



How to Read The Bible

Reading can be daunting to anyone, and when it comes to the Bible, many of us simply give up thinking that it is too hard or over our heads. Or, others have a kind of crazy ultra-subjective approach, believing that it is open to any personal interpretation in the “*this is what it means to me*” school of reading.

Definitely the Bible stands alone. There is not another book like it in existence, declared by many to be the inerrant Word of God. Although the Bible is not like any other book, still it must be read the way you would read any other book, by letting it speak for itself.

The most important fact about *reading anything* is that the **writer determines the meaning**. The reader can **at best** tip his hat to the text, acknowledging that he has done his best to understand the writer's complete viewpoint. Sometimes the readers' experiences are valuable to understanding, sometimes they just get in the way.

We must not bring to our reading a lot of preconceived notions that could filter out what the writer is saying. You wouldn't read a book by Bonhoeffer, for example, and then declare after you have read a page “this is what it means to me or I can't believe that is true.” Preconceived notions may come from our Western Worldview, from church doctrines that can act like a screwdriver, screwing interpretations into a text, from pastors' sermons, from TV preachers, from some misunderstanding about translations, or from reading a passage symbolically instead of literally. It is best to approach the text without filters or preconceived ideas. Very difficult to do.

As established, the writer creates meaning, not the reader. So, the first step of reading is **what is the author saying?** The second step is **do I agree with this writer in whole or in part?** If you begin with step two, you will never be able to read the Bible intelligently. Ultimately you must decide if what you have read is true. But, you can't change the rules of intelligent reading simply because what you read does not fit into your paradigm.

The reader must humble himself. The writer must be superior to the reader in understanding. And the reader must be able to overcome this inequality to a good degree. The reason he picks up the book in the first place is to have understanding. He must strive to know what the author meant. Many readers will never understand no matter how easy the translation, or how many

below the line commentators, The Greeks call such readers Sophomores; Alexander Pope calls them “bookful blockheads, ignorantly read” or as Paul said “*ever learning but never coming to a knowledge of the truth*” (2 Tim.3.7).

I was just reading a Facebook post today by a very good scholar who was discussing the problem of evil. Logical syllogisms were presented, philosophers such as Epicurus, Richard Dawkins, Bertrand Russel, were mentioned; but in this erudite discussion, the Bible didn't come up, the only book where evil is adequately explained. In fact, when it comes to the Bible, sometimes a child can instinctively grasp a truth before a learned person.

Dabbling here and there in the Bible, reading about the Bible instead of reading the Bible itself will limit understanding. Although this essay focuses on important practical considerations, The Holy Spirit is the ultimate teacher. Arrogance and our naturalistic preconceptions interfere with our reading the Bible, especially the first five books, the Torah. Paul doesn't give the smart man a lot of credit. He says, God cannot be known through human wisdom.

“For the **natural man** does not receive the things of the spirit of God for they are foolishness to him, nor can he know them because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Cor 2. 14).

The Western World View as Hindrance

Northern European peoples are **naturalistic**. We respect the engineer, the scientist. We focus on science to understand the natural world. Our Western World View is not concerned with the supernatural, supernatural beings, or those concepts that go beyond the five senses. If we are sick, we send for the doctor trained in science. A non-Westerner may say, “What spirit have I offended? Is someone taking revenge by having a spirit afflict me? Yet, the Bible introduces the **supernatural** from the first verse in Genesis through the last verse in Revelation. Scientists and naturalists may have problems with the supernatural, and for that reason alone disregard the Bible.

Some of our inherited Western assumptions focus on material things, gaining stuff; but a Filipino believes you are poor if you have no relatives. In the New Testament, what we store up in heaven is our real treasure.

Western society is also **humanistic**. We believe our achievements have come unaided through human efforts. Humanism believes the problems of living in the world can be solved by human intelligence, no outside spiritual assistance is needed. The Bible refers to the humanists as “Sons of Greece” and those who are like the Hebrews, God's people, as “Sons of Zion” (Zech. 9.1).

Western Society values **individualism and independence**. We don't value dependence on God or the group to which we belong. Biblical society was dependent on each other and God. Westerners tend to be open to change, especially if technological, but not so open to suspending a naturalistic belief for a supernatural one. In fact, some Bible expositors interpret the “original sin” of Adam and Eve as a desire to separate from God, to rely completely on themselves.

The Overview

The same principles that guide all reading should be applied to the Bible. Readers benefit from an **overview** of a book; and since the Bible is a book of books, each book should be read with the writer's culture, history and audience in mind. We need to understand that the early Hebrews birthed the Bible from their Middle Eastern culture which tends to be at odds with our Western Culture. Many Christians never realize that Jesus is a Jew born of a Jewish Mother in a Jewish land of the lineage of David, King of Israel, from the Tribe of Judah, son of Jacob, son of Abraham.

A good overview of the Bible is the Bethel Bible Series which began 60 years ago and is still active. The Bible is a work of literature and literature must be **unified**. There is something pulling the entire Bible together to give it unity, a sense that all parts are contributing to the whole. The Bethel Series does a great job of illustrating unity showing how everything is connected from Genesis to Revelation. You don't need a Bible course to begin, though this study is helpful.

None the less, don't be daunted, take a big breath and start reading. The Bible is a book of truth and comfort. Many advocate beginning with John's gospel in the New Testament. Personally I like to begin with the first five books, the **Torah** as it is the seed plot for the rest of the Bible explaining much of what is to come. Some begin in the New Testament never to read the "Old." Each testament helps to explain the other. Perhaps begin with Genesis and Matthew where you will find lots of correlation.

What pulls the Bible together is the person of Jesus Christ or Yeshua ha Mashiach. He can be seen throughout the entire Bible, in both testaments. And the themes of ***Paradise Lost, the sinfulness of man, the redemption of man, and Paradise Restored*** are the universal glue. An experienced Bible reader will see more and more correspondences. Like pieces of an intricate puzzle, no piece can be removed without removing some truth or some light that is necessary to understand the whole.

Some facts about the Bible:

It was written over a 1600 year span.

There are 66 books from 40 different authors

The writers didn't consult with one another, yet their work in its entirety produces agreement.

Though each writer writes from his own point of view and in his own style, their collected writings fit together to produce a unified work, giving the sense of one author, God.

The person who ties all the books together is the Jewish Messiah, known as Yeshua or Jesus.

The writers of this book of books are all Jewish (or Hebrew) with the exception of Luke who was a Jewish convert and Paul's personal doctor.

The Old Testament is written in Hebrew with the exception that parts of Daniel, Jeremiah, Ezra, were written in Aramaic.

New evidence supports that the Gospels were also written in Hebrew.

The New Testament letters were written in Greek.

The earliest manuscript of the O.T. Is the **Septuagint (LXX)** written entirely in Greek in the 3rd century B.C.

Recent archaeological finds support a written rather than an oral tradition verified by Jesus who said, “**Moses wrote of me**” (**John 5. 36 and Luke 24. 25-27**).

The Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS) found in the 1940's and 50's are manuscripts at least a thousand years earlier than any other texts in existence and amazed scholars by their harmony.

How Did the Bible Come to Us? What is the Impact of Translation?

Some people believe the Bible cannot be accurate because of its many translations. In regard to the Old Testament, the Jews were the most meticulous preservers of manuscripts. It is more correct to say that the Old Testament came to us the way an old photograph does, by copying. The Old Testament writers wrote on scrolls. The redactors and scribes recopied them when they got old. The old scrolls were then put into a jar and hidden away. The copiers were so meticulous that if they were to drive a spike through a new scroll, the letters pierced would be identical to a similar piercing of the old scroll. The number of letters from the top to the bottom, from the right to the left would also be identical.

Before they could copy the sacred name of God, (Yod Hey Vav Hey), scribes would immerse in baptismal waters, called a Mikvah. Many archaeological remains of Mikvahs are in the Qumran area of the Dead Sea. The find of the **Dead Sea Scrolls** in the late 1940's throughout the 1950's confirm the authenticity of our Old Testament as they are one to two thousand years older than the Old Testament found in our modern Bibles, known as the **Masoretic Text** (Dr. Daniel Machiela, The Earliest Manuscripts of the Hebrew Bible in Existence).

Found in eleven caves were over a thousand copies of the **Old Testament** in Greek, Syriac, Aramaic, and Hebrew, including many copies of Deuteronomy, the Psalms, and Isaiah. Likewise found were copies of First Enoch and The Book of Giants. It is interesting that the New Testament cites Deuteronomy, Psalms and Isaiah the most.

The Septuagint

The **Septuagint (LXX)** is a Greek translation of the Old Testament. What most don't know is that it is the **oldest** biblical manuscript in existence. Copies of it were also found in the Qumran Caves. The LXX had a miraculous beginning. By the 3rd century BC, many Jews were scattered throughout the Mediterranean and could no longer speak Hebrew. One Jew searched the

Alexandrian Library and could not find a Bible. The story is that seventy two Jewish scholars worked separately for seventy two days and miraculously produced identical texts of the Old Testament (Stephen Hackett).

The Old Testament found in our modern Bibles is the Masoretic Hebrew Translation (**MB**). The Greek translation, (**LXX**) is about 1300 years older than the (Masoretic) MB). The LXX was more widely available to the Apostles and the Fathers becoming the Bible of the early church.

Originally it was thought that the LXX favored or harmonized with Greek thinking. But instead, comparisons revealed that it was *faithful to Ancient Hebrew in thought, language and chronology* says Machiela, a textual scholar and translator of the Dead Sea Scrolls. He has found that careful examinations of ancient texts prove consistency and harmony. God has certainly preserved His Word.

When Jesus quotes Scripture it seemingly mirrors the Septuagint, giving it a halo of authenticity. Also probable is that the Greek manuscripts were more accessible than the Hebrew texts squirreled away in the Rabbinical schools in Hebron, Safed, and Tiberias. What we don't have is the **Source Text** from which the Septuagint or Masoretic texts were derived. Until the fourth century AD, there were only two translations of the Hebrew Bible in existence, the Septuagint and the Masoretic. The oldest **Masoretic** is the **Lenningrad Codex** completed in 1008 or 1300 years after the **Septuagint, LXX**.

The Bible Into Latin and English

Jerome living on the Mount of Olives in the late 4th century A.D., translated the entire Bible into Latin, known as the **Vulgate** serving as the basis for The Catholic Bibles and the Eastern Orthodox Bible which Machiela says is the most accurate of all the word for word Bibles, though not so literary. The **Vulgate** was also found to harmonize with ancient texts.

Regarding the **New Testament**, many thousands of manuscripts existed in the early centuries of the church but had not been collected into a single corpus. No doubt church leaders had an original autograph from which other manuscripts proliferated. By two hundred AD, every verse that we may read in the **King James Version** had already been cited by the Ante-Nicean Fathers. They were men like Clement, baptized by Peter, Ignatius of Lyons, a hearer of the apostles, Justin Martyr, and Irenaeus.

The voluminous works of Irenaeus, pupil of Polycarp, a pupil of the Apostle John, pupil of God (Bennet 13) validate, along with other early writers, the authenticity of the New Testament manuscripts as received by (**Textus Receptus**) the translators who gave us the **King James Version**. The argument that the New Testament Canon wasn't agreed upon until the Council of Nicea 325 is spurious. Although, not available to the common man, the Bible, as we know it, was available to scholars and church leaders long before the council ever met, according to Eusebius who was a member of that council.

What was needed was a single volume of the New Testament. Enter **Erasmus**. Erasmus was a Dutch theologian who was the first to publish a printed Greek Text of The New Testament. Erasmus published five editions, the first in 1516, followed by the 1519 edition (used by Martin Luther for his historic German translation). He kept editing until his death in 1536. His magnificent work set the standard for centuries to come. The various Erasmus editions became

the basis for the Protestant Reformation Bibles and culminated in the magnificent **Authorized King James Version** of 1611.

The great history of the Authorized King James Bible is literally the DNA of our language, and stands alone as the most beautiful translation. We can **also** trust that it is a very faithful literal translation of the Greek as is the **New KJV** says Stephen Hacket, textual critic. The **AKJV** was translated by a group of forty seven scholars unmatched today in brilliance. Sir Lancelot Andrewes, bishop and scholar, headed the committee for King James. He was renowned for his preaching and his scholarship and certainly could have been translator general at Babel. No other time period could have been more salubrious than the time of Shakespeare and Elizabeth to produce such a momentous work. Then was the flowering of the English language when even plowmen were poets.

The **Revised Standard Version (RSV)** didn't come about until the early 20th and the later 20th century brought the familiar **New American Standard, The New King James Bible**, and the **New International Bible (NIV)**. At that time there were not so many Bibles to say that meaning was lost in translation. However, paraphrases and new Bibles have sprouted like weeds in the last forty years. Many can't be trusted, an argument for another day.

The Textus Receptus (*texts received*) were the Greek manuscripts which formed the basis of the original English translations, or the Reformation Bibles. Since the Receptus, older manuscripts have come to light, the **Textus Criticus**, or the **Critical Text**, which arrived on the scene in the late 1800s replacing the Receptus as the most accurate rendering of ancient Greek Texts. Two prominent scholars, Wescott and Hort, printed their **New Testament in Greek**, dismissing the Receptus and King James as inferior.

Many scholars think that the age of the Critical Text makes them more accurate. The Textus Criticus arrived on the scene very badly marked up and edited which may reveal tampering argues ancient manuscript expert Ken Johnson.

Translations such as the NIV, the **English Standard Version 2001** are based on the **Textus Criticus**. They are different from the KJV, the NKJV, the RSV because they don't include some of the same verses or even the same designated names for God and Jesus. Are they more accurate because they are older? Some of the more famous exclusions are “young woman” instead of “a Virgin shall conceive” in Isaiah seven. The omission of the woman taken in adultery, and the longer ending in Mark 16 are also missing. Dr. Matthew Everhard says that “The longer Mark 16 passage exists in 1,226 other manuscripts, however. And, only three manuscripts exclude Mark 16.” I noticed that the famous John 3.16 passage in the ESV excludes “only begotten” son which has theological implications in my view.

Yes, there is a snobbery attached to the older Critical Texts. Professors of seminary and Bible Schools tend to latch on to the older texts. Graduates go along with the academic flow, as students tend to do. Others may fear censure and unemployment. This ancient manuscript controversy has yet to be settled. This is just one more controversy in a long history.

For example, Eusebius records the battles the Fathers had with Gnostic counterfeits, such as Simon Magus, (Simon the Sorcerer) whose school in Alexandria pumped out lots of manuscripts

and pseudo gospels in Greek. But for me, the argument is moot if the same passages that are familiar to us were already cited by the early Fathers. Too late I say, the omitted verses were already in circulation.

However, now there are over nine hundred translations and paraphrases. Now is the time to be careful. Paraphrases and doctrine driven Bibles abound that are dangerous such as **The Passion Bible**, **The Mirror Bible** and the **Message Bible**. Don't read just anything that looks easy and appealing.

Hackett's recommendations for the three best versions are **The King James** and **New King James**, **The Legacy Bible** and the **NET, New English Translation** which takes a bit more liberty but is easier reading for a moderns with great notes. The most important take away is that even through translation, the Bibles harmonize. God does watch over his Word. And, The King James, my favorite, is coming back into favor.

Tools for Reading

Now to prepare for the close read some tools are necessary, **pen and a dictionary**. A good Bible dictionary is nice too, but if you don't know what the words mean, Help! If you missed learning about language devices in your English class, they become even more important aids in understanding the Bible.

Should I look up the original Greek and Hebrew? Sometimes, a Greek and Hebrew lexicon can shed a little light. But, if you have ever read a Google translation you know that the practice doesn't convey meaning. The art and science of the translator is to convey meaning. Looking up a word in the original can only convey a denotation of a word, not its connotation and certainly not the meaning of the passage. The translator must use the best English words that he can to convey the entire sense, even to poetic effect of the original. The translation that does this the most artistically and faithfully the King James Version.

A look at Language in the Bible:

As mentioned, allow the author to speak for himself. The author, not the reader, determines if the passage is literal or figurative. If it seems far-fetched, it does not automatically mean the the passage contains symbols, metaphor, or allegory. Begin with the **literal method of interpretation** that gives to each word the same exact basic meaning it would have in normal, customary usage whether employed in writing, speaking, or thinking. To interpret literally means nothing more or less than to read in terms of normal, usual, designations. When the text no longer allows this, then the reader shifts his method as he would when reading Jesus words, "I am the door," which is, of course, a metaphor. The literal method of interpretation is the only sane and safe check on the imaginations of man.

The Bible, like all literature, contains different kinds of language: poetry, parable, figures of speech such as metaphor, allegory, types, and symbols. To read the Bible intelligently, it is important to understand the definition of each.

A **metaphor** is a figure of speech using a picture to help us understand meaning. A common

metaphor might be “The assignment was a breeze.” A metaphor is a picture which compares two things that are unrelated. Some get very hackneyed, “He was as stubborn as a mule.” The idea is to look at the picture, the mule or the breeze to aid the concept.

A Parable is a story that teaches a moral or religious lesson.

Jesus taught in parables. Parables reveal or obscure very deep truths. For example, Even though the Jews expected the immediate promise of the Kingdom, Jesus illustrates by way of parable in **Luke 19** that this Kingdom will come only after an undefined period of time has elapsed.

He represents Himself as the nobleman who having a right to the Kingdom goes “into a far country to receive the Kingdom for Himself” (12) and to return at a later time.” During His absence His servants are to “occupy till I come.” Then after an interval of time, not definitely stated, the nobleman returns ([Jesus] to enter His reign having received the Kingdom. He returns, judgment follows, and those who rejected Him saying 'we will not have this man to rule over us'(14) are destroyed.

The Parables can be very difficult with layers of application.

An Allegory is a figure of speech in which abstract ideas and principles are described in terms of characters, figures, and events. Although an allegory uses symbols, it is different from symbolism. An allegory is a complete narrative which involves characters and events that stand for an abstract idea.

Pilgrims Progress is an old Christian allegory where every event and character is an idea. Some read the book of Revelation as an allegory instead of as a prophecy as yet unfulfilled. I do not believe it to be an allegory though it contains symbolic language.

Symbol

A symbol, on the other hand, is an object that stands for an idea giving it a particular meaning. A symbol does not tell a story like an allegory. A common symbol used in everyday language might be the rose. The rose stands for love. The dove for peace. A chain might symbolize prison or a union. We are “bound together by cords of love.” Lots of black in a story might stand for evil or death. A ladder may symbolize the connection between heaven and earth.

Types

The most important aid in Bible reading is the **Type**. The type connects the two testaments. A **Type means to represent before hand, to prefigure. It is a person, event, or institution in the Old Testament that stands for a corresponding person or event in the New Testament.** The Old Testament has many types that foreshadow or prefigure Jesus. The New Testament contains anti-types one that is foreshadowed by or identified with a counterpart in the Old Testament. For Example, Jesus' reference to the “Days of Noah and Lot” in the last days are **anti-types** that help explain his end times scenario in the 24th chapter of Matthew.

Examples of Types

The Passover Lamb: The Israelites sacrificed a lamb at Passover. The lamb becomes a picture of the sacrifice of Jesus. John the Baptist calls Jesus “the lamb that takes away the sins of the world.” In the O.T. every time a lamb is sacrificed it typifies the final sacrifice of Jesus.

The Serpent in the Wilderness: The 21st chapter of Numbers tells of fiery serpents sent among the children of Israel. Many of them died. God commanded Moses to erect a bronze serpent. If the people looked up to this serpent, they would not die but live.

Jesus said to Nicodemus, “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life” (John 3.14). If the children of Israel did not look up to that type of Christ, they died. Likewise, we must look up to the cross and the resurrection in faith to live. This is a very powerful type.

The Offering of Isaac:

Abraham's offering up Isaac as a sacrifice **is a type** of the crucifixion (Genesis 22). Many details of Jesus crucifixion are pictured. How many details can you find? Can you find twenty?

The Rock

A rock is a type of Jesus. God told Moses that He would hide him in the “**cleft of the rock**” as he passed by so that Moses would not die in His presence. That cleft represents Jesus. God said, “there is beside me a cleft in the rock” meaning that seated beside him was Jesus (Ex.33.21) The idea of Jesus seated beside the most high God is also in John, Hebrews and in other places.

Moses was instructed to **strike a rock** to get water when the children of Israel were thirsty Paul explains that type: “We all ate the same spiritual food [manna] and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of the spiritual rock that followed them, and that rock was Christ” (1 Cor.10.4). Understanding this type, can you answer the question, why was Moses not permitted to strike the rock twice for water?

Prophecy

Prophecy is another kind of language in the Bible. Hebrew is ideally suited for prophecy because time can be fluid; either the past, present or future may be expressed, sometimes all at once.

Prophecy in the Bible is different from prophetic significance that one might find in a book like Orwell's 1984 or Allan Bloom's The Closing of the American Mind. Biblical prophecy foretells very specifically events that have come to pass in the smallest detail. No other book purporting to be prophetic has been able to duplicate the Bible in this regard.

Sometimes readers will mistake prophecy for allegory. Jesus' first coming is a fulfillment of many Scriptures in the Old Testament taken literally. That Jesus has come as Messiah is based on prophetic fulfillment. Other Scriptures describing the fate of Israel have also come to pass as prophesied. To then read unfulfilled prophecies as allegory is a violation of logic. ***Would not future prophecies have the same literal fulfillment?***

A few of examples:

Jesus was born of a virgin, Isaiah 7.14

Born in Bethlehem, Micah 5

Called out of Egypt, Hosea 11.1

Hands and feet pierced, Psalms 22

Fate of Israel:

Abraham told that Israel would be slaves in Egypt but led out with great wealth. Gen 15.14

The Northern Kingdom would be captured. Amos 5.27

The rebuilding of the second temple, Zech. 4.6.10.

After a great diaspora, the Nation of Israel would be restored in a day, Is. 66.7-8.

The deserts would bloom like a rose, Is.35.1. There are many more examples of fulfilled prophecy.

The Close Read

Now to prepare for the close read, be able to answer the following:

What is the category of the book are you reading?

(The Bible has history, poetry, prophetic books, eyewitness accounts, biographies, letters)

Rapidly overview and produce a cursory outline of the Book

Read a chapter with pen in hand.

Who is speaking in every instance?

Who is the audience? (A common reading error is to assume that Christians are the audience). Since the Bible has many applications of meaning, often lessons from your reading may be applied to the Christian life, ***but don't mistake a lesson for the audience.***

Note the beginning and end of each sentence.

Only a sentence can convey meaning; look for the periods.

For example the first chapter of Ephesians has only one sentence in 8 verses.

Look up any words you don't know in a dictionary.

Discover the Terms.

A term is a particular use of a word or phrase. It can't be looked up in the dictionary. The author uses a term to communicate his special knowledge. Doctors and Carpenters, and lawyers use terms that aren't understood by the layman at once. So does the Bible. For example, Paul's letters to the Thessalonians has terms that have special meaning such as ***kingdom, thief in the night, His appearing***. One of the most reoccurring biblical terms is ***wrath, The Day of the Lord, The Day, That Great and Terrible Day***, or just ***That Day***.

Another term is ***Kingdom of God or Kingdom of Heaven***.

Understanding End Times especially relies on an understanding of those terms. You will eventually need to come to terms with the terms. Slipping over the terms without proper understanding will cause the reader to miss important concepts.

Other Tips

Be sure to trace back any pronouns to their antecedent. In the case of the Bible, pronouns can become tricky. The verse and chapter designations are arbitrary and were not in the

original texts. It may be that the sense of the chapter especially the first verses must be found in the preceding chapter. Don't assume that a chapter is a unit of meaning.

Now find the important words, and through them come to understand the author. **Underline** anything that jumps out at you for any reason but especially **key words**. **What are the key words? Any words that give you trouble.**

Find key sentences and underline them. What are the key sentences? Likewise, The ones that give you the most difficulty. That is why Bible discussion groups are so valuable. We can discuss problems of reading, but ultimately the reader has to come to an understanding or the reading simply isn't done.

Ask questions of the text. Ask any question that you think needs clarifying. Write these questions in marginal notes, notes that may have arrows drawn to the mystifying places. When I would teach literature I would have my students write a list of questions to ask the character if they could bring that character to life. Then I would have other students role play. It is amazing what answers role playing can give to difficult questions. Ask the question, and pretend that you are the one with the answer and give it a whirl.

Be prepared to cross reference while a book is being digested. Even reading the Bible from beginning to end in sequence may not give you complete understanding. Themes and subjects are found spread across the Bible. If the Holy Spirit doesn't cross reference, use a **Concordance** to see all the places where this particular event or subject is spoken of. Pay attention to the first source. Until you know the cross references, you will not be able to have a complete grasp on the subject at hand. Their composite understanding gives the Bible unity and the reader the fullest sense of the topic. What I am proposing takes some time.

Are you able to restate the author? If you don't know his main idea, you can't decide your own position. You must be able to state with reasonable clarity "I understand" before you know whether or not to agree or whether to suspend judgment.

The rewards for Bible reading are many. You will learn historical and geographical facts supported by archaeological evidence. If diligent and prayerful, he who seeks will find. You will find the God who created the universe. You will find the Jewish Messiah. As a bonus, you may receive peace, love and joy in the Holy Ghost as well as the gift of eternal life. I can think of no greater prize.

Mary Pinkney Gulbranson Parnell

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Dr. Daniel Machiela wrote the following note to me regarding the Septuagint. This statement spurred on the need to update my 2018 version.

"Actually the oldest text of the old testament, period. True, it is a translation, made by Jews who translated the oral tradition into text, for the sake of the Jews in the Hellenistic world who lost their Hebrew tongue. Therefore, many believe that the Septuagint is the closest to the ancient old testament. The current "official Hebrew bible" (Masoretic Text) is from the 7th and 10th centuries AD."

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