

The Gospel Unashamed

"From the cowardice that shrinks from new truth, from the laziness that is content with half-truths, from the arrogance that thinks it knows all truth, O, God of Truth, deliver us."

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~ All articles are written by Terry Carter unless otherwise stated ~

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Date of the Septuagint

Question:

I have read online that the Septuagint was not written till the second or third century A.D. Is this true?

Answer:

There are two groups that I know of who make, or have made, such a claim. The first group is the KJV only crowd and the second group are the Jewish apologists. Although their motives in making such a claim are different, the same evidence should suffice for both.

The KJV only advocates have a bias against the Septuagint as it is fatal to their position for them to admit that Jesus and the apostles quoted from the Septuagint. Therefore, they argue that it is both late and corrupted.

I have thoroughly refuted this position in my book *The FAQs Concerning the King James and New Versions* (available from Summit or on Amazon.com). There I use their most trusted sources, including the KJV translators themselves, to thoroughly dismantle their specific claims about this.

The second group that has a bias against the Septuagint is the Jewish apologists. They have attacked the credibility of the Septuagint since at least the second century.

The Christian apologists had used it so successfully to demonstrate that

Jesus was the Messiah that the Jews tried to discredit it. In particular they argued that the **Isaiah 7:14** passage should be translated "young maid" rather than "virgin" as the Septuagint has it. Their reasons for this are obviously to discredit the Christian claim that Jesus fulfilled this prophecy.

It is interesting that they didn't argue that Jesus wasn't born of a virgin here but argued that Isaiah should be translated "young maid". However, a young maid having a son is not much of a sign. That happens every day. Further, **Matthew** quotes from the Septuagint version in **Matt. 1:23** where it is rendered in Greek by "*parthenos*" which must be translated "virgin", not "young maid".

The tragedy of this is that the KJV only people, in their zeal to defend their favorite translation, parrot what the Jews wrote in trying to discredit the very Divinity of our Lord. In their attempt to undermine the new English translations, they are undermining the very foundation of Christianity itself.

Following is evidence that the Septuagint was written in the second century B.C.:

First Century A.D. Witnesses:

Philo – *On the Life of Moses II, sections VI-VII*, discusses the translation of the Law into Greek. He goes so far as to say that in his day there was an annual celebration of its completion held on the island of Pharos that not only Jews but also, "a

great number of persons of other nations" attended.

Josephus – *Antiquities 12.2.1-2* says that Ptolemy Soter had the Law translated into Greek.

Second Century A.D. Witnesses:

Justin Martyr – *Hortatory Address to the Greeks Chapter XIII* says that the profane writers (secular writers) attest that Ptolemy sent for 70 wise men from Jerusalem who knew both Hebrew and Greek to translate the writings of Moses and the prophets from Hebrew into Greek.

He even says that he himself had been in Alexandria and saw the little cots at Pharos still preserved and heard these things from the inhabitants.

He also says you can read about these things in "*Philo and Josephus, and many others*". He goes on to say that if anyone doubts what he is saying that they can get the proof from the books preserved in the synagogue of the Jews.

Irenaeus – *Against Heresies Book III, Chapter XXI* says Ptolemy was sent 70 elders from Jerusalem to translate their Scriptures into Greek.

Clement of Alexandria - *Stromata Book 1, Chapter XXII* tells of Ptolemy Philadelphus translating both the Law and the prophets from Hebrew into Greek. He quotes from Aristobolus in his first book, addressed to Philometor (Ptolemy VI), where he

speaks about this. Philometor had two reigns in the second century B.C., from 180 to 164 and again from 163 to 145.

Note carefully: This means that we have Aristobulus in the second century B.C. writing about the translation of the Hebrew Law into Greek.

Tertullian – *Apology Chapter XVIII* says that the Jews gave Ptolemy Philadelphus 72 interpreters to interpret their writings into Greek. He says that, in his day, the libraries of Ptolemy could be seen with the identical Hebrew originals at the temple of Serapis. He further says that Aristaeus gives the same account.

Third and Fourth Century A.D. Witnesses:

In the early third century, **Origen** made his famous Hexapla which included the Septuagint.

In the fourth century, **Eusebius** quotes from Irenaeus in his *Histories Book V, Chapter VIII* part of which I referenced above. He quotes this as proof of the reliability of the Septuagint. The translator inserts an interesting footnote here that reads in part as follows:

“It is at any rate certain that the Pentateuch (the original account applies only to the Pentateuch, but later it was extended to the entire Old Testament) was translated into Greek in Alexandria as early as the third century B.C...The translation of the remainder of the Old Testament followed during the second century B.C.”

Also, in his *Histories Book VII, Chapter XXXII*, Eusebius mentions Aristobulus as, “*chosen among the seventy interpreters of the sacred and divine Hebrew Scriptures by Ptolemy Philadelphus and his father*”.

The above ought to be more than enough evidence to convince an honest person that the Septuagint dates to the second or third century

B.C. In fact, the introduction to most any printing of the Septuagint will be filled with such information about its origins. While there is some debate as to which Ptolemy commissioned the work, there is no doubt that it was done in the second or third century B.C.

Finally, I would simply point to the fact that the New Testament writers clearly quoted from the Septuagint quite often.

The early Church fathers then quoted the New Testament as it quoted the Septuagint. Given the fact that you could construct all but 11 verses of the New Testament with material written within 150-200 years of Christ leaves no doubt as to their claims of antiquity.

That the Septuagint is quoted often by the New Testament demonstrates without a doubt that it predates the writing of the New Testament which was completed by the end of the first century A.D.