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## Question 74 - What are the facts regarding the Septuagint?

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## 101 MOST ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE BIBLE

### 74. What are the facts regarding the Septuagint?

- A. The Septuagint is a translation of the Old Testament Hebrew into the Greek language. This was done around 280 B.C. at the request of some Jewish leaders. The reason was because many Jews had moved into Egypt and other places outside of Palestine, and as a result, were unable to read or speak Hebrew. So a translation was prepared in the common Greek language of the day. It was called the "Septuagint" (the Greek word for 70) because, according to tradition, it was supposedly translated by 70 Jewish scholars in 70 days. The Septuagint was the Bible in Jesus' day.
- B. The Jews at first accepted it, indeed, even pronouncing a curse upon anyone who would add to it, delete it, or alter it in anyway. But they later rejected it, calling the Septuagint a work of Satan!
- C. H. S. Miller aptly summarizes the Septuagint as follows:
- It is now generally believed that the work was done by Alexandrian rather than by Palestinian Jews, because: (1) It shows an imperfect knowledge of the Hebrew; (2) It contains many words and phrases which are peculiar to the Greek used in Alexandria (294); (3) It contains a liberal amount of Egyptian words;
- (4) It contains errors regarding names of places in Palestine; (5) The translation is, in many places, a free one, often departing from the Hebrew text which the Jews held so literally and reverently; (6) The good Palestinian Jew would, at this time at least, abhor the thought of translating the sacred Hebrew Scriptures into a heathen language.
- The importance of the Septuagint is great: (1) It is probably the oldest attempt to reproduce a book of any language in another language; (2) It is probably the oldest translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into another language; (3) It was an early step toward union with and intercourse between the Hebrew-speaking and Greek-speaking people; (4) It released the splendid Old Testament truths of God, sin, and redemption from the isolation of the Hebrew people and language, and gave them to the world through the Greek language; thus (5) It prepared the way for the spread of Christianity and the New Testament truths by giving, with the Old Testament, the entire Bible in one great universal language;
- (6) Philo, Alexandrian Jewish philosopher and writer, quoted generously from the Old Testament, and always from the Septuagint version; (7) Josephus used it more than the Hebrew; (8) It was commonly used in New Testament times, Christ and the New Testament writers quoting from it as well as from the Hebrew Old Testament; (9) It was received and venerated by the Jews, except the synagogues

and schools of Palestine, which adhered to the sacred Hebrew; (10) The early church received it from the Jews with the same veneration, and the Christian writers quoted largely from it, using it in the formation of doctrine and for argument; (11) It has been, and still is, the sacred text of the Greek Catholic Church, "The Holy Orthodox Catholic Apostolic Eastern Church," (12) It has been largely used in missionary work, and it was the text from which several other translations were made, such as the Old Latin, Egyptian, Ethiopic, Gothic, and Slavonic.

(*General Biblical Introduction*. Word-Bearer Press. Houghton, N.Y. 1952. pp. 222, 224)

- D. There are presently 1500 complete and fragmentary manuscripts of the Septuagint.