

Did Jesus Use the Septuagint?

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Soli Deo Gloria!

The view of many mainstream scholars today is that Jesus used the Septuagint (LXX; i.e., the translation of the O.T. in Greek) as His Bible. The primary evidence offered in support of this view is that many of His quotations from the O.T. appear to better match the Greek text of the LXX than the Hebrew (Masoretic) text. That evidence, however, must be weighed against the fact that the earliest extant manuscript copies of the LXX come from several centuries after Christ, creating the possibility that the Greek text for these O.T. verses could have been taken from their N.T. quotations in order to create an exact, verbatim match¹ (which otherwise is not the pattern of scriptural quotation seen in the Bible). Is there alternative evidence in favor of Jesus' use of the Hebrew O.T. rather than the LXX? The answer to that question is YES, and the evidence is quite compelling.

In Luke 24:44, Jesus made reference to the written O.T. scriptures:

"And [Jesus] said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me."

Implicit in these words of Jesus is the structure and organization of the Hebrew Bible (which is equivalent in content to the O.T.). The books of the Hebrew Bible (i.e., **TNK**, or Tanakh) are organized into three sections: the law [of Moses] (Heb., **Torah**), the prophets (Heb., **Nevi'im**), and the writings (Heb., **Ketuvim**; the first book in this section is the Psalms). By referring to the entirety of the (O.T.) scriptures as the law, the prophets, and the psalms, Jesus presupposed the organization of the O.T. canon that appears only in the Hebrew scriptures. In contrast, the books in the LXX (which also contains many non-canonical books) are organized much like they appear in modern English Bibles (e.g., historical books, wisdom books, and prophetic books). Thus, Jesus' words presuppose the Hebrew Bible, not the Greek Septuagint.

This presupposition of a Hebrew Bible is seen again in Matthew 23:35, where Jesus refers to the first and last martyrs in the O.T. as:

"That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, who ye slew between the temple and the altar".

Abel is the first martyr recorded in Genesis 4, and Zacharias is the last martyr recorded in 2 Chronicles 24. Genesis is the first book in the Hebrew Bible, and 2 Chronicles is the last book in the Hebrew Bible. Again, Jesus' words presuppose the Hebrew Bible, not the Greek Septuagint.

Did Jesus use the Septuagint? NO, Jesus used the Hebrew scriptures.

¹ For evidence of this, see "LXX Quotation from the NT" at <https://continueinmyword.net/textual-studies/>.