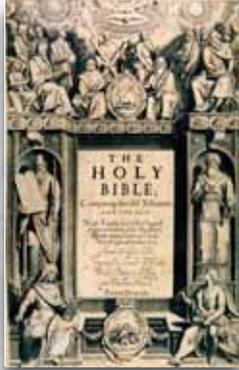


Inspiration and Early Translations

2011 marks the four hundredth anniversary of the first printing of the King James (or Authorised) Version of the English Bible.

It was printed in 1611 at Barker's printing house in Aldersgate Street, London. Open the King James Version of the Bible and you should find these words,



The Holy Bible containing the Old and New Testaments. Translated out of the original tongues: and with the former translations diligently compared and revised by His Majesty's special command – Appointed to be read in the Churches.

We should add three important words, "... and at Home"! For the Bible is not just for reading in churches. God intended that we should read it ourselves, at home. It tells us everything we need to know about His purpose with the human race and His intention to send the Lord Jesus Christ to establish the Kingdom of God here – in a rejuvenated earth.

This Series

The purpose of this year-long series, God willing, is to trace the history of the English Bible so that we can see the way in which God has worked through the centuries to preserve the gospel message. Wonderfully, that gives us the opportunity today to read,

understand and respond to its call.

The Bible declares that it is the Word of God and it speaks with authority about God and His purpose with mankind. At least 40 writers were involved, spread over a period of about 1,500 years. They came from a wide range of occupations and backgrounds, including a king, courtier, poet, herdsman, scribe, tax-gatherer,

fisherman, physician and tent-maker. They lived in different countries and most did not know one another. Yet the whole forms one unified book consisting of sixty-six sections, grouped in two volumes known as the Old and New Testaments.

Inspiration

It was the original Hebrew and Greek texts that were the inspired Word of God. We should remember that versions of the Bible are translations into other tongues, and are not inspired texts in themselves. We plan to look at this in more detail in a future article.

The New Testament writers recognised that the Old Testament writers were inspired by God's power to record His Word. Thus the Apostle Peter records, under inspiration, *...that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke [as they were] moved by the Holy Spirit* (2Peter 1:20-21).

The Old Testament writers were guided by God speaking to them to declare His purpose. Take for example, Moses (Exodus 19:9), Jeremiah (Jeremiah 1:7-9) and King David (2Samuel 23:1-2) as representatives of the Law, Prophets and the Psalms. They each wrote the inspired words given to them by the Lord. God also spoke through the New Testament writers. By this means they were able to accurately record everything that He requires us to know for our salvation.



identify some key points of Bible teaching.

Translations

In the 1st Century AD Christianity spread westward to the Latin speaking half of the Roman Empire. A Latin translation of the Bible therefore became necessary. Many Latin translations were made of the Old and New Testaments, dating from the 2nd Century AD.

↘ Jerome

In 382 the Pope commissioned Jerome to make a new authoritative Latin translation which was accepted by Christendom and was known as the 'current received' or 'common version'. It did not receive the designation the 'Vulgate' until the Council of Trent in 1546.

Jerome's source documents for this work included Hebrew and Greek Old Testament texts and Old Latin texts. The spread of Christianity from the 2nd to 5th Centuries AD brought the Gospel message to many more nations including Syria, Egypt, Ethiopia and Armenia. This was made possible through the translation of many more versions of the Bible, for people to read and learn of the Gospel message of salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. For God has ensured that His plan and purpose with mankind was available for all to read.

↘ Caedmon

At various times between the 7th and 14th Centuries AD, the Psalms and portions of the Old and New Testaments were translated from Latin into English. Today we still have some references to these early translations, but most of them have not survived. For

Wholly Inspired

The last Book of the Bible, the Book of Revelation, is a personal message from the Lord Jesus Christ to believers telling them of things that will happen before the Kingdom of God is set up on earth. This is how he described his message:

The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants – things which must shortly take place. And he sent and signified it by his angel to his servant John (Revelation 1:1).

Thus Jesus shows us that the whole Bible, Old and New Testaments, is the Word of God. For Jesus used the Law, the Psalms and the Prophets to help his followers understand God's purpose through his ministry and sacrifice (see Luke 24:44-45).

The Bible has stood the test of time. Its message is unchanging and God, in His mercy, offers us a hope of life beyond the grave, through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. As this history of the English Bible progresses we will also

example, Bede tells us of a 7th Century Whitby monk by the name of Caedmon who made a paraphrase translation from Latin to Anglo-Saxon and is said to have sung of many events recorded in the Bible – the Creation, the Exodus and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

↘ **Guthlac**

Around the close of the 7th Century AD, Guthlac a Saxon hermit from Crowland near Peterborough translated a Psalter, that is, a group of Psalms for liturgical use. Another version of the Psalter was made in 706 by Aldhelm, Abbot of Malmesbury.

↘ **Bede**

In Britain Latin did not extinguish the mix of local languages as it did in other Western Roman Provinces. However, Latin continued to be the language of the learned. Bede was a famous scholar of his day. His studies included Latin, Greek and Hebrew. He was a monk in the monastery of Jarrow and translated parts of the Bible from Latin into Anglo-Saxon. Bede (circa 637-735) translated the Lord's Prayer, the Gospel of John and the Creed into Anglo-Saxon. This was for the guidance of the native clergy whose understanding of Latin was limited.

↘ **Alfred the Great**

At the end of the 9th Century, Alfred the Great translated the Ten Commandments into Anglo-Saxon which became the first part of the ancient laws of England. Alfred recognised that God's Laws are the best basis and model for human legislation. He also began a translation of the Psalms but died before the task was finished.

↘ **Aldred**

The 7th Century Lindisfarne Gospels are an example of perhaps the first

English interlinear translation of the Latin text. Appearing as a background to this page, these Gospels contain a word-by-word translation into Old English (Anglo-Saxon). This was written between the lines of the Latin text during the third quarter of the 10th Century AD by a priest named Aldred. This is the earliest surviving version of the gospels in any form of the English language.

Latin Versions

After the 11th Century Norman Conquest, Latin remained the language of the Church and of scholars in Western Europe. This was a barrier for the common people as it inhibited free access to reading the Bible. They had to rely on the Church priests for an interpretation of the Bible message. However, the winds of change were blowing and the drive for unfettered access to the Word of God would prove to be unstoppable.

The Lord God tells us that His Word is unstoppable. It cannot be thwarted by men, it will achieve His plan and purpose with mankind. The prophet Isaiah says:

For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, and do not return there, but water the earth, and make it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please (Isaiah 55:10-11).

Peter Moore

Next month: the work of Wycliffe