

A Brief Historical Overview of the Bible Versions

When it comes to choosing a Bible, there's really only two choices: a modern version or the King James Bible. The reason for this is because ALL modern versions of the Bible are translated from a group of manuscripts collectively called the Alexandrian Texts¹ while the King James Bible (KJB) is translated from a different set of manuscripts called the Byzantine Texts.²

The primary Alexandrian Text is the Septuagint (Roman numeral designation: LXX). Specifically, the Septuagint is a Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament (OT) that was *allegedly* translated before the time of Christ c. 285-250 B.C. (And less publicized, it has always included the books of the Apocrypha *as part of its canon.*). This is the *claim* made by a man named Origen who lived during early New Testament (NT) times.

But Origen also produced *own* version of the Greek NT.³ So in speaking of the Septuagint today, it's often done in the expanded sense of the term. So in general terms, the Septuagint is the Old *and* New Testament in Greek and the books of the Apocrypha. But specifically, it's the Old Testament in Greek and the books of the Apocrypha.

After his death in 254 A.D., others then used Origen's Septuagint to produce their own versions. The first of these was a man named Eusebius who used it to produce 50 Bibles for Constantine c. 331 A.D. – three of which are still known to exist today. These are Codex Vaticanus B, which was found in the Vatican library in 1481; Codex Alexandrinus A, which was given as a gift to King James I from Cyril Lucar, the Eastern Orthodox Bishop of Alexandria in 1627; and Codex Sinaiticus Aleph, which was found in a trash can in a monastery at the base of what is thought to be Mt. Sinai in 1844. These are the three Septuagints that remain today and they all contain the OT in Greek, the Apocrypha, and Origen's edited NT as copied and revised by Eusebius.

But between 331 A.D. and 1881, a period of some 1550 years, the Septuagint all but disappears from view – except in one place: Rome. But in 1881, and based on Eusebius' work, two English apostates named Westcott & Hort published the first “modern version” of the Bible in English called the English Revised Version of the Bible (ERV or RV). At first they only published the New Testament. But four years later in 1885, they published the Old followed by the Apocrypha in 1895. And in 1901, this English version with both Testaments was marketed and sold on U.S. shores as the American Standard Version of the Bible (ASV). Initially it wasn't well received. But like sin, over time, it and its subsequent versions have prevailed (1 Cor. 5:6).

In more recent history, names like Kurt Aland and Bruce Metzger continued Westcott & Hort's work. This resulted in the Nestle-Aland Greek NT text (NA²⁸) and United Bible Societies' Greek NT text (UBS⁵). These are the Greek texts from which the NT portion of all modern versions of the Bible are translated while the OT is based on the Septuagint or a bastardly mix of the Septuagint and the Hebrew Masoretic Texts.

¹ The Alexandrian Texts are also called the Minority or Critical Texts.

² The Byzantine Texts are also called the Majority or Traditional Texts.

³ Origen was born and raised in Alexandria, Egypt, which explains why the Septuagint and its textual descendants are referred to as the Alexandrian Texts.

But away from Alexandria and outside of Rome we find a much different set of manuscripts in circulation. These are collectively called the Byzantine Texts because they were collected from regions of Asia Minor where the apostles are known to have travelled (Corinth, Galatia, etc.). Specifically, the Byzantine Texts are the Greek NT manuscripts. But more generally, the term is used to also include the OT Hebrew Masoretic Texts (HMT or MT) as well.

But in contrast to the Alexandrian Texts that were brought together and canonized by the end of the 4th century, the Byzantine Texts weren't brought together until a man named Erasmus' published his NT in Greek in 1516 (later dubbed the *Textus Receptus*).⁴ Years later, the King James translators then used Erasmus' Textus Receptus as the basis for their KJB. And so it was the Hebrew Masoretic Texts and the Greek Textus Receptus from which all early English Bibles were translated up to and including the KJB in 1611. That is, until 1881, some 270 years later, when Westcott & Hort began to publish their English versions based on Alexandrian Texts. So let it be understood that the debate between the Bible versions isn't based on which English (or other language) translation we should be reading from, but from which set of manuscripts we should be using when making a translation: the Alexandrian or the Byzantine. Why? Because ALL modern versions are translated from the Alexandrian Texts and the KJB from the Byzantine!

But in looking at the accompanying chart, notice the contrasts it reveals between the two text-types. (1) The Alexandrian Texts came out of Egypt while the Byzantine came out of Israel and Asia Minor. (2) The Alexandrian Texts were brought together and canonized "early" in history and the Byzantine "later."⁵ (3) For 1500+ years, the Alexandrian Texts were only used *within* Roman Catholicism while the Byzantine circulated freely *without* (less Rome's persecution). (4) The Alexandrian Texts are continually being revised while the KJB has remained the same since 1611. It has only been *edited*.⁶ (5) And as indicated, all modern versions are derived from the Alexandrian Texts while the KJB is derived from the Byzantine. Thus there are major differences between the two text-types that cannot be reconciled – and this is only a small sampling.

So the short of it is this: either we side with the Alexandrian Texts that were used to establish and further Rome or we side with the Byzantine that were used to set the world free from its dominion.⁷ It's that simple. No one disputes the history of what has been presented here, only its final conclusion. Why? Because it requires a decision. So for the reasons outlined here (and many more!), there's really only one choice (in English) for Bible-believing Christians: the King James Bible. The KJB is God's Word in English; it's not a "version" of the Truth. Selah.

⁴ A year later in 1517, Luther pinned his Ninety-Five Thesis on the Wittenberg door which set the stage for the Reformation. Luther then used Erasmus' 2nd Edition (1519) to produce his German Bible which he completed in 1534; and it was from Erasmus' 3rd Edition (1522) that William Tyndale published his English NT in 1526 – an act for which Rome strangled and burned him at the stake.

⁵ This is why modern version frequently include a footnoted or bracketed reference to their texts being "The oldest and more reliable..."

⁶ The KJB has only been edited, not revised. A *revision* brings about a change to the message of the text while an *edition* only corrects spelling mistakes, changes font, etc., or makes small changes that don't affect its message. Hence, the modern versions are all revisions while the KJB has only been edited. And if this is true, then how can the Alexandrian Texts be the "most reliable"?

⁷ Note that Vaticanus B was found in the *Vatican* library; that Alexandrinus A was a gift to England sent from *Alexandria*; and that Sinaiticus Aleph was found in a *monastery* – thus revealing their Romish heritage.

The Bible Versions – Basic Timeline

Alexandrian Texts (The Bible of Rome)		Byzantine Texts (The Bible of Biblical Christianity)
Septuagint (LXX) (Greek OT + Apocrypha)	c. 1445-433 B.C. → ← c. 250 B.C.	Hebrew Old Testament (Masoretic Text)
<i>New Testament Complete</i>	← 100 A.D. →	<i>New Testament Complete</i>
Origen’s Septuagint (Greek OT + Apocrypha + Greek NT)	← c. 240 A.D.	
Eusebius’ 50 Bibles (Septuagints) Three remaining: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Codex Sinaiticus Aleph ➤ Codex Vaticanus B ➤ Codex Alexandrinus A Jerome’s Latin Vulgate	← c. 331 A.D. ← c. 400 A.D.	{Old and NT manuscripts in circulation throughout Asia Minor and world}
{c. 331 A.D. - 1881: LXX disappears from view for 1500+ years, except in Rome}		
Rome officially adopts Jerome’s Latin Vulgate	1516 → 1526 → ←1546	Erasmus publishes NT in Greek (aka. Textus Receptus) Tyndale publishes NT in English
Westcott & Hort (English and Greek NT)	← 1881	1611 → King James Bible (Hebrew Masoretic Text + TR)
American Standard Version (U.S)	← 1901	
Nestle-Aland\UBS Greek NTs (Kurt Aland\Bruce Metzger)	← 1963\66	
All Modern Versions	← Present →	King James Bible