

1-2019

## Question 24 - What language was the Bible written in?

Harold Willmington

*Liberty University*, [hwillmington@liberty.edu](mailto:hwillmington@liberty.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/questions\\_101](https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/questions_101)



Part of the [Biblical Studies Commons](#), [Christianity Commons](#), and the [Religious Thought, Theology and Philosophy of Religion Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Willmington, Harold, "Question 24 - What language was the Bible written in?" (2019). *101 Most Asked Questions*. 26.

[https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/questions\\_101/26](https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/questions_101/26)

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the 101 Most Asked Questions About the Bible at Scholars Crossing. It has been accepted for inclusion in 101 Most Asked Questions by an authorized administrator of Scholars Crossing. For more information, please contact [scholarlycommunications@liberty.edu](mailto:scholarlycommunications@liberty.edu).

## 101 MOST ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE BIBLE

### 24. What language was the Bible written in?

- A. The Old Testament was written in Hebrew, with the following exceptions appearing in Aramaic – These are: Ezra 4:8-6:18; 7:12-26; Dan. 2:4-7:28; Jer. 10:11. Why did God choose Hebrew? In their book, *A General Introduction to the Bible*, authors Geisler and Nix note the following:

“It is a pictorial language, speaking with vivid, bold metaphors which challenge and dramatize the story. The Hebrew language possesses a facility to present ‘pictures’ of the events narrated. ‘The Hebrew thought in pictures, and consequently his nouns are concrete and vivid. There is no such thing as neuter gender, for the Semite everything is alive. Compound words are lacking . . . There is no wealth of adjectives. . .’ The language shows ‘vast powers of association and, therefore, of imagination.’ Some of this is lost in the English translation, but even so, ‘much of the vivid, concrete, and forthright character of our English Old Testament is really a carrying over into English of something of the genius of the Hebrew tongue.’ As a pictorial language, Hebrew presents a vivid picture of the acts of God among a people who became examples or illustrations for future generations (cf. 1 Cor. 10:11). The Old Testament was intended to be presented graphically in a ‘picture-language.’

“Further, Hebrew is a personal language. It addresses itself to the heart and emotions rather than merely to the mind or reason. Sometimes even nations are given personalities (cf. Mal. 1:2-3). Always the appeal is to the person in concrete realities of life and not to the abstract or theoretical. Hebrew is a language through which the message is felt rather than thought. As such, the language was highly qualified to convey to the individual believer as well as to the worshiping community the personal relation of the living God in the events of the Jewish nation. It was much more qualified to record the realization of revelation in the life of a nation than to propositionalize that revelation for the propagation among all nations.” (ibid, pp. 219-220)

- B. The entire New Testament was written in Greek. Again, to quote from Geisler and Nix:

“Greek was an intellectual language. It was more a language of the mind than of the heart, a fact to which the great Greek philosophers gave

abundant evidence. Greek was more suited to codifying a communication or reflecting on a revelation of God in order to put it into simple communicable form. It was a language that could more easily render the credible into the intelligible than could Hebrew. It was for this reason that New Testament Greek was a most useful medium for expressing the propositional truth of the New Testament, as Hebrew was for expressing the biographical truth of the Old Testament. Since Greek possessed a technical precision not found in Hebrew, the theological truths which were more generally expressed in the Hebrew of the Old Testament were more precisely formulated in the Greek of the New Testament.

“Furthermore, Greek was a nearly universal language. The truth of God in the Old Testament, which was initially revealed to one nation (Israel), was appropriately recorded in the language of the nation (Hebrew). But the fuller revelation given by God in the New Testament was not restricted in that way. In the words of Luke’s gospel, the message of Christ was to ‘be preached in his name to all nations’ (Lk. 24:47). The language most appropriate for the propagation of this message was naturally the one that was most widely spoken throughout the world. Such was the common (Koine) Greek, a thoroughly international language of the first century Mediterranean world.

“It may be concluded, then, that God chose the very languages to communicate His truth which had, in His providence, been prepared to express most effectively the kind of truth He desired at that particular time, in the unfolding of His overall plan. Hebrew, with its pictorial and personal vividness, expressed well the biographical truth of the Old Testament. Greek, with its intellectual and universal potentialities, served well for the doctrinal and evangelistic demands of the New Testament.”  
(ibid, p. 221)