice that he is defining **its negative understanding**; it is the modern definition of myth *viewed negatively*. In it, he brings out a kind of **chronological snobbery**, as C. S. Lewis might put it (Lincoln calls it “self-serving” “Eurocentered”) that we moderns have about the past. We are scientifically advanced,

³ **Bruce Lincoln**, *Discourse and the Construction of Society: Comparative Studies of Myth, Ritual, and Classification* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 24.

rational, enlightened, evolved people who know better than our superstitious ancestors prone to pseudoscience and storytelling. We know better than they do, as we munch our popcorn to *The Lord of the Rings*.

But things get more complicated when you start looking at what people who have studied myth say. For example, **Sallustius**, the 4th century Roman historian and mystic said, “**Myths are things that never happened but always are.**” **Phil Cousineau**, a modern filmmaker said, “**Myths are lies that tell the truth.**” He is riffing off his mentor **Joseph Campbell**, the famous professor of literature, comparative mythology and religion about whom he did a documentary. Campbell said, “**Myth is much more important and true than history. History is just journalism, and you know how reliable that is.**” These men seem to **agree** that myths are not actual history, but they **disagree** that their purpose is to deceive. Rather, they see myths metaphorically, like allegories for “deeper” or “hidden” truths. Instead of taking them at face value, they seem to me to be looking at myth the way a Gnostic might have done in the elder world of the early church. And many scholars think this is precisely what Paul and Peter are talking about in their use of myth. But are they?

C. S. Lewis was of perhaps a more skeptical opinion about myth when he told Tolkien one night that myths were “lies, even though lies breathed through silver.” Tolkien responded emphatically, ‘No. They are not.’ Rather, they are the best way of conveying truths which would otherwise be inexpressible. Their lengthy conversation was the final straw that God used to break the Lewis’ pride, who would within the month convert, famously calling Christianity was the “true myth.”⁴ Lewis was learning nothing that wasn’t taught in the early church when Clement of Alexandria wrote, “Hear a story that is no mere story [lit: *akouson mython, ou mython*], but a true account of John the Apostle that has been handed down and preserved in memory” (Clement of Alexandria, *Rich Man’s Salvation* 42).⁵

Yes, “truth” and “myth” can come together, not just allegorically, but historically. Many people have pointed out that Genesis 1-11 is mythical literature. This makes many angry, because they think this means it is untrue (and for some who say this, they probably also think that). But

⁴ The discussion with Tolkien took place on Sept 19, 1931. He wrote to his friend Arthur Greeves about the true myth on Oct 18 of that same year. To read the whole story online see [Socrates58](http://sullivanfiles.net/lewis/mythastruth.pdf), “Myth-as-True, J.R.R. Tolkien, and the Conversion of C.S. Lewis,” (2004), <http://sullivanfiles.net/lewis/mythastruth.pdf>.

⁵ In Martin Dibelius and Hans Conzelmann, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, Hermeneia—a Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972), 16.

Francis Schaeffer understood and said (of the Genesis 6:4 nephilim story), “More and more we are finding that mythology in general, though greatly contorted, very often has some historic base.”⁶ Can a myth really be true? The city of Troy is one of the mythical cities in the poems of Homer. For thousands of years some people said everything in those stories was made up fantasy, including the places. *The Odyssey* might as well have been *Star Wars*, and Troy might as well have been Tatooine. Everyone knows the Greek poets were just spinning a yarn. Then, in the 1860s, taking Homer at his word, someone dug it up. Troy was a real place! The myth became historical geography.

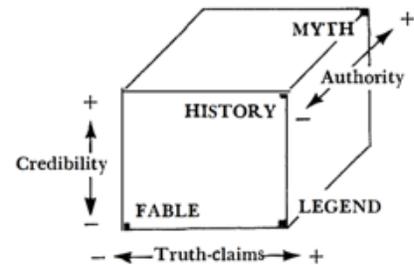
Understanding that myths can actually be true, one scholar has done a taxonomy of the truth-claims that come to us in narrative form (see chart below). This taxonomy is *not* based on what *we think* of their claims, nor of any one stories actual historical reliability, but merely on what they themselves claim to be. **Fables** are stories that make no truth-claim at all and are accepted as pure fiction. Think of Aesop telling you about rabbits and turtles talking to each other. **Legends** are stories that make truth-claims, but lack credibility. Paul Bunyan and his ox Babe is a good example.

⁶ Francis Schaeffer, “Genesis in Space and Time,” in *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer: A Christian Worldview* (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1996), p. 89.

History is a story that makes truth-claims and is credible. **Myths** are stories *that make truth-claims, are credible, and authoritative* to a community, making them, by their own count, exactly the opposite of what modern people think.⁷

	<i>Truth-claims</i>	<i>Credibility</i>	<i>Authority</i>
Fable	-	-	-
Legend	+	-	-
History	+	+	-
Myth	+	+	+

Figure 1.3. Classification of narratives.



Again, that **doesn't mean that all myths are historically true**, but this leads us nicely to begin considering exactly what it is that Paul and Peter are actually talking about. For you need to understand something about both men that we learn about in the very letters where they discuss myth as negative. Peter, like Francis Schaeffer, alludes to the myth of the **nephilim and angels as being true** in the same letter where he warns about myths (**1Pe 3**; **2Pe 2**). Paul tells Timothy in the same letter that these misguided men in his church who spun myths were exactly like **Jannes and Jambres** who opposed Moses (**2Ti 3:8**). The thing is, the Bible doesn't tell us about Jannes and Jambres. You must go

⁷ These is Lincoln's Taxonomy of Narratives from *Discourse*, 25. I was led to Lincoln from a reproduction of the chart in **Steve Friesen**, "Myth and Symbolic Resistance in Revelation 13," *JBL* 123/2 (2004): 295

to extrabiblical literature like the targums or mythic literature like the Testament of Solomon to learn the names of these Egyptian magicians. So how could both Paul and Peter speak negatively of myths and yet literally use “myths” in the very same letters if they meant that all myth is evil? Clearly, this is not what they are talking about.

Myths: Their Proper Context in Paul and Peter

What I want to do today is look at the context of these “myths” first in our passage, and then in the parallels in the Pastorals and in Peter. Doing this will show us that the myths being spun had **a very specific effect upon the church**, and that effect was not that people learned the history of the Greeks in some ancient version of Sunday School. There is something **much more sinister** happening here. From there, I want to move to **a parallel word** used by Paul that, as one dictionary puts it, “**cannot be separated**” from myth in this context.⁸ Then we will try to make sense of what might possibly have been happening at Ephesus (and nearby cities) that aroused the ire of the Apostles. This will lead us to the

⁸ **Friedrich Büchsel**, “Γενεά, Γενεαλογία, Γενεαλογέω, Ἀγενεαλόητος,” ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–), 664.

practical reasons why it was such an important topic and why its proper understanding today is just as important.

As we saw last week, it is clear when reading through Timothy that there was **some kind of heresy** being taught. Paul even called it *heterodoxy* in **1Tim 1:3**. Getting a handle on what it was is a major step towards understanding what is meant by “myth.” But doing that is **easier said than done**.

One study of the Letter has put together a **nice chart** summarizing what we can know for certain. We learn that it is “**another teaching**” using “**myths and genealogies**” and “**speculations**” that were nothing but “**empty**” “**worthless talk,**” and “**disputes about words.**” It was “**false knowledge**” somehow related to “**deceitful spirits and demonic teachings**” being taught by men whose “**consciences are seared**” and have “**depraved minds.**” It was a “**form of godliness, but denying its power**” that cause some to “**shipwreck their faith,**” “**wander from the faith,**” “**go astray from the faith,**” and “**turn away from listening to the truth.**” It seems that the teaching, coming through the stories, was being used to somehow coerce the Christians into an **ascetic lifestyle** (“**forbidding marriage**” and “**requiring abstinence of foods**”) and, I would add to his list, they were **attacking**

the Gospel, especially the pre-existence, incarnation, resurrection, and ascension of Christ.

Heresy in the Pastorals? ⁹		
Passage	Text	Translation
1 Tim 1:3; 6:3	heterodidaskalein; heterodidaskalei	to give another teaching
1 Tim 1:4; 4:7; 2 Tim 4: 4	mythois kai genealogiais	myths and genealogies
1 Tim 1:4; 6:4; 2 Tim 2:23	ekzētēseis, zētēsis	speculations/ controversy
1 Tim 1:6; 6:4, 20; 2 Tim 2:14, 16; 23-24	mataiologian; logomachias; bebēlous kenophōnias	Empty talk; dispute about words; worthless talk
1 Tim 6:20; cf. 1 Tim 1:7; 2 Tim 3:7	pseudōnymou gnōseōs	False knowledge
1 Tim 4:1	prosechontes pneumasin planois kai didaskaliais diamoniōn	Holding to deceitful spirits and demonic teachings
1 Tim 4:2; 2 Tim 3:8	kekaustēriasmenōn tēn idian suneidēsin; katephtharmenoi ton noun	Whose consciences are seared; men of depraved mind
1 Tim 4:3, 8	kōluontōn gamein, apechesthai brōmatōn; sōmatikē gumnasia	Forbidding marriage, requiring abstinence of foods; bodily training
1 Tim 1:19; 6:10, 21; 2 Tim 2:18; 4:4	peri tēn pistin enauagēsan; apeplanēthēsan apo tēs pisteōs; peri tēn pistin ēstochēsan	Shipwrecked their faith; wandered from the faith; gone astray from the faith; turn away from listening to the truth
2 Tim 3:5	echontes morphōsin eusebeias tēn de dunamin autēs ērnēmenoi	Having a form of godliness but denying its power
1 Tim 3:16		Revealed in the flesh, vindicated in the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory.

⁹ Chart modified from **Hughson Ong**, “Is There a Heresy in the Pastorals? A Sociolinguistic Analysis of 1 and 2 Timothy via the Ethnography of Communication Theory,” *Paul and Gnosis* (0AD): 121.

https://www.academia.edu/27155290/Is_There_a_Heresy_in_the_Pastorals_A_Sociolinguistic_Analysis_of_1_and_2_Timothy_via_the_Ethnography_of_Communication_Theory. The last line is my own, though I think we could add many more positively related ideas about the Gospel that is also found in these letters.

The important thing to notice is that the **myths were being used to destroy people’s faith** by giving a gospel that was in fact no gospel at all. If you don’t understand that, then you have not taken the first step towards understanding what the Apostle might be talking about. But we can say more. If we go to **the five places where “myth” is used** in the Bible, we can note **specifics** from the context and gather details regarding what this destroyed faith was doing to the church (the following is a discussion of my chart below).

The Negative Use of “Myth” and “Genealogy” in the NT			
Passage	Content	Context	Created
1Ti 1:3-7	“myths and genealogies”	“vain discussion” “speculations” “teachers of the law”	Not stewardship Not love Not a pure heart Not a good conscience Not a sincere faith
1Ti 4:6-7	“myths”	“Irreverent” and “silly”	Not training for godliness Bad doctrine
2Ti 4:3-4	“myths”	“itching ears” “teachers to suit their own passions”	Not endure sound doctrine Not listening to the truth
Tit 1:13-16	“myths”	“Jewish” “turn away from the truth”	Not sound in the faith Defiled, unbelieving, impure Profess God, deny him by works
2Pe 1:16	“myths”	Cleverly devised	The power and coming of our Lord Jesus, eyewitnesses to his majesty.
Tit 3:8-10	“genealogies”	Foolish controversies Quarrels about the law	Seem to attack gospel (3-7) No good works Dissensions Division

Because of what is said, let's begin in with **1Tim 4:6-7**. Here Paul describes the myths as being “irreverent” and “silly.” This verse is often used by those who do not understand myth, as if it is the only thing we need to know, which suits many well, since this is precisely what they think about the myths of the world. The word for “silly” is a rather strange translation of what is literally translated as something like “fit only for old women” (NAS), which means something that entertains the mind of a busybody or gossip (cf. **1Tim 5:13**).

The word “irreverent” (*bebēlos*) is also translated as “worldly” (NAS) or “profane” (KJV) or “godless” (NIV). It is found in **Lev 10:10 LXX** where it says, “You are to distinguish between the sacred and the *profane*, between the unclean and the clean.” It is tempting here to think that this would simply refer to the stories of the pagans. But I don't think so.

Let's add to this, beginning with our passage. Paul refers to these “myths” as “vain discussions” and “speculations” coming from “*teachers of the law*.” Importantly, “teachers of the law” is found elsewhere only as a designation that referred to the Jewish scribes and Pharisees (**Luke 5:17**) and to Paul's own mentor, the famous Rabbi Gamaliel (**Acts**

5:34; 22:3). Titus has a parallel to this. In this letter, Paul calls them “*Jewish* myths” that “cause people to turn from the truth” (Tit 1:14). It is because of this that I do not think that Paul is primarily talking about stories like Zeus or Apollo or Diana. Rather, he is talking about *biblical* stories, known and loved by all Jews, and at least some of these were *profaning the sacred*, turning the story into something common rather than holy, or perhaps natural rather than supernatural. Right now, that might not make a lot of sense, but I think it will shortly.

Let’s turn to *Peter* for a moment. He says that the myths are “*cleverly devised*.” In other words, it seems that a *biblical story was somehow twisted* for a very wicked purpose. It is these *new* stories, not the old ones, that were untrue. Add to this that the Jews were somehow directly involved in these myths, and it comes as no surprise that many commentators run to the extra-biblical literature like Enoch or Jubilees and begin bashing them into a bloody pulp. “*These*,” they say, “*are the wicked stories of the Jews that pervert the true stories found in the Bible. These are the myths they foisted on the churches.*” While it is true that there are elements in them that could be used this way,¹⁰

¹⁰ For example, the genealogy from Shem to Abraham in Jubilees gives ages that more closely resemble those of the Masoretic Text rather than the LXX. But we have not yet come to this

having read nearly all of these books, I highly doubt that most who say such things have ever actually read them, and if they knew anything at all about the vast majority of them, they would know that it was Christians who preserved them for us and used them ... to tell people about Jesus! Besides, what authority would those have had in the church?

As a kind of aside, it is frustrating to me that modern conservative Christianity has created a **phobia** around reading ancient extra-biblical literature, as if any book written in the ancient world not found in the Bible is therefore evil and of the devil. It's even worse that Paul and Peter are used as proof-texts! As I said, Paul himself is using something like the Testament of Solomon, hardly a Christian book and completely mythical at that, in this very letter to Timothy! And Peter is virtually paralleling Jude who uses 1 Enoch no less than a dozen times, all positively. Unless they were flat-out **Gnostic retellings** of the biblical story, which absolutely happened (though long after the NT was completed), ancient Christians usually held the Apocrypha and most of the Pseudepigrapha (both OT and NT) in high regard. As Luther himself said about the Apocrypha in his German translation of the Bible, "**These**

discussion. See Smith (2018). Also, the stories that crop up in the book could have been used by the Jews to undermine Christianity. But it is not necessary that they did so!

books are not held equal to the Scriptures, but are useful and good to read.”¹¹ That includes “myths” like Bel and the Dragon!

But let’s look at **what these myths were cleverly devised to do**. That’s the key. In Peter’s context, like I believe is implicit in Paul, he says that they were causing people to deny “**the power and coming of our Lord Jesus**” even though he and the Apostles were “**eyewitnesses to his majesty**.” These stories somehow perverted the truth about the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

But these stories were also causing serious **ethical problems** in the churches. People were sinning against one another *because of these stories!* As people are lead *away* from the Faith, they are led *into* sin. I’ve honestly never heard a story about Hermes or Osiris that did that, mostly because why would anyone ever take them that way?

But why would this happen? Because, Paul says, they have “**itching ears**” and they gather around them “**teachers to suit their own passions**.” What were those passions? **Hatred, dissensions, division**, not enduring sound doctrine.

¹¹ Or as the Muratorian Fragment that we looked at last time puts it, “**They ought to be read, but not publicly to the people in church**.” This, of course, doesn’t mean that Luther and others weren’t susceptible to the same phobia we are today. Indeed, he and others sometimes did not know what they were talking about when they spoke of the and called them “**mad fools**.” See **Douglas Van Dorn**, *Giants: Sons of the Gods* (Erie, CO: Waters of Creation Pub., 2013), 10-11 and especially n. 26.

It stemmed from **impure hearts, guilty consciences, insincere faith, lack of godliness, defiled, unbelieving, impure people**. They used myths and quarrels about the law to advance their wicked behavior. That's extremely serious.

Myth and Genealogy Go Together

Exactly what kind of a story could lead to this? In my opinion, it would have to involve **a biblical story**, not a made-up story, not a pagan story, a biblical story that was deliberately tampered with, a story coming from the OT itself, but which was being recast to throw doubt and **suspicion on Jesus of Nazareth**. Nothing else could possibly have the authority to sway people *in the church* into this kind of sacrilege and disobedience. Not Enoch or Jubilees. Not the Testament of Solomon. Certainly not the stories of the Greeks or Egyptians or Babylonians! What authority could they possibly have had?

Other than the Jewish pseudepigrapha, which are often brought up as possibilities and which I've already suggested are at best only tangentially what the Apostles are talking about, the other common suggestion is **Gnostic retellings of Jesus and the Apostles**. Fact is, there are a lot of these books

out there. There is a whole library full of them that was discovered in the 1940s in Egypt that we now know much about. The problem is, none of these books were around when Paul was writing to Timothy. That doesn't mean that *seeds* of those stories couldn't have been around. It is certainly possible that they were already starting to evolve, and I won't discount that.

But a few years ago, I was alerted to a view that I've come to learn many since the very **earliest days of Christianity believed**, but I've never seen a single commentary on Timothy discuss. It makes a lot of sense in answer to this question. To me, it makes more sense than anything else I've heard. To get at it, I want to call our attention to **that other word** that cannot be separated from myths. This is the word "**genealogy**." This word is only found **four times in the NT**. Once in **Matthew**, as he introduces, curiously enough, the genealogy of Jesus (**Matt 1:1**), meaning that, like myths, genealogies are not necessarily evil (a point that should be self-evident). **Two times Paul** uses it in the Pastorals. Once he tells Titus to "**avoid foolish controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels about the law**" (**Tit 3:9**). Here, the genealogies are attached to "**quarrels about the law**." We find the same thing

in the reference in Timothy. The people devoting themselves to “*myths and endless genealogies*” (there’s the direct connection to “myths”) were causing speculation about “*the law*” (1Tim 1:7).

What law? Clearly, that law must have something to do with the moral law of God, because the stories were causing the church to forsake this. I think we see something of this today when people say, “*We aren’t under law, but grace,*” and use this as a way to justify all kinds of sins. They also do it by reinterpreting NT passages commanding certain people to do certain things, by saying, “*That was just their culture.*” So we can see that such things can, have, and do happen still.

But “*the law*” can also refer to *the books of Moses*, including Genesis. Jesus refers to “*the Law and the Prophets*” (cf. Matt 5:17) but also calls this “*Moses and the Prophets*” (cf. Luke 16:29). In other words, they may have been *tampering* not just with the *theology* surrounding the moral law, but *with stories that uphold and support it*, stories such as Eden, the Nephilim, the Flood, the Tower of Babel, or stories having to do with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and so on. This is where the term “genealogy” becomes, I believe,

so important to see with “myth.” Is there a way that genealogies and myths might go together?

Yes. **Gnostics were prone to doing this** with the early history of Genesis, retelling the story of Adam and Eve or Cain and Abel and so on in completely perverted ways that allowed them to reveal the “*hidden*” mysteries of the Bible. But again, that was much later, and while that could have been happening as early as someone like Simon Magus (see **Acts 8:9-24**), one of the main fathers of radical Gnosticism, there is another kind of story, one that is much more subtle than the obvious perverted nonsense of many Gnostics.

Myth and Genealogy: A Case Study of Melchizedek and Shem

To introduce this, let’s consider the fourth and final time that “genealogy” is used in the NT. It surrounds a certain individual from Genesis named **Melchizedek**. Melchizedek was the King of Salem (before it was Jerusalem), in the days of Abram (before he was Abraham). He was such a significant person that Abram gives him a tenth of all that he has. In fact, Hebrews calls Melchizedek Abrahams’ superior, which is saying something considering that Abraham was considered the most “superior” person in the OT by the

Pharisees ([John 8:53](#)). Like Christ, this Melchizedek (meaning “King of Righteousness”) was both a king and a priest.

Hebrews discusses him in some rather extraordinary ways. It says he is “without father or mother,” that he had “neither beginning of days nor end of life” ([Heb 7:3](#)). It strangely says, in fact it says this over and over, that he continues a priest forever ([3, 8, 16](#); cf. [5:6, 6:20; 7:24](#)). And it says this in the context of his, presumably, being “immortal” ([7:8](#)).

All of this led to some fascinating speculation about Melchizedek that we find throughout the Dead Sea Scrolls. Sometimes he is presented as one of the chief angels around Yahweh’s throne in the divine council ([4Q401 11 3](#)). In one of the texts ([4Q Visions of Amram^b](#)), he is said to have three names which are: Michael, Prince of Light, and Melchizedek. In another ([11QMelch II, 10](#)), he becomes the “Elohim” of [Psalm 82](#), which Jesus applies to himself ([John 10:34](#)). In still another, “Instead of reading ‘the year of the LORD’s favor,’ which is the way [Isa 61:2](#) reads, the text ... reads ‘the year of Melchizedek’s favor.’” ([11Q13 Col. ii:9](#)).¹²

¹² [Craig A. Evans](#), *NT306 The Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament*, Logos Mobile Education (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2014). I don’t remember if he discusses this directly or not here, but you can listen to Dr. Evans talking about Melchizedek on “Hebrews: A Superior

These are deeply Messianic passages that are now linked to Melchizedek. And, like Jesus, who wins a great victory over Satan in **Heb 2:14-15**, Melchizedek is seen as a heavenly warrior to fight and defeats Belial at the end of the age.¹³

It is into this **supernatural context** that Hebrews uses the word “**genealogy**.” It is found immediately after Melchizedek having no father or mother ... *or genealogy*. This is the fourth and last time the word is found in the NT. I take Hebrews at its word, not as saying that Genesis doesn't mention his genealogy, but that he literally doesn't have one! Contrast Melchizedek being *without* genealogy to Paul saying that these false teachers in Ephesus were *fixated* on genealogies and myths.

Now we are prepared for **the real bombshell**. Who was Melchizedek? Based on a face-value reading of him being without father or mother, without genealogy, without end of days or beginning of life, immortal, and continuing as priest forever, I believe Hebrews is arguing that he was a heavenly being. At the very least, he is **a type of Christ** to come in this sense. But possibly, Melchizedek is the Angel of the LORD, the Second Person of the Trinity *preincarnate*.

Covenant,” *White Horse Inn* (Feb 8, 2015), <https://www.whitehorseinn.org/component/tags/tag/2-hebrews>.

¹³ See my sermon on Hebrew 7:1-10—“Melchizedek the Mystery Man” for more.

Jesus would “resemble” him in that he is the Incarnate Second Person of the Trinity, but *now with human flesh*. These ideas certainly fit with the Dead Sea views, but more, they demonstrate that whichever way you take it, this man is vitally important to Jesus Christ and his High Priesthood.

However, at some point in time, another explanation arose among the Rabbis. That was that **Melchizedek was perfectly human** and was in fact the son of Noah, **Shem**, from whom their race traces their ancestry.¹⁴ Targum

¹⁴ **Going Deeper.** While my original source for this idea was the following video [**Nathan Hoffman**, “Where the Pyramids Built Before the Flood? (Masoretic Text vs. Original Hebrew),” *YouTube* (May 28, 2017), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V11yRTC6kGE>], I stumbled across another video [**Rob Carter** and Lita Cosner, “Were the Pyramids Built Before the Flood? Deciphering Biblical Chronology,” *Creation Ministries International* (Nov 12, 2020), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rhswjNhwpz0>] discussing the same textual variants. They seemed to be aware of the first video and suggested that he was wrong, that in fact the Masoretic text was the original. Their arguments seemed quite weak to me, but I decided to do some more research.

I then found a scholar who argues *persuasively* that in fact the first video was right, the Jewish Scribes post-70 AD tampered with the text. He called it “**deliberate chronological deflation in the proto-Masoretic Hebrew text by the Jewish rabbis in the post-AD 70 period**” (p. 122). Although he seems unaware of the “Shem” reason for the tampering, he absolutely recognizes that the Rabbis did this because of Jesus, see p. 122). See **Henry B. Smith Jr.**, “The Case for the Septuagint’s Chronology in Genesis 5 and 11,” *The Proceedings of the International Conference on Creationism*, ed. **J.H. Witmore**, 8.48 (2018): 117-132. For the first to argue that the Jews tampered with the text and that the LXX was reflecting the original, see **Eusebius**, *Chronicle* 23-29, <https://web.archive.org/web/20120910234646/http://rbedrosian.com/euseb7.htm>. For a detailed history showing that most Church Fathers sided with the LXX see **William Hales**, *A New Analysis of Chronology and Geography, History, and Prophecy* vol. 1. (London: C.J.G and F. Rivington, 1830), 211-14, https://www.google.com/books/edition/Chronology_and_geography/aNfVAAAAMAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=Hales+A+New+Analysis+of+Chronology+and+Geography,+History+and+Prophecy&printsec=frontcover. For various charts, including a comparison of Jubilees with the Masoretic, SP, and LXX see **Henry B. Smith Jr.**, “MT, SP, or LXX? Deciphering a chronological and Textual Conundrum in Genesis 5,” *Bible and Spade* 31:1 (2018): 18-27, esp. Table 4 p. 25, <https://biblearchaeology.org/images/Genesis-5-and-11/Smith-Henry-Winter->

Neofiti for example says, “And Melchizedek, the king of Jerusalem, *who was the great Shem...*” (Gen 14:18 tg.nf.). Importantly, this means that Melchizedek in fact *does* have a genealogy, but that’s contrary to Hebrews. James Kugel explains, “This identification—while probably of ancient origin—must have helped to ‘domesticate’ Melchizedek in the face of some of the claims made regarding his true identity.”¹⁵ I fully agree.

Now, long ago, Jerome said, “The [Jews] say that [Melchizedek] was Shem, Noah’s son, and counting up the total years of his lifetime [600 hundred years, according to Gen 11:11] they demonstrate that he would have lived up to [the time of] Isaac [and so certainly could have encountered Abraham in Gen 14:18-21] (Jerome, *Questions in Genesis*, Gen 14:18). If you pull out your Bible and start adding up all the years between Shem and Abraham, you will **most likely** see that this agrees with what the Jews are saying. In fact, you will see that Noah himself dies only 2

[2018-BAS_MT-SP-or-LXX.pdf](#). Also taking the view that Gen 11 is a Masoretic corruption see Benjamin Shaw, The Genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11 and Their significance for Chronology, Dissertation to Bob Jones (2004). https://www.academia.edu/3525606/Genealogies_of_Genesis_5_and_11_and_Their_Significance_for_Chronology.

¹⁵ James L. Kugel, *Traditions of the Bible: A Guide to the Bible As It Was at the Start of the Common Era* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 284.

years before Abram is born, while Shem lives all the way into the days of Isaac.

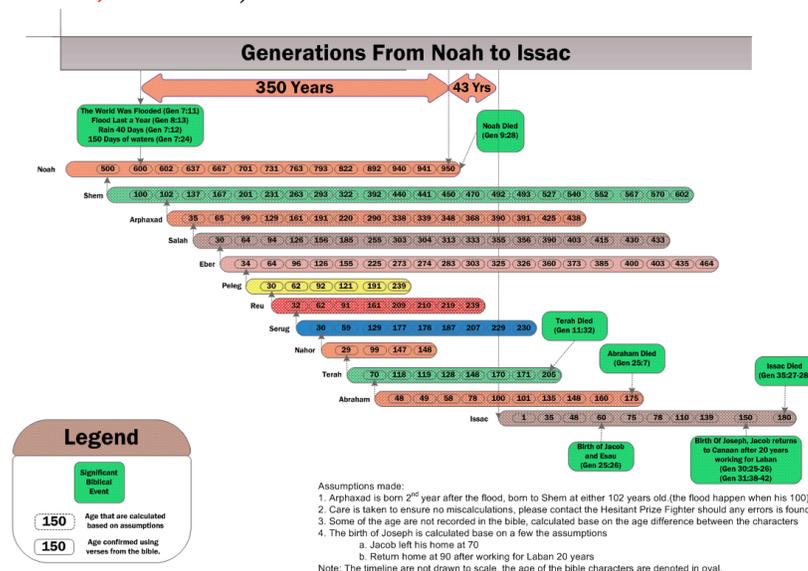
CHRONOLOGY CHART FROM ADAM TO ABRAHAM
Lifespan of the Biblical Patriarchs

YEARS FROM CREATION	LIFESPAN	YEARS FROM CREATION
0	930	930
130	912	1042
235	905	1140
325	910	1235
395	895	1290
460	962	1422
622	365	987
687	969	1656
874	777	1651
	1056	950
		2006
	1558	600
		2158
	1658	438
		2096
	1693	433
		2126
	1723	461
		2187
	1757	239
		1996
	1787	239
		2026
	1819	230
		2049
	1849	148
		1997
	1878	205
		2083
	2008	175
		2183

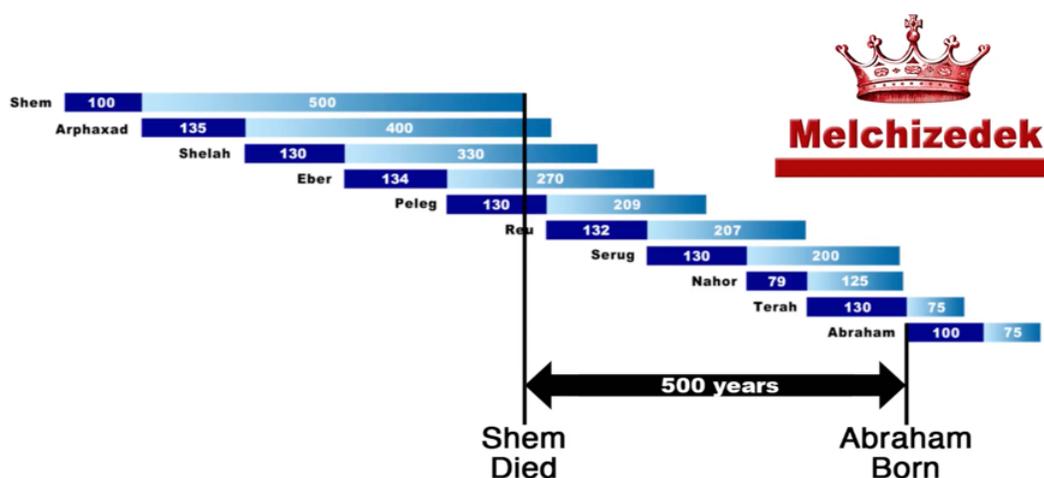
ConformingToJesus.com

Not to beat a dead horse, but again we are dealing here with *genealogies*.¹⁶ Now, I just said, “most likely.” This is because you may be reading the LXX. Did you know that

¹⁶ It is worth noting that some charts put Noah himself living well into Abraham’s life (see below). However, this is based on a misunderstanding that Abram was born in the 70th year of Terah’s life (Gen 11:26), when it was actually at least the 130th year, according to Stephen (Gen 11:32; Acts 7:4).



for nearly 2,000 years there have been **competing numbers for these genealogies**? What I mean is that the LXX has 650 more years than the Masoretic text! Upon this reading, it becomes immediately clear that **Shem died hundreds of years before Abraham was born** and therefore could not possibly have been Melchizedek, meaning that if the LXX is correct, so also can Hebrews be correct. Mel. has no genealogy.



LXX Genealogy of Shem – Abram

How could it possibly be that we have two different manuscript traditions that are so far apart on the numbers? Did God not preserve his Scripture for us? Is the Bible hopelessly unreliable? No. **Someone deliberately tampered with the text**, and it is easily provable, meaning that we can be certain what the original said. Long ago, **Eusebius** the historian explained, **“We suspect that this was something which the Jews did. They made bold to shorten the time**

before the fathering of children to encourage early marriages. For if these ancestors lived such long lives, marrying early and fathering children early as their version clearly states, who would not want to emulate them by marrying early?” (Eusebius [260-340 AD], *Chronicle* 25). But others, in fact many others in the early church (see n. 16), categorically stated that they **deliberately tampered with the text because of Jesus**. Smith explains,

Why would the rabbis deflate the primeval chronology by 1250 years? Chronological speculations and calculations pertaining to the time of the **messiah's arrival** (messianic chronology) were widespread in Second Temple Judaism. Messianic chronologies were connected to the prophecy of Daniel 9:24–27 and closely associated with **the days of Creation**, with each day symbolizing 1000 years of world history. In some schemes, the messiah would arrive in the 6th millennium from creation, and usher in the kingdom in the 7th millennium. Other schemes held that the Messiah would arrive in/around the year AM 4000, an idea later repeated in the rabbinic Babylonian Talmud.

The rabbinic world chronology in the *Seder Olam Rabbah* (ca. AD 140–160), based on the MT, dates Creation to 3761 BC, placing the arrival of the Messiah to around AD 240 ... The *Seder Olam* was developed and written by the very same

rabbis who deflated the MT's numbers in Gen 5/11 to discredit Jesus and the ascending Church. Simply stated, the rabbinic date of Creation derived from the authoritative Seder Olam places Jesus' life too soon for him to be the Messiah.¹⁷

At the end of the day, it was a relatively easy thing to do. Just subtract the number "100" from about six of the names in the list, and presto, *a brand-new history* of the world *through a genealogy* that no one outside of the Scribes would really care about. If you really hated Jesus that much, which the NT repeatedly says they did, they had the motive. They also had the authoritative power and unique opportunity to systematically revise the sacred text. As Smith says, "They are the only group who could have made this kind of radical chronological alteration permanent in future manuscripts."¹⁸

So now we have *direct evidence of tampering with genealogies*, by the very same group Paul is pointing out in

¹⁷ Smith, 122. Ephrem the Syrian (306-73) said, "The Jews have subtracted 600 years [in Genesis 5] from the generations of Adam, Seth, etc., in order that their own books might not convict them concerning the coming of CHRIST: he having been predicted to appear for the deliverance of mankind after 5500 years." Cited in Henry B. Smith Jr. (2017), 169 n. 3. In turn cited in Hales, 278. Justin Martyr and Irenaeus accuse the Jews of doing the same things with the LXX. See Hales, 277. As did Gregory of Nyssa (335-395) and Epiphanius (310-403 AD). See Gallagher 665-76.

¹⁸ Ibid. I do not have time to explain further how this Genesis 11 genealogy directly relates to the two-powers controversy, something which the Rabbis also tried to expunge from the Scripture. For more, see my *Conspiracy Theory: A Christian Evaluation of a Taboo Subject*, chapter 5.

Timothy and Titus: the Jews. But what about the mythology? There are plenty of myths (in this sense, false stories) that grew up around Shem after this change. These myths change the biblical story inherent in the original timeline. Here's one from the Talmud, "R. Zechariah said in the name of R. Ishmael [1st-2nd cent]: God at first wished to have the priesthood come from Shem [that is, Melchizedek], as it is written, 'and he was a priest to God Most High' [Gen. 14:18]. But when he [Melchizedek] put Abraham's blessing before God's own, God resolved to have the priesthood descend from Abraham instead" (b. *Nedarim* 32b). Or take *Numbers Rabba* 4:8 which talks about the famous skins of Adam that God clothed him with. These "skins," they said, were actually priestly garments, and they were handed down by Adam to Seth, from Seth to Methuselah, from Methuselah to Noah, from Noah to Shem (that is, Melchizedek), and from Shem to Abraham.¹⁹

These are probably not the kinds of "myths" you had in mind when we began this morning. But do you understand their purpose? It was to say that the true priesthood would *not* go through Melchizedek, as Psalm 110 and Hebrews were claiming (and yes, they had ways around the obvious reading

¹⁹ See Kugel, 136.

of Ps 110). Therefore, Jesus is not the Messiah! Furthermore, the priesthood, and therefore *the true teachers of the law*, were as they always had been—the Scribes and the Pharisees. They were the forever guardians of Torah and true religion. But doesn't this now sound exactly like **1 Timothy 1:6-7**? “Certain persons, by swerving from these, have wandered away into vain discussion, desiring to be teachers of the law, without understanding either what they are saying or the things about which they make confident assertions.”

It is still difficult to know precisely how the Christians were involved in this at Ephesus. **Were these** Jewish teachers that were claiming to be Christians that had infiltrated the churches? **Were they** Gentile Christians who were being influenced by Jews in the synagogues? **Was this** some early form of Gnostic Christianity that had its roots, as I believe all Gnosticism does, in mystical and/or legalistic Judaism? Maybe it was some or all of those things. But I think **one thing is certain**. When the heart of your letter is reminding Timothy of the amazing incarnation, resurrection, and glorification of Jesus Christ, I'd bet that they were attacking Jesus and Paul's authority, and we've now seen Exhibit A—a real historical example of how genealogies and myths were

being used by the Jews to counter the claims of the Christians.

Myth: Behavior and the Gospel

So why does all this matter? First, it is **not politically correct** in our day to talk about just how violently the Scribes and Pharisees hated Jesus of Nazareth. But the entire witness of the New Testament is unanimous on this point. It caused them to do radically sinful things, such as deliberately tamper with their own Scriptures, and even murder Christians, as Paul/Saul knew all too well. Here are a couple of **quotes from the Fathers** that I think reinforce the point rather dramatically as to how bad it got. **Justin Martyr**, who knew full well about the tampering of the text in the early mid-second century said, “**Your Rabbis have absolutely expunged many passages out of the Septuagint version, as I would have you to know. Still, I will argue with you even from those received passages which you still allow, which if your Rabbis had understood, be assured they would have expunged them**” (**Justin**, *Dialogue with Trypho* 71). **Irenaeus** was even more blunt. “**If the Jews had known that we should have made use of those testimonies that are**

to be drawn from the Scriptures, they would never have hesitated themselves to burn their own Scriptures” (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 3.21.1).

There was such a seething hatred of Christ that it satanically inspired them to commission not only the systematic manipulation of the long established Hebrew text, but an entirely new translation of the Hebrew *into Greek* about 65 years after 1 Timothy was written in order to compete with and overtake the LXX’s popularity. It was done by one Aquila, possibly from Ephesus and could have even lived during the time Paul wrote this letter, who was a pagan, converted to Christianity, interestingly excommunicated because of “irregular behavior” and telling “tales about fate,” and then in rage converted to Judaism and become one of the great enemies of Christianity in the early church.²⁰ It caused no end of hostility between the Scribes and Rabbis and the earliest Christians.

²⁰ Aquila of Sinope (northern modern Turkey, ancient Pontus) is not to be confused with the biblical husband of Priscilla, is famous for his own translation of the OT into Greek around the year 128 AD, nearly 60 years after the destruction of the temple, and about 65 years after 1 Timothy was written. The thing is, Aquila was a Gentile by birth, and a pagan. At some point, he converted to Christianity. However, he was excommunicated for “irregular conduct, turned a renegade to Judaism, and became a pupil to that famous Rabbi Akiba ... [and become] one of the most malignant adversaries of Christianity” (Hales, 276). Epiphanius (*On Weights and Measures* 15, https://www.tertullian.org/fathers/epiphanius_weights_03_text.htm#C13) tells us that the irregular behavior was astrology and he was repeatedly reprovved because he “tried to establish things that have no existence, tales about fate.” Tales, irregular behavior, hatred of Christianity? That all sounds eerily similar to what Paul is telling Timothy about in Ephesus. It gets even more coincidental. Epiphanius tells us that Aquila was born in Pontus, but the

They went to great lengths to tamper with the text, often (though not always) in the most mundane of places, like genealogies that no one cares about. All to deny their Messiah. All to elevate themselves and their own supposed authority. Truly, as Jesus said, their true genealogy was their father—the Devil. Contrast this with Paul’s simple genealogy of his authority. “Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope” (1Tim 1:1). Christ is the only authority he needs. And what authority does Timothy now have to rebuke these false teachers? The direct call of God and the local church,

Commentator gives his place of origin as Ephesus (*W&M* 14; my guess is confusing him with Aquila and Priscilla who moved there, see [Bischoff](#), 431). Since we do not know the age of Aquila when he made his translation, but we do know he had lived a long life and had to study a long time to become such a prized pupil of Akiba, it is not logically or historically impossible that Aquila wasn’t a young man in the church at Ephesus! Here’s the full quote from Ephiphanius on Aquila.

“So Aquila, after he had been strongly stirred in mind, believed in Christianity, and after a while, when he asked, he received the seal in Christ. But according to his former habit, while yet thinking the things of the heathen, he had been thoroughly trained in vain astronomy, so that also after he became a Christian he never departed from this fault of his, but every day he made calculations on the horoscope of his birth. He was reproved by the teachers, and they rebuked him for this every day but did not accomplish anything. But instead of standing rebuked, he became bold in disputation and tried to establish things that have no existence, tales about fate. Hence, as one who proved useless and could not be saved, he was expelled from {55b} the church. But as one who had become embittered in mind over how he had suffered dishonor, he was puffed up with vain jealousy, and having cursed Christianity and renounced his life he became a proselyte and was circumcised as a Jew. And, being painfully ambitious, he dedicated himself to learning the language of the Hebrews and their writings. After he had first been thoroughly trained for it, he made his translation. He was moved not by the right motive, but (by the desire) so to distort certain of the words occurring in the translation of the seventy-two that he might proclaim the things testified to about Christ in the divine Scriptures to be fulfilled in some other way, on account of a certain shame that he felt (to proffer) a senseless excuse for himself.”

not some genealogy that comes from Shem. That and the foundation the Apostle entrusted to him in the Holy Scriptures—OT and NT. You must not underestimate our history or what lengths people will go to do deny the Messiah. If you haven't come to Christ, you must beware of your own heart that can make for yourselves excuses like these that must inevitably lead to wicked behavior.

I want to make **one more application**. Thing is, there are some serious implications from this facing many Christians right now. The sad fact of the matter is, there are many people, including a lot of Reformed people, who have unwittingly, unknowingly been entertaining these “silly myths” as if they were facts while simultaneously and ironically destroying the true meaning of passages in declaring them not mythical and saying that the real meaning is “silly!” This includes made-up myths like the Nephilim were perfectly human (no one originally believe that), the sons of God were not angels but the children of Israel, and genealogies of the Masoretic texts with their accompanying new stories, all passages that intimately work together, as Justin told Trypho, to demonstrate that Jesus is the Son of God, Israel's Prince, and the prophesied Messiah.

This in turn demonstrates an opposite side to Paul's warning. That is, to entertain myths that *aren't true* is bad, but to not entertain myths *that are true* is equal or perhaps even worse. As Lewis and Tolkien both put it, the story of Jesus is the True Myth. It is mythical. Yet, it is true. This is not a contradiction. The Nephilim are the same way. The person of Melchizedek is the same way. People may not like that, but it is what it is. Our job is not to argue with God, but to believe him. The stories are told in such a way that they resemble in some ways other myths, yet are clearly true. But they are told in such a way that they work not merely on the level of your brain like history, but your soul and heart—like all good myths do.

People *won't believe in true myths* but are perfectly fine *accepting man-made myths* that replace them, especially myths that bizarrely secularize or profane the supernatural original meaning. They won't believe them in large measure because those truly silly myths have been allowed to persist for a thousand years. The church didn't put an end to them, like Timothy was told. And it gets even worse when we try to justify our own incredulity at the actual meaning of the biblical story by saying, "*our tradition doesn't read it that way.*" How is that not like *adding genealogies of our own*

to justify things that we know not what we speak about? I'm all for tradition and reading the Bible with the church, but not at the expense of the objective, historical meaning. I'm willing to be shown wrong on some of these points, but not because some guy said it. Sola Scripture is my rallying cry.

It gets worse even yet. I've personally encountered, and had other people say they've experienced the same reaction, dozens of people involuntarily becoming enraged at the very thought that certain passages should be interpreted supernaturally, should I say mythically? Melchizedek and the Angel of the LORD couldn't possibly be the Second Person. The sons of God couldn't possibly have been angels. The Trinity can't possibly be in the OT. Gods can't possibly be real. And so on. All of these ideas in the OT were deliberately tampered with textually, genealogically, and mythically in new stories by the Scribes.

I've seen this rage turn into even worse sin. Go through the list that Paul gives Timothy and I've seen much of it. For example, [I've personally been black-listed](#) by some fairly well-known people in our own circles because I dared to believe nothing but what 100% of the church Fathers believed until 400 AD about giants, which believe it or not is indirectly and in some ways directly related to

Melchizedek. **How does black-listing** someone over an issue you've never even talked to them about not fit almost exactly with the kinds of **dissension and factions** that Paul discusses in Timothy? And why? All because we refuse to entertain that there might be different textual traditions, that some of those traditions might have arisen out of hatred for Christ, that our tradition could actually be wrong, or that there might actually be a supernatural world out there that goes beyond the Trinity and Satan that directly relate to Jesus Christ?

Could it be that Christians have unwittingly been listening to the very kinds of myths that were created by the Rabbis with the original intent of attacking the heart of Christianity? **Could it be** that these same myths have worked their dark magic in the hearts of some Christians who believe them, causing them without their even realizing it to divide and react violently against God's Word, and against their own brothers who are doing nothing more than believing what all Jews and Christians prior to this massive change in the genealogies and growth of subsequent false-myths had always believed?

Think about **how serious it therefore is** that we take Paul and Peter's charges to Timothy, Titus, and the other

churches seriously still in our day. Look at how everywhere you turned at Ephesus, the problems being addressed were arising at the root because of this. Rather than knee-jerk react to a word like “myth” through our own out-of-context ideas, maybe it is time to take seriously that what Paul and Peter were so concerned about might still have implications in our own day. If you are not a Christian, I implore you not to kick against the goads any longer. Believe the Myth that is True. Nothing could be better for your eternal soul. Turn to Chris, the one who fulfills all the OT. But if you are a Christian, consider something too few today have. **Do you really want to take part** in the myths and genealogies that have and continue to wreak havoc in the church, all originating in the hatred of Jesus Christ, even if until now you have had no idea that this is what their intent has been?

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