

History and Authenticity of the Bible
Lesson 6
The Greek Translations

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There is another version of the Old Testament that we want you to be familiar with and that is Greek. From Alexander the Great, in approximately the fourth century B.C. on, Greek dominated the world. You know how you have heard stories of how Alexander the Great conquered the world. He had no more worlds to conquer and he sat down beside the Euphrates River in Babylon, a drunken man and died at age thirty-three. There is even some question as to whether that tale is true. But he did definitely conquer the then-known world. He certainly did not handle the Far East, but as they knew it from a western culture point of view.

So, one of the things that he imposed was Greek culture and Greek language. Boy, was that a mess! Can you imagine, conquering a people and demanding they speak your language. And before long Greek was everywhere. But in the providence of God, that was all a fulfillment of what God wanted to accomplish because in [Galatians 4:4](#) it says, "When the fullness of time was come, God sent forth His Son." And you realize that at the time the gospel came, it was the first time in the history of the world since the tower of Babel that all the world was one language. They spoke other dialects of course. But there was one language dominating trade across the world and that was Greek. We had also for the first time in the history of the world, in addition to all speaking Greek, we had a culture that was imposed on the entire world. That culture just, class so you know, comes to be called "Hellenistic," off the Greek word for Greece. It means Greek culture, Hellenistic. So you could have Hellenistic Jews. You could have Hellenistic Arabs. You could have Hellenistic Russians. They are people who are now dominated by Greek culture and Greek language.

Now that Greek influence, from fourth century B.C. on, was very powerful. The Romans, actually their republic was started in 705 B.C. And the Romans stood over there in Italy kind of ignored while Greek culture dominates the world. But what you often will hear or read in a book, when you're talking about the time of the New Testament, you will read this statement: "Roman-Greco culture." Have you seen when you're reading, "Roman-Greco culture?" What that means is that when Rome took over and conquered and started the empire, unlike what Alexander the Great did, they tolerated the Greek language and culture but infiltrated it with Rome's culture. So it was a mixed bag at the time of the first century. But the number one language of the scholars, the journalists, the writers, was Greek. Greek was the biggest language in the world. It was also more mathematical and exact and so it became a teacher, classic, journalistic-type language for the world. The documents were all written in Greek.

So it is of no surprise to us that the Old Testament would be written in Greek, if you are going to communicate. Now, we have a number of Greek translations. I've listed for you five of them. The one everybody knows is the Septuagint, which is a word meaning "seventy," which is spelled in Roman letters LXX. The L stands for fifty. X is ten. That is how you get seventy, LXX. It is talking about the Septuagint and the Septuagint has dominated the Christian world.

One of the greatest church fathers in the eyes of many was Origen, because of his brilliance. I do recognize his intellectual capacities. Origen had what he called the Hexapla. It was six columns and it included four Greek translations. The first four are mentioned, with his own transliteration in Greek along with the Hebrew text. Now can you imagine, I want to know the meaning of the Hebrew, the Old Testament text, and

here is a man in church history, third or fourth century, and he's got all the Greek texts listed parallel in six columns next to the Hebrew. So do you understand that I would really weigh heavy his views, wouldn't I? I would really say, "Wow, he is really telling us what the Old Testament means." Well, this is so serious, I don't know where to begin but I'm going to just try.

At the end of the nineteenth century, two British scholars, B.F. Westcott and A.J. Hort, on the basis of the discovery of two Codex manuscripts—one Codex Sinaiticus, the other Codex Vaticanus, which the Vatican produced upon hearing about Sinaiticus—on the basis of this, they said we needed a new Bible. It was news in England and it was news in America. I thank God for D. L. Moody. He was reluctant about anybody telling him there was going to be a new Bible. Now he was not a scholar, at all. And he slaughtered the King's English and never knew Hebrew or Greek. But he was America's greatest evangelist and he heard about a new Bible.

Now, one of the greatest Greek scholars of all times, studied manuscripts, was also alive when Westcott and Hort wrote. His name was Dean Bergen. And he had nothing to do with this new Bible. In fact, he was viciously attacking it as being from the pit of hell itself. Well, all of this manuscript evidence that they used to produce this new English translation off of a brand new Greek text (which by the way, is the foundation behind the New American Standard, the New International, etc.—it all uses the same text) was largely controlled by Origen, who is part of what we call the Alexandrian school. Alexandria is in Egypt. And it was an Alexandrian school that was dominated by allegorical teaching, fanciful interpretations, and led and fostered by their godfather who was Origen. In some books that you will read, they will call Origen the greatest church

father to have ever lived. But can you imagine what the impact would be for those of us who would like to know the meaning of the Hebrew text, as we relate it to Greek to see his Hexapla, six columns of it, four Greek translations, plus his own and the Hebrew text.

Now the problem is, are they truly (these Greek translations) what they claim? I have some facts for you about the Septuagint. If you heard this in some schools, they would just laugh. Because they just already feel that the Septuagint is the only thing to trust. They even say that Paul wrote most of his fourteen books of the New Testament off the Septuagint rather than Hebrew. Does he refer to the Septuagint? Of course! If it was a popular translation of his day, he could refer to a quotation from it. But never does the Bible depend upon the Septuagint to give us any correct interpretation. But that is taught in seminary and college all through America, that they depended on the Septuagint. I do not believe it.

But let's just get a little background on it. This all comes from a letter of a man named Aristeas. It was dated about one hundred B.C. and supposedly scholars, (listen to this carefully, I have simplified it, you can check it out for yourself) scholars supposedly came from Israel, six from each tribe, went to Alexandria, (that's in Egypt). They were housed separately, translated separately, and when they came together, their translations were miraculously alike.

Now, remember when I told you about Jews and their carefulness? What do you think Jewish scholars think about that? Let's consider some facts. One, there were Jewish groups in Egypt as early as Nebuchadnezzar and there was a growing colony around Alexandria. Two, Alexandria became the predominant place of Greek language and

culture after the conquest of Alexander the Great and that is where they got the name, Alexandria.

Let's keep going. There are quotations from the Greek Pentateuch found in other Greek literature before 200 B.C. So we know that the Old Testament had to be completed before the time of Christ, right? Otherwise how could you translate the whole thing into another language? The Septuagint probably was the completion of other attempts. Now those who are dedicated to the Septuagint hate this talk. They don't like it at all. But I think there is plenty of proof for it. And I think the Septuagint is associated with Origen and the Alexandrian school of text criticism and it is associated with Codex Vaticanus and Codex Sinaiticus and all of this came together, miraculously in people's minds, seeing how it was all coordinated all about the time of the end of the nineteenth century, when we wanted to put out a new Greek text and a new English Bible. I don't know. I have trouble with that.

There is early evidence of Greek translations of the Pentateuch (that's the first five books of the Bible) that are more literal in their translation of the Hebrew, unlike the Septuagint. And isn't this interesting, the Jews rejected the Septuagint. You know the exact opposite is told to people? Jews rejected it. Why? Because the Christians accepted it! Why? Because they were all speaking Greek! Wouldn't you? If you only spoke Greek, you did not speak Hebrew and you have the New Testament? What about the Old Testament? Well, we've had Greek translations. Hey listen, the early church before they had the books of the New Testament, that's all they had. So if you are Greek, you were using the Greek Old Testament versions.

Now, we had a man named Aquilla who had a translation, a word-for-word translation in the second century A.D., to make the Old Testament acceptable to anti-Christian Jews. We had Theodotian's translation, he tried to bring the Greek text into harmony with the Hebrew and it was a revision of an older pre-Christian Greek text—and we do not even know what that was—completed in the second century A.D. And Symmachus' translation, he tried to make a smooth reading, but he did not revise old works with Hebrew idioms, he just left them. And Origen, he brought out his own.

Today's Greek Old Testaments date, the ones we have copies of, from the fourth century A.D. If anybody tells you we've got them 300 years before Christ, they are wrong. We do not. Do we know that it was translated into Greek before that? Yes, we do. Why? Well, if you back up again, quotations from the Greek, at least Pentateuch, are found in Greek literature before 200 B.C. So we know it was in existence. But do we have copies of the Greek Old Testament previous to fourth century A.D.? And the answer is, no. This is very surprising to a lot of people who are trying to make a big case.

We rely primarily, listen to this, on two manuscripts—this is very interesting because they are the two that have caused all the trouble—Codex Vaticanus, and Codex Sinaiticus, and the work of Origen. It all centers in there and guess what? When the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered and they began to be translated, all of a sudden, the respect for Hebrew became greater. Now we realized, up until the Dead Sea Scrolls we only had a 900 A.D. Hebrew text with vowel markings by Masoretes. So people said, "Oh, there were a lot of changes made." Now we know by the Dead Sea Scrolls, matching it with the Hebrew Masoretic text that outside of the vowel markings there is hardly any difference at all.

In fact, to demonstrate this, when I take tour groups to the Shrine of the Book in Jerusalem, I take a Hebrew text of Isaiah. The Isaiah scroll is unraveled and it is all the way around this big glass case. We look up a given passage and I look it up in my Hebrew Bible today and I take and I rip a page out. Forgive me, but I do. And I put the page up there on the window and let people notice the consonants and I point them out one by one. And it is amazing the effect on people! They say, "Well, those are exactly the same!" That is true, though there is over a thousand years' difference between the two. You tell me, were the Jews careful?

So you see, what has happened by the Dead Sea Scrolls is all that big argument about the Greek text and how it was so important and may have even resulted in our Hebrew text that we were using in the ninth century A.D., is all a bunch of bologna. As a matter of fact, it was used by Westcott and Hort to sell their new Greek text, which has over 13,000 changes from the majority of texts that were used throughout history.

Let's go to another subject. We are going to come back to that in detail. But let's go to another subject. What versions of the Old Testament have we learned about so far? Aramaic. Not Hebrew. Hebrew is not a version. That is the original text. A version is translating into another language. Aramaic, Greek. Now let's go to Latin. How many of you have taken Latin in school? You should have taken Greek. When we were in school, as you well know, man, you had to take Latin. We have two things to say about Latin. One is that there is old Latin and the Latin Vulgate. I don't want you to know anything else. That is all you need to know in this course. What is old Latin? Well, it dates around 200 A.D.—primarily in North Africa. And the old Latin Old Testament appears to be a translation, listen carefully, from the Greek rather than the Hebrew. Now that is very

common to do. There is a difference between primary versions and secondary versions. Primary means translated from the original language straight into the language. Secondary means it was translated into still another (an additional) language from that language. So, it is really a secondary version, the Old Latin.

Now the Latin Vulgate becomes the number one Old Testament used throughout church history. So you better learn that—the Latin Vulgate. What does Vulgate mean? Vulgar. Well, today it means dirty, something awful. But vulgar, its original meaning is “common.” It means “the common people.” So the Latin Vulgate was putting Latin not into the language of court or scholars but into the language of the people on the street. It was common. It is kind of funny, isn’t it? Because the Roman church sort of made it like it was really a great, unusual, courtly language, but really it was the language of the people.

By the way, the Greek New Testament that we use is in *Koine* Greek. *Koine* means “common.” It is like “vulgar” in Latin. The Latin Vulgate (390 – 404 A.D.), you notice the dates of Jerome, he translated from Hebrew. Now it included the Apocryphal books, but he questioned their canonicity, and rightly so. The Council of Trent, 1540 to about 1547 A.D., did an update on the Vulgate, called The Sixtine Edition. Some of your Catholic Bibles today will have that in it, The Sixtine Edition. It appeared in 1590 A.D. and it was just revised by Clementine two years later. But that is what Catholics have had for years. And the Latin Vulgate was from the fourth century all the way through, until the Reformation at least, as a dominant Bible that people used.

Now, class, put your thinking caps on. What is the problem with a dominant Bible being Latin? Nobody understood it. Guess who controlled the continuation of Latin?—

the Catholic Church, the hierarchy. They perpetuated Latin and in fact, kept the Bible from the common people so they depended upon church leaders to tell them what the Bible says. Is everybody following now? That's why in history books—it's amazing, history's being told differently today, it really is—but that is why we call the Middle Ages the Dark Ages. If somebody asks you, why were they dark? A guy told me, "Well, they had the Bubonic plague." Well, no, that did happen, but that is not why they were the Dark Ages. "They were the Dark Ages because it was a feudal state." No. The feudal state was a result of the Dark Ages. The Dark Ages are keeping the Bible away from the people in their own language. So they could be interpreted only by church leadership. Well, you see what happened to the world because of it. It was plunged into the most awful, terrible, filthy—from the standpoint of hygiene—it was a filthiest period of time. A thousand years of misery, dominated by wealthy churchmen whose only Bible—they said the true Bible—was Latin. The common people did not know what in the world they were talking about.

That carried over to even today. Have you noticed in some Catholic churches today, they believe that really the true church keeps using the Latin. No, no. It would be better if you would teach Hebrew and Greek, then you've got it. But you see they used it (Latin) and it created the Dark Ages and then they depended on church leadership and they threatened the people. If you have not read *God's Outlaw*, for instance; it is a simple little book about the life of William Tyndale and you absolutely ought to read it. It is an exciting adventure and you will learn why it was so important to put the Bible into the language of the common people.

We have also what we call Syriac (Syriac, the eastern-type church) Antioch of Syrian, Constantinople, Turkey, all of those areas, Caspian Sea areas—Syriac. We have two Bibles to bring to your attention. Peshitta, I mentioned that earlier. That is what we call old Syriac, third century A.D. It is quoted often in the fourth century A.D. It did not include the Apocrypha books. It was translated from Hebrew, not Greek; however, one of the interesting things about it, it left out the book of Chronicles, originally.

Now the Syriac Hexapla is a translation of Origen's fifth column. Which was LXX, which means what? Septuagint. Out of the six columns, the fifth one was the Septuagint and that was the Syriac Hexapla that was published in 616 A.D. Syriac was a very popular language in what we call the Eastern Church.

Now the fifth thing we have, regarding the Old Testament, this is just gaining information about it, is what we called "patristic." What does that mean? Father. Latin word. Also, isn't Spanish, *padre*? Latin, *pater*, or Greek, pretty well the same in those languages. It means quotations of church fathers. What is church father? They are leaders. You will find me referring to the early church leaders. God is my Father.

Now these church leaders, you need to understand this; it is a very important issue in relation to your Bible. They quote voluminously from the Bible. Just like in a message today when you listen to a tape, I hope you hear a lot of Bible. Oh they quoted a lot of Bible too, and wrote many comments. Cyprian, who died in 258 A.D., was a bishop of Carthage (that's in North Africa) has over 740 Old Testament quotations in his writings. So you understand these patristic quotations give us evidence of what the Old Testament was, the text of the Old Testament. It is not what we call primary. Primary would be looking at the Hebrew. But it does tell you what was understood by those church fathers.

Also when they write in Greek, which many of them do, or in Latin, and they quote, now you know how the Hebrew was translated into Latin and Greek. And you can match it with—like Origen's attempt to prove, or Westcott and Hort in the end of the 19th century—that this was the original text. Wait a minute! If the patristic quotations do not agree with that, then we've got a real problem. And by the way, they agree more with the text behind the King James than they do the text behind the newer translations, which is interesting.

Now are there other versions, other languages? Yes. Manuscripts from the fourth century onward include Coptic, Ethiopic, Arabic, and Armenian versions. They were the most popular. We also have Hebrew translations. But look at the dates of them.

Codex is different than a scroll. A scroll you roll. A codex is the ancient background behind our books. They actually have leaves. Codex is usually on vellum or animal skin. We are going to talk about it, by the way, in the course. Right now, we will tell you that it is like a book. So there are leaves stacked together and usually there are holes in the side, punched in the side and leather thongs would tie it together. So it is like a book. It flips open. Codex Sinaiticus is on display at the British Museum in London and I have seen it; rather large and very ornate. They have a number of leaves but there is a lot missing.

This is one of those courses where your mind says, "Wait a minute, what about...what about?" And you just keep thinking of things. Be patient. We are going to get to them.

Hebrew Translations

- 1) The Cairo Codes of the Prophets (A.D. 895)
- 2) The Leningrad Manuscript (A.D. 916)
- 3) The Aleppo Manuscript (Tenth Century A.D.)
- 4) The British Museum 4445 (Genesis 39:20 – Deut. 1:33)
- 5) The Leningrad MS B-19 A (A.D. 1008)
- 6) The Dead Sea Scrolls (100 - 250 B.C.)

Other Hebrew translations—look at this carefully. The first five of these, before the Dead Sea Scrolls, are what we used to reconstruct the original text before the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls. A lot of people do not know that. What is the earliest date on them? 895 A.D. You see the problem? For 800 years, how do we know this is the right text? They use a Hebrew text that is a combination of that. Like we go down to the store and buy a Hebrew Bible, they would use that. What this is saying is that all five of these were used to construct what we thought was the Hebrew text. Okay? Follow that? And I do not want you to know these. I just want you to know the fact that they exist. You do not have to know these or memorize them.

So you could imagine what a marvelous discovery the Dead Sea Scrolls were in 1947. Now that's the Old Testament. You say, "Is that it?" Well, there's a lot more pages in books on it, but yeah, that's it. You say, "That's not a whole lot of evidence." That's true. That's true.

When we come to Greek, it is a whole different story. When we come to the New Testament, we are talking about big-time trouble in manuscript evidence. And my purpose will be to strengthen your faith in God's word, not to undermine it. But you need to hear me carefully right now. I understand why people, when they go into these fields, have their confidence in the Bible undermined. Because it can shake you up. And it is very important; you can understand that if you had a teacher who was not committed to inerrancy or inspiration of Scripture what can happen here. A lot of people believe that when their teachers speak they must be right, they are teachers. But just because we teach does not make us right.

And I think this is a very serious subject, the whole subject of manuscript evidence of the New Testament. You are going to be exposed to it here at Bible college. Some people will take the same evidence and come to another conclusion. I have been through the scholastic world. I have been through their side. I know what their side is. And I do not support their side, but I understand their side. Some of those guys are my friends. But I do not agree with them.

You say, "Well, what makes you right and them wrong?" Nothing makes me right. The Lord is right. All I am telling you is that when you look at this, you can look at it with two sets of eyes. Now if you look with the eyes of the Lord, you are going to be just fine. If you look with the eyes of faith and confidence in Him that He will not lead you astray, you will come out just fine. But if you enter this with a little skepticism and are looking for doubt, you can find it.

Now I hear preachers say, "There are only one thousand places where you actually find any variation in the original text." I feel like going up to them after and

saying, "Have you ever read them yourself?" I mean we are talking a lot, but yet we got a lot of words too. And it is not as big a problem as you think. It is less than any other extant manuscript, so the Bible is not worse in that regard. And I believe there is a reason behind this, which I am going to get to later. What is the name of this course? *The History and Authenticity of the Bible*. What I am trying to tell you is that there is balance. It would be easy for me to try to protect us all, to not give you any of this information. There are people actually in this land who say that the King James in English is the original language. There are books written on it. And it comes under the doctrine of preservation.

Well, I want you in your mind and your heart to not be afraid any more of facts. Do not be afraid of it. There are lots of facts that you are going to see and you are going to wonder, "Wow, I did not know all that. Wow, did we have a trustworthy...?" Yes. When we come out in the end, you will be stronger than ever. But a lot of people filter out along the way. I am not talking about you. I'm talking people that hear about this. They filter out. They give up. They quit. They do not want to hear any more. They are all confused. And what has happened is the devil has done a number on us. He has gotten us, in this culture, to believe it is not important. What do you mean, it's not important?

Don't you know that Christianity crumbles if you can undermine this Book? It crumbles. Everything that you and I believe about Jesus Christ is in this Book. There is no issue that is so fundamental to Christianity as the Bible itself. And so, we are not going to be afraid of the facts. We are not trying to scare you. We are not trying to give you more information than you can handle. We are trying to teach as we laid out in the objectives of the course, to teach this in a way that apologetically you will have an answer. You will

have the defense. You will know what you believe and why, and you will understand it more than you will ever understand without it. But you will be able to tell people what are the facts and to do it with a love, and a kindness, and a humility, but to show them why it really does build confidence in the Lord. And it does not undermine our confidence in the Bible.

Do you realize that you have fellow Christians in churches who have been to other Christian colleges who literally (I have heard this over and over again) lost their faith and confidence in the Bible in a Christian college. Does it mean that they were not taught the facts? No, they were taught the facts. But you see it makes a difference, doesn't it, how we come out at the end? It makes a difference about our commitment. Whether we believe this is as God originally gave it—we have no original autographs—but whatever they were, they were inspired and inerrant from the hand of God Himself.

Now we've got to prove that point. You say, "If we do not have the original autographs then how do we know?" That is what this course is all about and that is what we are going to answer.

Let's pray.

Father, thank You for the Bible. Thank You that we have here, in our hands in English, a sure foundation. We thank You that You guided those men by the Holy Spirit to ensure that what they wrote was indeed the word of God, without error, totally reliable and trustworthy in every respect. We believe, Lord, that everything that is in this Book is true. When the devil lies, it is accurately reported, and we thank You for that. When men speak lies and falsehoods, You accurately report what they

said. Thank You, Lord, that we can trust this Book. And I pray, Lord, that You will continue to give us a heart to know the Bible in every way. We thank You, in Jesus' name. Amen.