

Doctrine of the Bible

Our English Bible

1. The story of the English Bible can be picked up in the year 1382 when John Wycliffe (1330 – 1384) translated the Bible into English from the Latin Vulgate (“common”).
2. Unfortunately, in an attempt to control the hearts and minds of people, the Roman Catholic Church condemned this wayward priest. Long after he had died of a stroke on December 31, 1384, Wycliffe was condemned in 1415, and burned for heresy in 1428 after he was dead.
3. The heresy of Wycliffe consisted of the following faults.
 - Wycliffe encouraged the king of England not to send tax money to the Pope. He drafted a reply arguing that there was no basis for Rome’s demand for a tribute from a foreign power. “Already a third and more of England is in the hands of the Pope. There cannot be two temporal sovereigns in one country; either Edward is King or Urban is king. We make our choice. We accept Edward of England and refute Urban of Rome.”
 - Wycliffe was critical of the secular power the Church of Rome wielded, especially the priests.
 - Wycliffe denounced the collecting of indulgences for the remission of sin.
 - Wycliffe had translated an English version of the Bible and made it available to ordinary Christians.
4. In 1455, a revolutionary invention was made in the form of the Gutenberg printing press, which used moveable type, instead of carving out words on a piece of wood. Without the printing press, the Reformation would have been prolonged, as well as the availability of the Bible to many.
5. In politics, the Fall of Constantinople and the Eastern Roman (Byzantine) Empire on Tuesday, May 29, 1453, to the Turks, caused Eastern Christians to flee West with their Greek New Testaments (1453). The Byzantine Empire fell to a 21 year old Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II.
6. The movement of Christians from the East to the West fostered a Renaissance of interest in the ancient languages.
7. One Catholic scholar, and priest, to take advantage of the wealth of information coming to the West was Erasmus.
8. Collecting as many Greek manuscripts as he could assimilate, Erasmus published a Latin and Greek text of the New Testament side by side in 1516.

9. His translation of the Bible would become known as the *Textus Receptus* (Received Text), on which the KJV of 1611 would be based. But before the KJV of the Bible came into existence, there were other important English translations.
10. The work of John Wycliffe was followed by the efforts of Miles Coverdale.
- In 1536 the Mile's Coverdale Bible was presented to Anne Boleyn, one of King Henry VIII's wives.
 - This is the first complete Bible to be printed in English.
11. During this same period, William Tyndale was also at work on an English translation. Tyndale translated the Bible into English from Greek and Hebrew, over a ten year period, (1525-1535).
12. Tyndale's translation influenced the Matthew's Bible (1537), the Great Bible (1539), and the Geneva Bible (1560).
- Matthew's Bible (1537). John Rogers was the actual translator of this work. He assumed, for personal protection, the pen name of "Thomas Matthew." It should be of interest that this is the first English Bible printed with the king's permission. The king was Henry VIII, not James the First of Scotland. Printed one year after the death of Tyndale, who was burned at the stake, Matthew's Bible honors the martyr. Tyndale's initials are printed in 2 ½ inch block letters on the last page of the Bible.

Special Note.

The successful sale of Matthew's Bible led Richard Taverner to edit a pirated version, and claim it for himself (1539). Taverner's Bible never became popular.

- Great Bible (1539). Thomas Cromwell, an advisor to Henry VIII, and a supporter of the Reformation, entrusted Miles Coverdale to revise Matthew's Bible, which became the Great Bible. The Great Bible was placed in every church by order of Thomas Cranmer. This Bible was chained to the church pillars to discourage theft.
 - Geneva Bible (1560). Exiles from England fled to Geneva, Switzerland under the reign of Bloody Queen Mary, a devout Catholic, who wanted to return England to Catholicism. In 1560 they undertook a complete revision of the Great Bible with the Old Testament translated from Hebrew. The Geneva Bible contained theological notes from Protestant scholars, John Calvin, Theodore Beza, and William Whittingham. This is the Bible of Shakespeare, and the one brought to America by the Pilgrims in 1620. The 1640 edition of the Geneva Bible is the first English Bible to omit the Apocrypha.
13. There were other English Bibles prior to the KJV.
- Bishops' Bible (1568). A new translation of the English Bible began under the reign of Queen Elizabeth in 1568. It was translated by several bishops of the Church of England as a response to the Geneva Bible.

- Rheims-Douai Bible (NT 1582, OT 1609). This Bible was translated into English from the Latin Vulgate, by Catholic scholar Gregory Martin, while in exile in France. It is today the standard translation for the Catholic Church.
14. The King James Bible came about because a group of Puritans petitioned King James for reform, including a new English translation of the Bible. Reluctantly, King James conceded to the Puritan demands.
 15. A commission of 54 scholars undertook a new English translation of the Bible, based upon available Greek and Hebrew manuscripts.
 16. Even though King James never gave the finished version his royal approval, the King James Version is known as the “Authorized Version.”
 17. The KJV has been revised many times over the years, reflected in the NKJV which came out in full in 1982.
 18. The most popular edition of the KJV used today was revised in 1769.