

The Truth About the LXX Septuagint



In this article, Dr. Phil Stringer satisfactorily answers a question I have had for a while about the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament. That question was, “If the Septuagint was the Scriptures that Jesus and all the New Testament writers quoted from, *why* did the translators of the Old Testament of the King James Bible use the Hebrew Masoretic text which was compiled by Jewish scholars hundreds of years later?

Transcription

There is a position that says, *God has inspired certain words. God has promised to preserve those words.* Those words have been translated for us in English. We can know the certainty of the words of truth, we can know we have God’s words, and as a result of knowing we have God’s words, we can have an answer for those who have questions.

There is *another position* among those who profess to be evangelicals and claim to believe in inspiration, that God gave His words, but the words were never kept in an exact form. In a vague sort of, well you know, we might not be sure of the text, we might not be sure of the translation, and there’s room for differences of opinion, and you can’t be certain, it’s kind of vague. And that position has come to dominate in professing evangelical Christianity.

It’s not as dominant as it was a few years ago, but it’s clearly still there and still dominant. And when I began to talk about the certainty of the words, there were folks who would say, that can’t be true. And you know how we know that can’t be true? Man, they do have an answer, you know how we know that cannot be true? Christ and the apostles used the Septuagint, and the Septuagint does not match the King James, it does not match the Hebrew Masoretic text, and so the text isn’t really an issue, you can have different texts, you can have different words, they can disagree because Christ and the apostles used a very loose translation of the Old Testament and referred to it as the Scripture, so the word Scripture, holy writings, you know, it can mean different things and variations of the text are okay, and so it doesn’t matter, and so that just can’t be true.

What you said just cannot be true, because Christ used the Septuagint, and that doesn’t fit with your approach to Scripture. What you said, Brother Ketchum, can’t be true, because Christ used the Septuagint, and that doesn’t fit with your message. What you said, Brother Brown, cannot be true, because Christ used the Septuagint, and Christ could not have used the Septuagint if what you said was true.

That is the argument. I thought for a while it might be one of the arguments, but after having heard it over and over and over again, I have come to realize it is the argument the average Evangelical who believes in a loose approach to Scripture has and uses, Christ used a loose translation, so the translation issue is not important, pick any translation you want, use them all, they're all the same, Christ used the Septuagint. And so I ask questions, and I have discovered on this issue when you ask questions you make people angry.

How do you know Christ used the Septuagint? The answer is everybody knows! I am always suspicious of anything when the answer is everybody knows. Everybody knows evolution is true. Why does everybody know that? Everybody knows, the smart people know. If you don't know, you're just not smart. Everybody knows global warming is true. Everybody knows that. We've stood in Chicago in the midst of snow drifts and bitter weather, being lectured about how that was caused by global warming, because everybody knows global warming is true.

And so I have asked the question, how do you know? Everybody knows, the intelligent people know, the smart people know, if you don't know you're not intelligent, you're not smart.

It's what I call the tyranny of the expert. All the "smart" people know this, so if you don't know, you must not be very smart. Did you know socialism is good for the poor? And if you ask anybody, can you show me one example in thousands of years of recorded world history where socialism ever benefited the poor, the answer you will get is that, "Everybody knows it benefits the poor." But don't ask for a specific example.

The tyranny of the expert, the smart people know this, and anytime somebody defends a position by saying everybody knows, I'm instantly suspicious of that position. And here's why. If you ask that question and they had an answer, instead of saying everybody knows, they would give you the answer.

Everybody knows Christ used the Septuagint. And I begin to wonder about that in that lesson, and Roman Catholicism is very adamant that Christ used the Septuagint, and they have a reason. The Septuagint, and I'll explain what that is in a minute, the Septuagint has the Apocrypha in it.

So if you accept the idea that Christ used the Septuagint, then Christ authorized the Apocrypha by using a Bible with the Apocrypha in it. And so the folks who believe in concept inspiration, they do not believe in God-inspired words, they believe in God-inspired ideas, they love the idea that Christ used the Apocrypha because it justifies their doctrine of inspiration since we're really not worried about the words if we're using the Septuagint.

But why evangelicals? Why Baptists? Why do people who profess to believe in verbal inspiration? And they can be very adamant about this.

And I asked myself, and I watched this for a while and I came to this conclusion, that **the reason they say this is because the Catholics and the modernists will question their scholarship if they don't.** And so they repeat

it because they do want to look good to the world. They want to look intelligent.

I've had a couple of people tell me over the years, "Stringer, you would come across as an intelligent guy if you would just drop this King James stuff, but everybody knows that no intelligent person believes all that. They declare that they're scholars, **they repeat what they got from Catholicism, they repeat what they got from the modernists**, they say, see that proves how educated we are, how intelligent we are. They not only repeat it, **they repeat it as doctrine**. They not only repeat it as doctrine, but they also repeat it as fundamental doctrine that affects your beliefs about everything. And you know how they know? All the *Catholic* scholars say that. And they do. And all the concept inspiration *modernists* say that. And they do. And if we were not to agree with it, we would get called names.

Let me explain what the Septuagint is. According to Miller's general biblical introduction, the Septuagint version is a translation of the Hebrew Old Testament into the Greek language for the Greek-speaking Jews of Alexandria of Egypt.

It is commonly called the Septuagint. The abbreviation is LXX for 70, it's sometimes called the Alexandrian version. But why, when Christ was preaching to the Jews of Palestine, would he use a Greek version designed for the Greek-speaking Jews of Egypt?

The idea that this translation existed at that time is based on a document called the Letter of Aristeas. And there are several people who quote this letter. And in the Letter to Aristeas, he says he's a high official of the Egyptian court, and he was assigned by the royal librarian to create a Greek translation of the Old Testament for the Egyptian royal library. So he asked the high priest to send six scribes from each of the tribes of Israel to Alexandria, which is 72, by the way.

For a period of years, the story is told with 72 translators, and then it changes to 70, hence the name 70. I do not know why it changed. But it's 72 translators, and they all come to Egypt, and they had translated for 72 days, and that each one of them did an individual translation, and when they were done, they compared the 72 translations, and they were identical, thus proving they were inspired of God.

And there's a question, I read that story, and all these people are talking about the Septuagint. Do you believe that story? 72 guys, each translated the entire Old Testament, and their translations were identical word for word? Well, no. **No one I know will admit to believing that story!**

But they also considered it authoritative, as well as being untrue. One well-known general introduction Bible says, that the details of this story are undoubtedly fictitious, but the letter does relate the authentic facts. Everybody knows that.

In the introduction, if you buy something called the Septuagint today, and **I want to suggest to you that is not the Septuagint of ancient times, it is a**

Septuagint produced after the time of Christ, but if you buy something called the Septuagint today, and if you read the introduction, the introduction to the Septuagint states that the letter to Aristeas is not worthy of notice, except for the myth being connected with the authority which this version was once supposed to have possessed. It goes on to say, that we don't know that what we have now called the Septuagint is anything similar to an ancient Septuagint. And for some reason, they quit calling it the 70 and referred to the 72.

If you don't believe the letter of Aristeas, which is the only ancient reference to the Septuagint, you've got nothing to go on.

Jerome, whose writing is a contemporary of Augustine, in the 4th century, wanted to make a new translation of the Old Testament from Latin into Hebrew, and he and Augustine exchanged letters about these things. Augustine did not want to use the Hebrew because he thought God had inspired the Septuagint. And the Hebrew, no available Hebrew text matches the Septuagint, so he didn't want to use the Hebrew because he said, we have an inspired Greek Septuagint.

Really? Folks who don't believe that God inspired the words in the beginning, or don't believe that God could have used the King James translators to preserve the Word of God, but you believe some Greek guys we've never known anything about were inspired? Really? Jerome understood that **the Septuagint of his day was developed by Origen**. He did not believe it was a Septuagint of previous references. He believed that Origen used several different Greek manuscripts and that all of them have been corrupted.

He disputed Augustine's assertion that the Apostles usually quoted from the Septuagint. I've had folks tell me that is something you King James guys invented. Really? Do you think, Jerome, was a King James guy in the 4th century?

Well, Jerome pointed this out. These, the things they refer to as quotations of Christ, not only don't match the Hebrew Old Testament word for word, they don't match the Septuagint either. They don't match anything, and there is an explanation for why.

Well, in 1588, 23 years before the release of the King James Bible, William Whitaker wrote,

"Learned men question whether the Greek version of the Scriptures now extant, be or be not the version of the 70 elders. The sounder opinion seems to be that those who determine that the true Septuagint is wholly lost and that the Greek text as we have it is a mixed and miserably corrupted document.

He said, what we have now, we're calling a Septuagint, this is just a horrible translation.

And so, for what particular reason do you think that Christ quoted from it? People say, "Well, you know, we have manuscripts of the Septuagint." But with

four possible exceptions, I'm going to mention real quickly, every one of them comes after 350 AD. And they say, "See, Christ quoted from this because there are a few places where it matches." 350 AD is long after the time of Christ.

Whoever produces that can go back and match word for word what Christ said, rather than it be the other way around. Four fragments called the Rylands papyrus have been found. Three of them were found in one place, and a fourth were found in a different place in Egypt. They all have little pieces of Deuteronomy, and they go back to before that time. However, the verses in them are not quoted by anybody in the New Testament, Jesus or the apostles. They don't have anything to do with this debate. They do prove somebody produced a Greek Old Testament of some kind back that early, but it doesn't tell you anything about what Christ or the apostles were saying or doing.

In the last century, a professor named Paul Cayley, he was a German professor of oriental studies, addressed this issue of the Septuagint and what's involved. He's a recognized scholar of mid-eastern languages. He said it is silly to believe anything based on the letter of Aristeas, really. He said it's just propaganda, it's just fiction. He says what we have the Septuagint at calling it the Septuagint today probably has nothing to do, and if it has in any way anything to do with an early Greek translation, we have no way of knowing it because we do not have a quotation of anything from before the time of Christ.

He just said, listen, guys, you cannot take this fairy tale and build an idea off of it. It doesn't hold. And he, I think, would be shocked to see what's happened more recently when folks took this fairy tale and not only built an idea of it, they built a doctrine out of it. For them, this is the fundamental doctrinal position that describes the nature of Scripture. Christ used the Septuagint, the Septuagint doesn't match the Textus Receptus, consequently, it cannot matter the exact wording of Scripture, it just can't matter.

How do you know? And I've asked dozens, by email and in person. I've asked critics, I've asked people I don't know anything about, I've asked friends. Why do you think Christ used the Septuagint? Now this is not some little quibbling about a minor detail, this is what their doctrine of Scripture is based on, and I say their doctrine of Scripture is not based on a biblical statement at all. It's not even based on confusing a biblical statement.

(End of transcription.)

The transcription of the audio is only a partial one. It contains the main points of what Dr. Stringer teaches about the Septuagint.

I think it should be a red flag for any evangelical when they hear recommendations of the Septuagint from Catholic sources. It is a red flag for real Protestants. Sadly all modern English Bible translations use the Septuagint. The Septuagint is the reason [Daniel 9:27 has been mistranslated](#) in modern English Bibles.

[Daniel 9:27 is a Messianic prophecy about Christ](#) confirming the Covenant God made with Abraham to the House of Israel. [Daniel 9:27 translated from the Septuagint](#) makes it sound like an end-time treaty the Antichrist will make with the Jews. This should give you good reason to stick to the KJV.