

THE

GLORIOUS

HISTORY

THE NEW TESTAMENT  
of Our Lord and Saviour

Jesus Christ

TRANSLATED OUT OF THE ORIGINAL GREEK,  
AND WITH THE FORMER TRANSLATIONS  
DILIGENTLY COMPARED AND  
REVISED

With all the words recorded therein  
as having been spoken by Our Lord  
printed in red

OF THE  
English  
Bible

David Cloud

*The Glorious History of the English Bible*

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SAMPLE

# Introduction

The King James Bible is not merely *another* translation. Its heritage and the manner in which it was created are unique.

The early record of the English Bible is one of the most fascinating chapters of church history and reads almost like a novel.

The history of the British Empire and of the American nation and of the English language itself are inextricably intertwined with the King James Bible.

*The Glorious Heritage of the King James Bible* recounts this history, beginning with the Wycliffe Bible of the late 14th century.

Every English-speaking believer should know this history; yet, sadly, even in the staunchest Bible-believing churches it is rare to find someone who is well informed about the great price that was paid to provide us with such an excellent Bible in our own language.

I have studied this history for many years, not only through literature (having built a large and expensive personal library on this subject) but through onsite research in the places where the history took place. By God's grace I've traveled to Lutterworth and Oxford and Cambridge, to Little Sodbury Manor and St. Adeline's Church and St. Dunstan's and Fulham Palace, to Smithfield and Hampton Court and Westminster and the Jerusalem Chamber, to Lambeth Palace and the Lollard's Tower and St. Paul's Cathedral, to Vilvoorde and Geneva. I've handled ancient Waldensian New Testaments at the Cambridge Library and Trinity College Dublin and early edition Tyndale Bibles at the British Museum.

This fascinating research has greatly strengthened my faith in God and in the authenticity and preservation of His holy Word, and I trust that *The Glorious Heritage of the English Bible* will do the same for each reader of this book.

## The Wycliffe Bible (1380, 1382)

The history of the English Bible properly begins with John Wycliffe (1324-1384).

The Scriptures most commonly found among English people before Wycliffe were Anglo Saxon and French, and the few English translations were only of portions of Scripture. (For an examination of the history of the Bible in England prior to Wycliffe see *Faith vs. the Modern Bible Versions*, available from Way of Life Literature.)

Some modern scholars have tried to make the case that Wycliffe did not do any of the actual translation himself, but older historians did not question Wycliffe's role in the work and we believe the evidence supports their view. That Wycliffe had helpers and that the original translation went through revisions no one doubts, but I do not accept the position that John Wycliffe was not involved in the actual translation.

### Wycliffe's Times

In John Wycliffe's day Rome ruled England and Europe with an iron fist. By the 7th century, Rome had brought England under almost complete dominion, and it was under subjugation to the popes from then until the 16th century, roughly 900 years, a period that is called Britain's Dark Ages.

King John (who ruled from 1199-1216) tried to resist Pope Innocent III's authority in the early 13th century, but he was not successful.

The pope excommunicated John and issued a decree declaring that he was no longer the king and releasing the people of England from their obligation to him. The pope ordered King Philip of France to organize an army and navy to overthrow John, which he began to do with great zeal, eager to conquer England for himself. The pope also called

for a crusade against John, promising the participants remission of sins and a share of the spoils of war. Bowing to this pressure, John submitted to the pope, pledging complete allegiance to him in all things and resigning England and Ireland into the pope's hands. The following is a quote from the oath that John signed on May 15, 1213:

“I John, by the grace of God King of England and Lord of Ireland, in order to expiate my sins, from my own free will and the advice of my barons, give to the Church of Rome, to Pope Innocent and his successors, the kingdom of England and all other prerogatives of my crown. I will hereafter hold them as the pope's vassal. I will be faithful to God, to the Church of Rome, to the Pope my master, and to his successors legitimately elected.”

The Roman Catholic authorities severely repressed the people and did not allow any form of religion other than Romanism. There was intense censorship of thought. Those who refused to follow Catholicism were persecuted, banished, and even killed.

The pope's representatives had great authority and held many of the highest secular offices in the land.

“The higher dignitaries in both these classes of the clergy, by virtue of their great temporalities held in feudal tenure from the crown, were barons of the realm, and sat in parliament under the title of ‘lords spiritual,’ taking precedence in rank for a parliament, archbishops, bishops, and abbots already headed the list. ... By prescriptive right, derived from times when the superior intelligence of the clergy gave them some claim to the distinction, all the high offices of state, all paces of trust and honor about the court, were in the hands of the clergy. In 1371, the offices of Lord Chancellor, Lord Treasurer, Keeper and Clerk of the Privy Seal, Master of the Rolls, Master in Chancery, Chancellor and Chamberlain of the Exchequer, and a multitude of inferior offices, were all held by churchmen” (H.C. Conant, *The Popular History of the*

the pope, Wycliffe was popular both with the king and with the authorities at Oxford. The king shared a dislike for the pope's interference in England's affairs, and the leaders at Oxford shared Wycliffe's animosity toward the Friars.

In 1374 Wycliffe became chaplain to King Edward III and was appointed to the rectory of Lutterworth in Leicestershire. Some parts of the ancient church remain from Wycliffe's times. There is a chair still there that he allegedly used and



*John Wycliffe*

the "Wycliffe Door" on the side of the church away from the river was the door that he used. The existing pulpit is a copy of the one that he preached from. On a visit there in 2003 we found the famous portrait of Wycliffe hanging in a back storage room.

Beginning in 1377 Wycliffe was fiercely persecuted by the Roman Catholic authorities in England at the instigation of the pope in Rome because of his Bible doctrine.

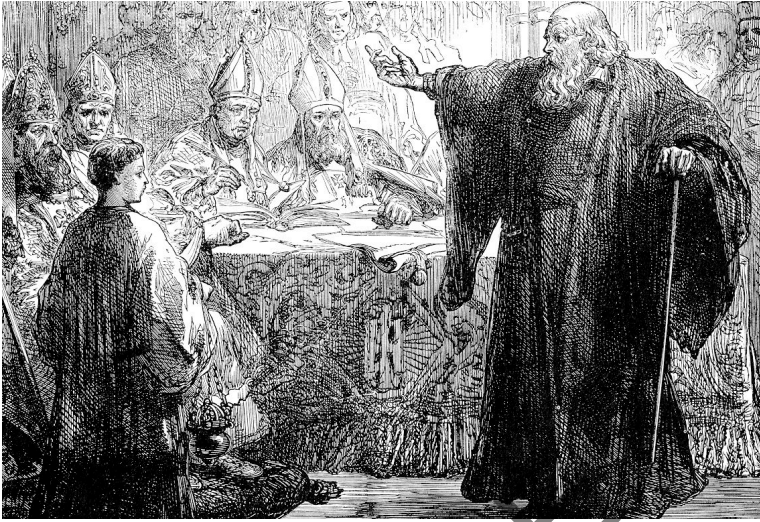
In 1381 he was put out of Oxford for denying the Roman dogma of transubstantiation and he retired to Lutterworth. The next year a sermon was preached from St. Mary the Virgin Church, the Oxford university church, denouncing Wycliffe's followers as *Lollards*.

Wycliffe produced a voluminous amount of writing between then and his death. "Some 57 Latin works were written between 1380 and December 1384" (Daniell, *The Bible in English*, p. 73).

It was during this time that the first English Bible was completed.

Wycliffe died on the last day of December 1384.





many dissenters were imprisoned. Before Wycliffe could be charged, Joan of Kent, widow of the Black Prince and mother of King Richard II, intervened, demanding that the trial stop and that no judgment be made against the Reformer.

The Catholic authorities in England continued to hate Wycliffe but they were thwarted in their efforts to imprison and kill him. Their attitude toward him and toward his vernacular translation is evident from what Thomas Arundel, Archbishop of Canterbury, wrote to Pope John XXIII in 1411. "This pestilent and wretched John Wyclif, of cursed memory, that son of the old serpent ... endeavoured by every means to attack the very faith and sacred doctrine of Holy Church, devising -- to fill up the measure of his malice -- the expedient of a new translation of the Scriptures into the mother tongue" (David Daniel, *The Bible in English*, p. 67).

In 1381 Wycliffe was condemned even by his own Oxford University because of his rejection of transubstantiation. Wycliffe preached against Rome's doctrine of the Mass with the same boldness he had preached against the Friars and against the Papacy itself.

# The Tyndale New Testament

The Tyndale New Testament of 1525 was the first English translation based on Greek and the first to be printed. The Wycliffe Bible was based on Latin and published only in hand-written manuscripts. The King James Bible is basically an edition of Tyndale's masterly translation.

William Tyndale (c. 1494-1536) is therefore the most important name in the history of the English Bible and one of the most important names in the history of the English people. And yet when I have asked people in England who he was, not one has given a correct answer, and the situation is the same in America.

## Tyndale's Times

Tyndale was born to a **time of great change and turmoil**. It was a time of international travel and discovery. When Tyndale was a boy Columbus discovered America and Vasco da Gama sailed around the Cape of Good Hope to India, and the great era of world exploration had begun.

**Tyndale's day was also a time of great persecution.** Shortly before Tyndale was born the Spanish Inquisition was established, and by the time Tyndale was a teenager, 8,800 had been burned to death and 90,000 imprisoned under the pope's Inquisitor General in Spain, Thomas de Torquemada.

As Tyndale grew to manhood, terrible persecutions were being poured out upon the separatist Christians in Bohemia and Moravia and against the Waldensians in Italy and France. For instance, when Tyndale was four, an army of 18,000 Catholics made war against the Waldensian Christians of Piedmont in Northern Italy, destroying entire towns and villages.

**Tyndale's day was also a time for printing.** In 1453, a mere four decades before Tyndale was born, Constantinople

Tyndale also debated Catholic priests who visited Little Sodbury.

One thing that he debated was the translation of the Scriptures into English. Many years later Tyndale described the way the Roman Catholic



*St. Adeline's Church*

authorities looked upon this work: "Some of the papists say it is impossible to translate the Scriptures into English, some that it is not lawful for the layfolk to have it in the mother-tongue, some that it would make them all heretics" (William Tyndale, preface to *The Five Books of Moses*, cited from Schaff, *Church History*, VI, p. 726).

One day a priest replied to Tyndale, "We are better without God's laws than the pope's." Hearing that, **Tyndale exclaimed: "I defy the pope and all his laws. If God spare my life, ere many years I will cause a boy that driveth a plough shall know more of the Scriptures than thou doest."**

Because of his preaching and his conflicts with the Romanists, Tyndale was called before a local tribunal in 1522 and threatened for preaching "heresy."

Tyndale later described this scene as follows: "All the priests of the country were present the same day. ... When I came before the Chancellor, he threatened me grievously, and reviled me, and rated me as though I had been a dog; and laid to my charge whereof there could be none accuser brought forth, as their manner is not to bring forth the accuser; and yet, all the Priests of the country were there the same day" (Tyndale's Prologue to Genesis, 1530).

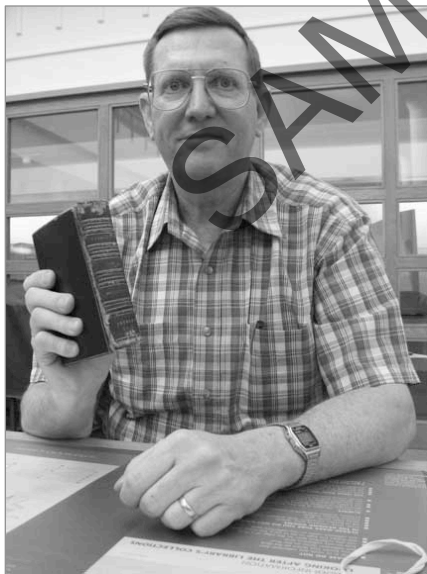
European continent, hidden in bales of merchandise, and then distributed clandestinely.

The first copies arrived in England in January 1526. It was the dead of winter but this volume was destined to warm many hearts. Condit tells us that the way having been prepared by the Wycliffe Scriptures, “the people received these newly printed Testaments joyfully, but, from necessity, secretly” (Condit, *The History of the English Bible*, p. 104).

The New Testaments were smuggled inside of bales of cloth, in barrels or casks of wine or oil, in containers of grain, in flour sacks, in the false sides or bottoms of chests, and in other ingenious ways.

The Catholic authorities were quick to label Tyndale’s translation heretical and ordered all copies confiscated and burned.

Cardinal Wolsey demanded that a diligent search be made for copies in London, Cambridge, and Oxford. Those who were found with copies were arrested.



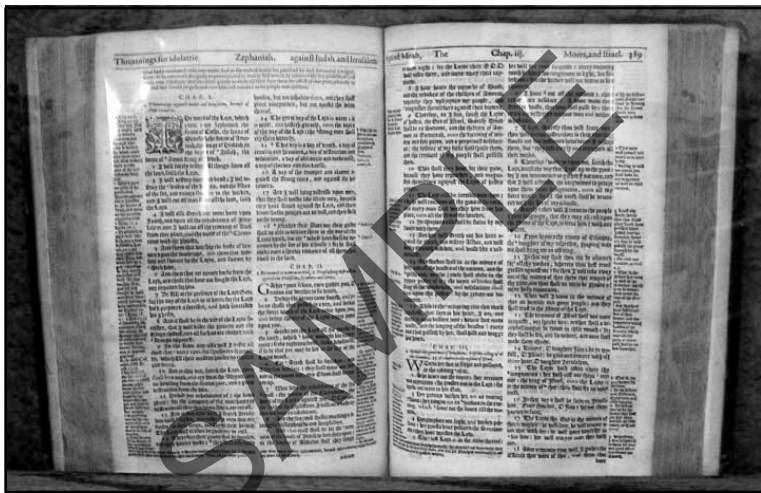
*The author holding a  
Tyndale New Testament*

On February 11, 1526, the first pile of Scriptures was burned in London, under the approving eye of Cardinal Wolsey. A description of this scene reminds us of the seventeenth chapter of Revelation: “The Cardinal had a scaffold made on the top of the stairs for himself, with six and thirty Abbots, mitred Priors, and Bishops, and he, in his whole pomp, mitred, which [Robert] Barnes [in a sermon] had

(3) The headings across the top of each page told the reader at a glance what book he was reading.

(4) Each chapter was preceded by a summary of its content.

**The Geneva Bible contained many notes**, explaining the text, teaching Protestant doctrine, and, in some cases, condemning Roman Catholicism. There is an average of two notes per page. Consider some examples. The notes on Revelation exhibit the erroneous allegorical method of interpretation.



Jeremiah 44:17: “It seemeth that the Papists gathered of this place their *Salve Regina*, and *Regina caeli laetare*, calling the virgin Mary Queen of Heaven, and so of the blessed virgin and mother of a Saviour Christ made an idol: for here the Prophet condemneth this idolatry.”

Revelation 9:3: “Locusts are false teachers, heretics, and worldly subtle Prelates, with Monks, Friars, Cardinals, Patriarchs, Archbishops, Doctors, Bachelors, and Masters which forsake Christ to maintain their false doctrine.”

Revelation 16:2: “This was like the sixth plague of Egypt, which was sores and boils or pocks: and this reigneth

# The King James Bible (1611)

This is the most famous and influential of the English Reformation Bibles. It is called the *King James Bible* or the *King James Version* (KJV) because its production was authorized in 1604 by King James I, who ruled England from 1603 to 1625. In the United Kingdom it is more commonly called *The Authorized Version*.

## The Proposal and Authorization

James Stuart (1566-1625) was king (James VI) of Scotland before he became **King James I of England**. He ascended the throne of Scotland in July 1567, at age 13 months, when his Roman Catholic mother Mary Queen of Scots (1542-1587) was forced to abdicate.

James' father, Henry Stuart, died in mysterious circumstances shortly after James was born. He was assassinated and it was rumored that Mary had a part in the crime.

“The rift between Mary and her husband became public knowledge. She turned to a Scottish nobleman, a very powerful man, the Earl of Bothwell, for support. He and other Scottish noblemen proposed to do whatever they could to help the queen in her dilemma. This decision led to a failed explosion plot and to the strangulation death of Darnely. A few months later, Mary and the Earl married. This angered the populace who suspected Bothwell's participation in the murder of their King. Mary's subjects were outraged and turned against her” (“Mary Queen of Scots,” <http://home.earthlink.net/~zzz12/>).

When Mary fled to England to seek help from her cousin Queen Elizabeth, she was imprisoned instead. Nineteen years later Mary was found guilty of participating in a plot to kill Elizabeth, and the 44-year-old former queen was beheaded at Fortheringhay Castle in 1587. In 1612 James moved his

“Thus it came to pass, that the English Bible received its present form, after a fivefold revision of the translation as it was left in 1537 by Tyndale and Rogers. During this interval of seventy-four years, it had been slowly ripening, till this last, most elaborate, and thorough revision under King James matured the work for coming centuries” (Alexander McClure, *The Translators Revived*, 1855, p. 59).

By the early 17th century the English language was at its apex. Alexander McClure observed: “The English language had passed through many and great changes, and had at last reached the very height of its purity and strength. The Bible has ever since been the grand English classic. It is still the noblest monument of the power of the English speech. It is the pattern and standard of excellence therein” (*The Translators Revived*).

### **The Scholarly Climate for the Translation**

By the early 17th century knowledge of biblical languages was at an apex in some ways. Realizing that this view is contrary to that held by most contemporary scholars, we invite you to consider our reasons for making this statement.

Consider the following descriptions of that time, which has been called “a period which was remarkable both in its wealth of eruditional effort and in the significance of its concentration of deepest learning on the Bible centre.” The following is from *The Cambridge History of English and American Literature, 1907–21*:

“LARGE PORTIONS OF THE SCRIPTURES WERE KNOWN BY HEART, NOT ONLY BY MINISTERS, BUT, ALSO, BY THE LAITY, AND EVEN BY CHILDREN, who were also well drilled in Foxe’s *Book of Martyrs* and other histories of persecutions. Whilst French Huguenot children were trained, Spartanlike, to look forward to dying for the faith, English children, from the earliest age, were disciplined in prayer, in reading books of