

*Anno Domini*¹

Latin and Greek



The New Testament writers used Greek. Paul used it even when writing his epistle to the Romans. Even in Rome itself at this time then, Greek was the common language.

We have some inklings of how the New Testament came to be put together because we know from the Bible itself that, after the martyrdom of Stephen, Christians fled from Jerusalem to, among other places, Antioch, Capital city of the Roman province of Syria. At Antioch they preached to the Jewish Greek speakers and, after Barnabas and Paul visited the city, a church was founded there and thrived. You can read about this in Acts 11. In this city the followers of Jesus were first called Christians. That Peter also visited Antioch we also know from a remark Paul makes in his letter to the Galatians 2:11. After Jerusalem fell to the Romans in AD70 Antioch took over as the chief centre of Christianity. The group of manuscripts that form the most reliable source of the Greek New Testament are sometimes called the Antiochian text. Another name for it is the Byzantine Text. This is because of its association with the Greek scholars of the Western capital of the Roman Empire, Byzantium. Most people in the empire probably spoke two languages, their own native language and either Greek or Latin, depending on whether they were in the Western or the Eastern area of the empire. Wherever they lived, most educated people spoke Greek and Latin especially if they wanted to work for the Roman authorities. You can read more about this subject here: <https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.tbsbibles.org/resource/collection/9D62A49E-9FF0-410B-B3CB-23A3C5EAE1CF/The-Lord-Gave-the-Word.pdf>

If you have a synchronological chart look at the years 300-400AD. What do you see happening to the Roman Empire? The maps at the beginning of the chart are quite helpful for this lessons too.

The Roman Empire grew so large that it was not possible to govern it all from Rome. The Emperor Diocletian (ruled 284AD to 305AD) divided the empire into halves. The west covered Spain, Gaul, Britain, and Italy, as well as the western parts of North Africa. The east included Greece, Asia Minor, and Egypt. The new capital city in the east was Byzantium (later called Constantinople, now Istanbul). Rome continued to govern the Western part of the empire. The knowledge of Greek began to decline in Western Europe. Then came the Emperor Theodosius who ruled from AD 379 to AD 395. He decided that both his sons should succeed him, one in the east and one in the west. This separated the two parts of the empire completely.

As the empire in the west gradually weakened contact between the two halves became less frequent. Knowledge of Greek declined steadily in the West and knowledge of Latin declined in the East. Over time this led to a problem. The New Testament was in Greek. There were probably few Christians who understood Hebrew so the Old Testament was accessible also only through Greek translations, the most enduring of which, known as the Septuagint, was completed around 130BC. As knowledge of Greek declined in the West the need for a Latin translation became more and more urgent. In the Eastern part of the empire there was no such need as Greek scholarship continued.

¹ AD, The year of our Lord.

Word Search

20 words

T H E O D O S I U S A S P B H K I A J T W
E D C E D F E B F C G E A D K O L E M E E
S I S E P T U A G I N T U J F N G O H P S
C O N S T A N T I N O P L E R L I J P U T
H C R G S I G R E E K T K R O M A N U L E
E L V M W N B Y Z A N T I U M L Y R Z V R
B E A H B B A R N A B A S S E A C S D O N
R T E P F J R G C O N S T A N T I O C H H
E I I T R A N S L A T E J L M I K T L W M
W A C T S E A S T E R N O E D N E P R R Y
A N S Y T Z B U A V B W C M N Y V Z U A W
E M P I R E B M A N U S C R I P T C S D Z

Acts, Antioch, Barnabas, Byzantium, Constantinople, Diocletian, Eastern, Empire, Greek, Hebrew, Jerusalem, Latin, Manuscript, Paul, Roman, Rome, Septuagint, Theodosius, Translate, Western.

Which two words are both the name of the same city?