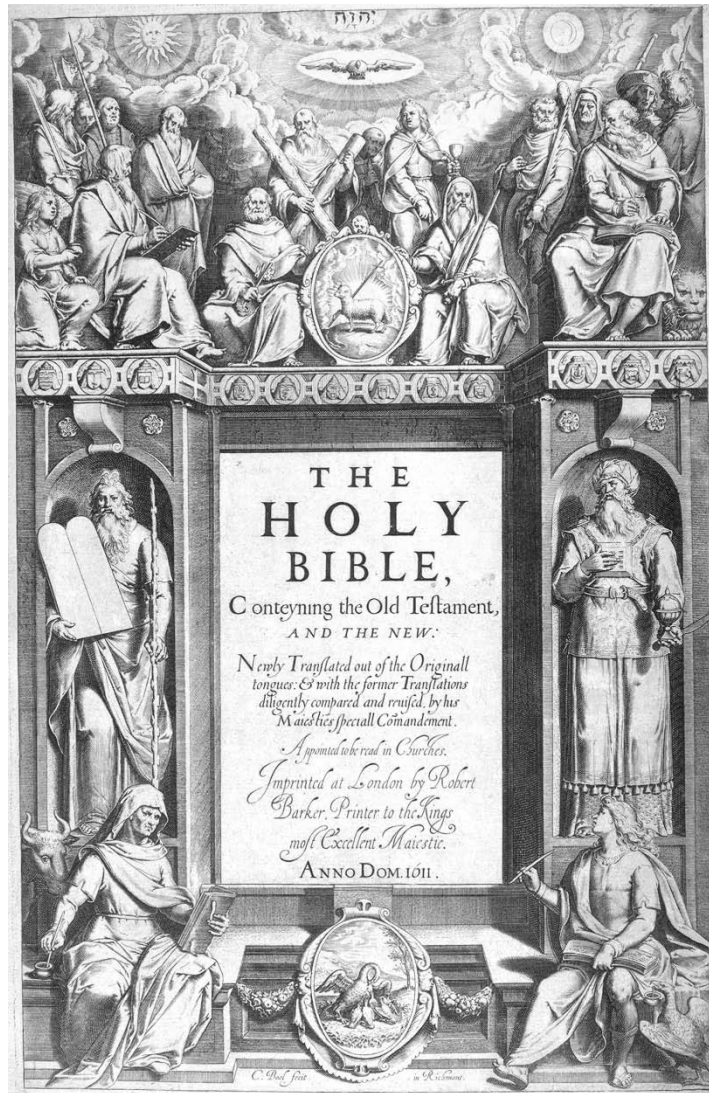


1611–2011

COMMEMORATING OUR
AUTHORIZED VERSION



GOD'S GREAT and MANIFOLD BLESSING

After the Fall, the Lord did not forsake the human race. Throughout the ages, He commanded His servants, the prophets and apostles, to write down His revealed will. Over the centuries, He caused these writings to be collected into a book we call the Bible.

In Old Testament times, writers such as Moses, David, and Isaiah wrote down God's Word in the language they spoke, Hebrew. During New Testament times, writers such as Peter, James, and John wrote in the language they spoke, Greek.

Very few people can speak, read, or understand either Hebrew or Greek. God wants us to have the Bible in the language we understand. Throughout the ages, the Lord encouraged His servants to translate His Word into the languages they spoke. During the 1300s, John Wycliffe translated parts of the Bible from Latin into English. Because Wycliffe lived and worked before the invention of the printing press, his followers copied his translation by hand. The Romish church did not want people to have the Bible in English and cruelly persecuted all who used Wycliffe's translation.

LearningTask: Explain why copies of Wycliffe's Bible were scarce.

Four hundred years ago, a group of God-fearing scholars finished translating the Bible into English. Since then, the Lord has used this trustworthy translation of His Word to save souls, nurture congregations, direct families, and counsel statesmen. We use this translation in our home, school, and church. This year, we commemorate the gift that God gave the English-speaking world in 1611. You will enjoy learning about the marvellous way in which the Lord gave us this unequalled translation.

This booklet is yours. I hope you will enjoy reading it. Colouring the pictures will make this booklet an attractive keepsake.

TIMELINE

Important Dates in the History of the Authorized Version

Circa 400	Jerome of Bethlehem translates Bible into Latin, which became the Latin Vulgate
735	Bede translates four Gospels into Old English
890	King Alfred translates the Ten Commandments into English
1388	John Wycliffe finishes translating the Latin Vulgate into English
1453	Gutenberg invents the printing press and prints the Latin Bible
1453	After the fall of Constantinople, scholars bring Greek New Testaments to Western Europe
1516	Erasmus's Greek New Testament printed: the first Textus Receptus; these became basis of all Reformation translations
1517	Luther nails his Ninety-five Theses to the chapel door in Wittenberg
1522	Luther finishes translating New Testament into German
1525	Tyndale's first translation of the New Testament
1536	Tyndale burned at the stake
1539	King Henry VIII allows people to use the Great Bible
1557	Geneva Bible, the Puritan's favourite translation
1568	Bishops' Bible, the bishops' favourite translation
1603	King James ascends English throne
1604	Hampton Court Conference; King James commissions a new translation
1611	Authorized (King James) Version completed
1769	Final revision of KJV for spelling, punctuation, use of italics and marginal notes

John Wycliffe was the morning star of the Reformation. In 1388, Wycliffe's translation of the Latin Vulgate Bible became the first translation of the entire Bible into English.



WILLIAM TYNDALE, THE GREAT TRANSLATOR

William Tyndale (1484-1536) is the most important of all the English Bible translators. His work underlies all English translations of Reformation times.

I. The burdened translator

Standing beside the cart that had been his pulpit, William Tyndale watched his audience walking away across the fields. He saw them gathering in small groups and talking busily among themselves. They were discussing his sermon.

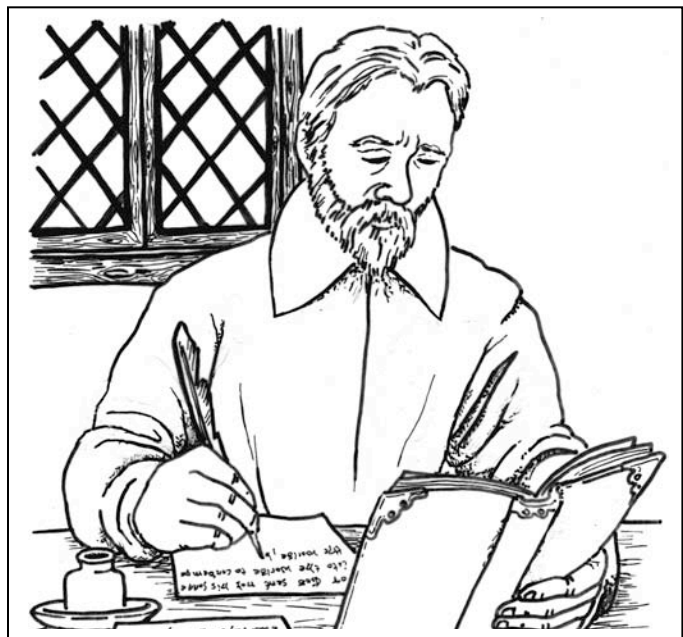
When he saw the monks and the priests mixing with the crowd, he shook his head and sighed deeply. These cowed monks and priests had also come to Austin Green to listen to his sermon. They had not come to learn from him. They had come hoping to hear him say something wrong, something they could use to get him into trouble with the authorities.

Tyndale knew what his enemies would tell the people: 'Tyndale is a heretic. He thinks he knows better than our holy father, the pope, and all the wise men in the church. Don't believe him; don't even listen to him!'

Tyndale knew their slander would confuse the people who had heard him preach. They wouldn't know whom to believe: their priests or William Tyndale?

He sighed and prayed silently. 'Lord, why do these priests and monks hate me so much? I speak to them from Thy Word but they refuse to listen: they become angry when I open Thy Word. Lord, why?'

He felt the Lord speaking the answer into his heart. 'William, don't you remember how they hated Me? They will hate you because you are My servant and teach the people from My Word.'



It had all started when Tyndale came from Cambridge University to become the tutor of Sir John Walsh's sons. Sir John and his wife were rich: they owned many farms and fields around the village. They lived in a big house called Little Sodbury Manor. They sometimes invited Tyndale to eat dinner with them. Their wealthy neighbours and priests, abbots, and bishops also came to enjoy the good food!

Often, the table talk turned to religious topics. Most of the priests knew little about the Bible. Tyndale knew a great deal. He knew more than all the guests because he had studied the recently printed Greek New Testament carefully. The Lord had blessed the reading of His Word to Tyndale's heart. He had found nothing in that Testament about the mass, about the priest forgiving sins, about praying to Mary or the saints, about burning candles before images. In God's Word, he did not read about salvation by doing good works, reciting many prayers, and using the sacraments. Instead, reading his Greek New Testament spoke to him about God, Christ, and the need for a new heart. It taught him he was a prisoner to sin, blind and helpless to save himself. He learned that he could be saved only if the Lord gave him faith to believe that the Lord Jesus had died for him.

When he heard the Romish priests say things that disagreed with God's Word, Tyndale always took the New Testament from its usual place beside his dinner plate. After paging through it for a moment,

he would put his finger on a text that proved the priest wrong. Of course, this made the priests and other churchmen very annoyed with him. Just seeing that little book beside William's plate made them angry!

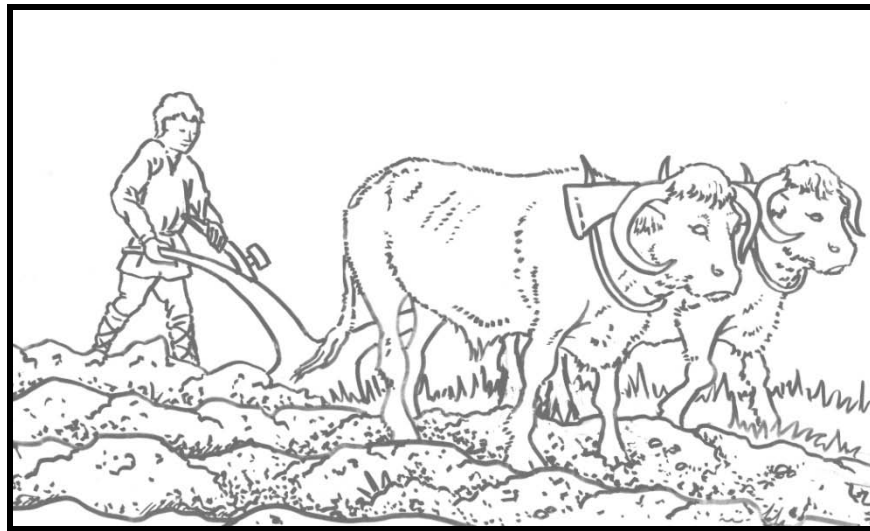
Tyndale was an ordained priest. Soon his patron, Sir John Walsh, allowed him to preach in the village church. Because so many came to listen to him, the church building was too small. He then decided to preach in a field. However, after every one of his sermons, his enemies did their best to prove William was a bad man who taught bad things.

All this confused the people. But why didn't they read their Bibles to see who was right? Because they had no Bible! In those days, all Bibles in England were in Latin or Greek. Very few people knew those languages. The authorities forbade the translating of the Bible into English and no one was allowed to have a part of the Bible in English.

Tyndale didn't know what to do. Every time he preached the truths of God's Word, his enemies would tell the people he was wrong. And since the people had no Bible, they never knew who was right. One day at dinner, a learned priest became annoyed with Tyndale. He said, 'It would be better to do without God's laws than without the pope's laws.' Angered by this blasphemy, Tyndale replied, 'I defy the pope and all his laws. If God spare my life, ere many years, I will cause a boy that driveth the plough shall know more of the Scripture than thou dost.'

Now Tyndale knew his calling. The Lord burdened him with the task of translating the Bible into English. Then everyone could read it or listen to someone else reading it. He was convinced that giving the people the Bible in English would stop many of the wrong things happening in the church.

Mr. Walsh agreed that the Bible should be translated from the original Hebrew and Greek into English. However, William Tyndale's bold statement had made the churchmen in the neighbourhood even angrier. Translating the Bible while staying with the Walsh family in Little Sodbury would not be safe. He soon found out it would not be safe for him to do that work anywhere in England. He would have to go somewhere else!



If God spare my life, ere many years, I will cause a boy that driveth the plough shall know more of the Scripture than thou dost!

II. The translator abroad

As he stood in front of the small and dirty window in his garret, William Tyndale's thoughts wandered to his homeland, far to the west of Cologne. 'Will I ever see England again?' he sighed to himself. 'The Lord wants me to translate His Word into English. I started that great work in the Walsh's home in Little Sodbury but I was not safe there. Then I went to London and stayed with kind Mr. Monmouth, but I was not safe there. I had to flee England so I could translate the Bible into English.' Tyndale shook his head. 'No, I shall not see England again, but the work that the Lord is helping me do, that will reach England! Whether the king likes it or not, ere long all the people of England will be enlightened by the New Testament and obey the Gospel. The Lord will bless that Word to the unlearned ploughboy walking behind his oxen, to the homemaker bustling about in her kitchen, and to the lord in his castle.'

Encouraged by that thought, Tyndale returned to his worktable and went back to work, translating the New Testament from the Greek into English.

First, he read a line from the Greek text aloud. Talking softly to himself, he weighed each Greek word until he found a simple English word. Then he arranged the words into a sentence with English word order and lilt. He did not want to use hard words because everyone, even a ploughboy with only a little schooling, must be able to understand the Word of God. After some thinking, he had the sentence clear in his mind. 'William, are you ready?' he asked his helper. When William Roye nodded, Tyndale began to dictate. *Put on the armour of God, that ye may stand steadfast against the crafty assaults of the devil.*

My zeal hath consumed me, because mine enemies have forgotten thy words.

Psalm 119:139

William Roye listened carefully to his master. Then he nodded his agreement. 'Yes, Master Tyndale, I think you've translated it very well.' Roye dipped his goose quill pen into the inkhorn and carefully wrote down the English words.

Once Tyndale and Roye had translated a part of the Bible, they took handwritten pages to the printer. When he visited the printing shop a few days later, William Tyndale saw men working at various tasks. The typesetter took each individual metal letter and placed it in a wooden frame. Each frame made a page. Once the page had been set, another worker put it on the press, carefully rolled ink over all the letters, and then placed a sheet of paper on top of them. Next, a third worker lowered the press and pushed the paper firmly down on the inked letters. Then he raised the press. Another page finished!

Just then, a worried looking man rushed up to Tyndale and the printer. 'Master, there is danger!'

'Come into the other room,' said the printer. 'All the noise makes it hard to hear you.'

The three men quickly moved into the room next door. 'Now, what's this about danger?' he asked.

'Sir, a priest called Cochlaeus found out Master Tyndale is in the city. He also found out that you are printing an English Bible.'

'How did he find out? I told all the workers to keep this a secret.'

'A few days ago, some of your workmen went to the tavern. After some drinks, they talked too loudly about their work. Cochlaeus, a fanatic Romish priest, overheard them. He came to their table and bought them some wine. This loosened their tongues even more. They began to boast about the two Englishmen whose printed translation of the New Testament would soon be shipped to England and make that whole country Lutheran. After he



heard this, Cochläus set out to search the city and find us. He visited the workers and with tricky questions soon knew all about Tyndale.'

'Have you heard anything else?' demanded the printer.

'Sir, he talked to some important people. The city council has held a special meeting. Soon they will send their men to take these papers, close your printing shop, and take you and Mr. Tyndale to jail.'

'Then all my work will be in vain,' cried Mr. Tyndale. 'Will I never be able to translate the Bible?'

'Do not despair, Master Tyndale,' replied the printer. 'We still have time.'

The printer called his men together and gave them his orders. Soon all were busy bundling the printed sheets into large bundles. Next, they wrapped them carefully with waterproof material. Others carried the bundles to a river barge in the harbour. Despite all the scheming of Cochläus and his henchmen, Tyndale and his work escaped the clutches of the Romish church. They safely reached a city called Worms. Because the Lord wanted His people in England to have His Word in their native language, He kept Tyndale and Roye safe from their Romish enemies.

LearningTask: research Luther's life to find his connection to the German city of Worms.

In Worms, William Tyndale and William Roye continued their work on the New Testament. They found another printer. Soon they had several thousand copies of the New Testament ready for shipment to England.

But how could they get them into England? King Henry VIII and his government had ordered customs officers and police officers to keep a careful lookout for books being smuggled into the country. Tyndale and his friends knew that these officials would search ships entering the harbours of England. How then could they get them to the people who were hungry for the Word of God?

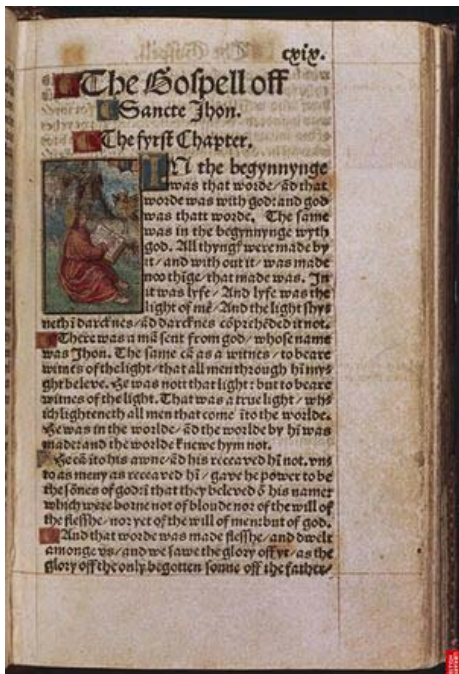
Many of the merchants in London shipped English goods to Antwerp. On the return trip, their ships carried cargo from the Lowlands. Those sailors who were Tyndale's friends wanted the Word of God to

reach their fellow Englishmen. They carefully hid the New Testaments aboard their vessels. Some Bibles they concealed inside boxes with false compartments. Others they carefully wrapped in waterproof packages that they hid inside barrels of wine and oil. Still others they put inside sacks of flour. In these various ways, Tyndale's friends successfully smuggled many of his books into England. From the ships in the harbour, the books found their way to booksellers and the people eagerly awaiting God's Word in their own language.

The Lord had blessed the reading of His Word to these Bible smugglers and booksellers. The Holy Ghost had used the Word to show them their sad and sinful state. That Word had also shown them they could only be saved and justified by a true faith in the Lord Jesus. Now they wanted everyone to have an English Bible.

But wasn't smuggling dangerous? Definitely: the authorities even burned one bookseller at the stake with a copy of the Bible tied around his neck! Although the booksellers knew these dangers, they readily risked their lives to bring the precious Word of God to the people of England.

The leaders of the Romish church did not want the people to have the Word in their own language because the Word would expose their trickery and false teaching. Just reading an English-language Bible could result in a severe penalty. Some went to jail; some were put to death. However, the Lord encouraged these smugglers and booksellers to distribute the soul-saving Word throughout the country and blessed it to many hearts.



**Authorities burned some of
the New Testaments Tyndale's friends
smuggled into England.**



III. The martyred translator

One day in the fall of 1526, Tyndale received a message from a friend in London. Eager to hear the news from England, he quickly broke open the seal and began reading the letter. After reading a few lines, he came to a part that upset him.

My dear friend, I scarcely dare to write about the very sad event that took place last Sunday at St. Paul's Church. I asked myself why firewood had been stacked in the square just outside the church. Then I saw a man with a burning torch in his hand coming out of the church. He walked up to the firewood and started a bonfire. Soon after, I saw Bishop Tunstall and some helpers coming out of the church carrying copies of your English New Testament. Imagine my dismay when they threw all these New Testaments on the bonfire and watched them burn!

Tyndale trembled when he read the last few lines. 'Master, what is the matter? Why does the letter make you tremble?'

'Bishop Tunstall burned the New Testament! He burned the Word of God!' whispered the deeply moved translator. 'Others burned Luther's books and my books but this is much worse. He burned God's Word! He burned the Word so carefully translated for the people of England.'

'And the bishop knows it is a good translation! He is a Greek scholar. He knows my work is faithful to the Greek text. And he burned it, because the king and the church don't want the people to have God's Word in their own language!'

Then Tyndale regained his composure. 'He's burned these copies, but many more shall come into their place! The Lord has sent His Word to our people and neither king nor bishop nor pope shall stop that work!'

Indeed, no human might or earthly pride could stop that work! Risky though it was, the people continued to buy Tyndale's edition of the New Testament. They read them carefully. Often, they shared them with family and friends until they read the book to pieces. More importantly, the Lord used His Word to bring many to the light of the Gospel.

However, before long, more than books would burn!

Sometime after Tyndale moved to Antwerp, a man named Henry Phillips came to that city. Phillips had wasted much of his family's money; he had even robbed his own father. Now he was broke. Desperate for money, this wicked man thought up a devilish scheme to help him earn much money: he would find Tyndale, pretend to become his friend, and then betray him to the authorities!

Before long, Phillips learned that Tyndale was staying with an English merchant. He treated Tyndale respectfully and became his friend. Tyndale ignored the warnings of his merchant friend who did not trust Phillips.

One evening, Tyndale agreed to go for dinner with Phillips. In the twilight, this English Judas hid his helpers in the shadows of a narrow alley. Then he knocked

LearningTask: justify calling Henry Phillips 'an English Judas.'

on the door. Tyndale stepped into the street and the two men set out down the dark lane. When Phillips gave the signal, the men jumped on Tyndale and dragged him off to the city jail! Later, he spent more than four hundred days in the dark dungeons of a castle.

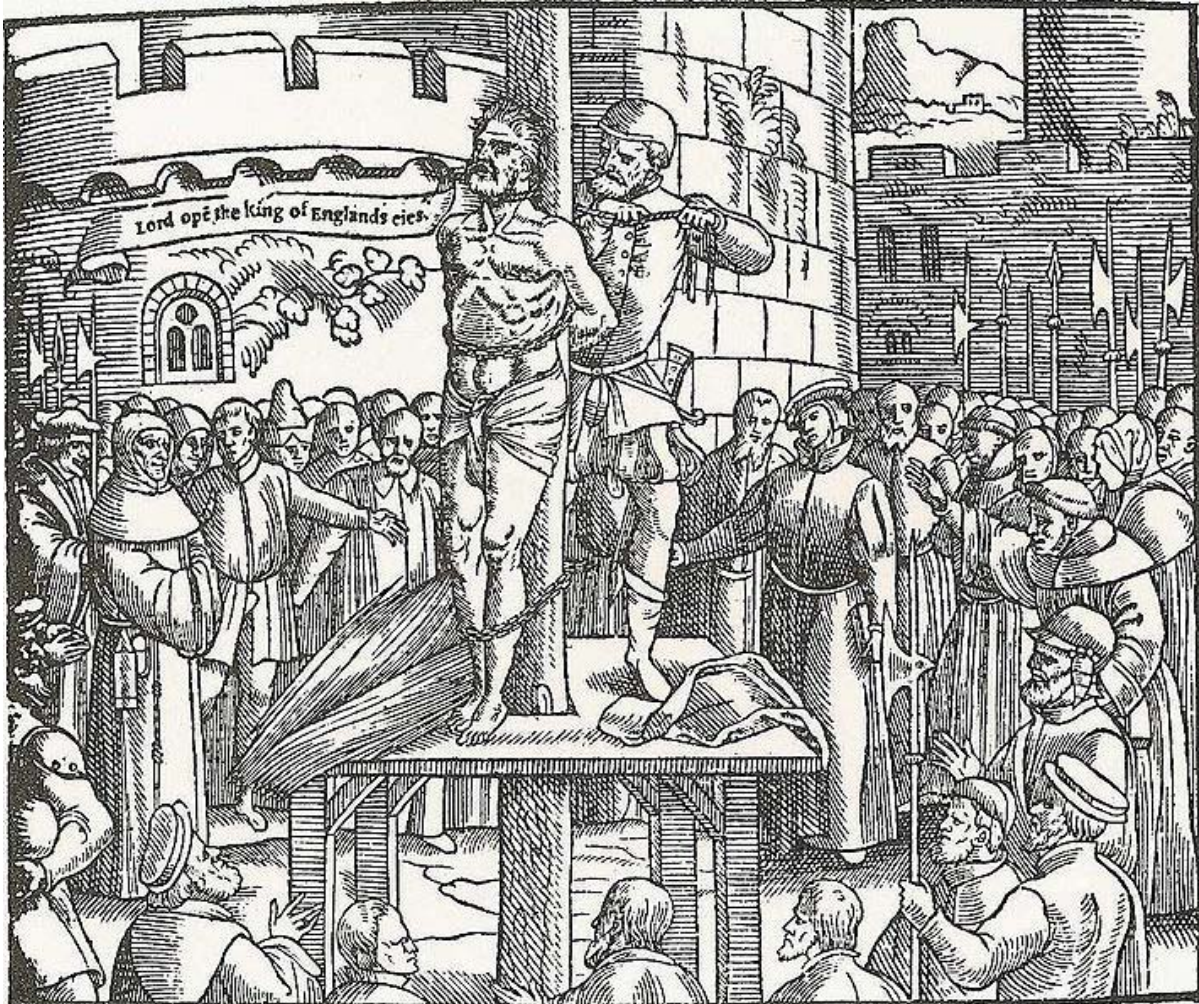
Although Tyndale defended himself well before his judges and although his friends tried to persuade the authorities to release him, all was in vain. In October 1536, his judges sentenced him to die.

On the morning of his execution, many people gathered in the city's market square. City workers had heaped brushwood, straw, and logs around the stake. After a while, the authorities took their seats on the chairs waiting for them. Then the crowd parted to let the guards bring in the prisoner.

They gave Tyndale a moment to pray. Then he walked to the stake and the executioner tied him to the pole. Just before the executioner strangled him, Tyndale cried out, 'Lord, open the king of England's eyes!' Soon afterwards, the flames consumed his body but his soul had already ascended to heaven.

Although he died at the stake, his work continued after him. Later translators used Tyndale's translation of the New Testament and of a large part of the Old Testament. Even the learned men who produced our King James Version four hundred years ago made few changes to the work of this great translator.

Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world
Matthew 25:34



In October 1536, Tyndale died at the stake.

IV. William Maldon and his Bible

After Tyndale died at the stake, others finished his translation of the Bible. A few years later, King Henry VIII agreed to allow the people to use these other versions. Did the king's decision please everyone? While many welcomed the Great Bible, others did not want an English-language Bible.

William Maldon, a teenage boy, carefully saved his money. Then he used his savings to buy a Bible. Because he knew this would anger his father, William did not take his treasure home. Instead, he hid the volume among the bolts of cloth in his father's fabric store. The Lord soon blessed the reading of His Word to William's heart. Now the boy found it impossible to keep on with Romish rituals and superstitions such as crossing himself and praying to saints.

His mother noticed the changes in her son. One day she scolded him for not doing his religious duties. She begged him to return to the old ways. 'Mother, I can't do those things anymore: God's Word forbids them.'

'William, don't ever let your father hear you say those words!' gasped his shocked mother. 'He wants nothing to do with a Bible in English. All the changes in religion upset him dreadfully: I don't know what he will do to you when he hears that you read the Bible and no longer obey the church.'

That same afternoon, the neighbourhood priest told Mr. Maldon that William no longer came to either mass or confession. 'Mr. Maldon, keep an eye on your boy: I think his heretic friends are leading him astray.'

This made Mr. Maldon angry. When he came home, his wife told him about her talk with William. Now he completely lost his temper. William had already gone to his bed in the attic; his father stormed up the stairs with a heavy stick in his hand. He hurled open the door and thundered, 'What's this I hear about you! I hear that you stay away from mass, refuse the rituals of our holy church, and read that heretical book.'

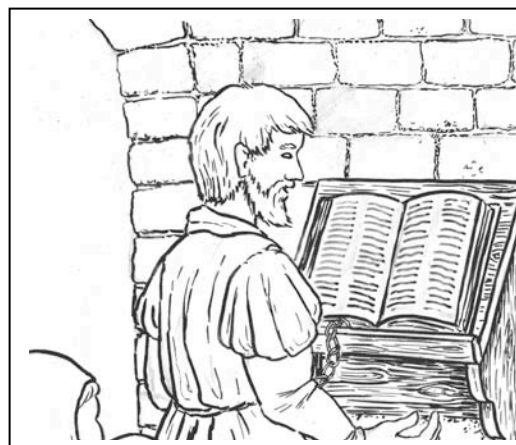
The heavy stick thudded down on William's body repeatedly but the boy did not cry a single tear. He rejoiced that the beating was for the cause of Christ. 'Repent,' demanded the enraged father, 'repent, and promise you will destroy that book. You must confess your horrible sins to the priest, and return to our holy mother church.'

'No, Father, I cannot do those things you ask. I may not sin against the Word of God.'

'Then I will hang you!' Mr. Maldon raced down the stairs. He soon returned with a rope halter. He shoved his son's head through the noose, yanked the boy upright, and started to twist the rope around his neck tighter and tighter.

Mrs. Maldon had come upstairs, too. When she saw her husband strangling her oldest son, she tried to make him stop. Along with the apprentice who also slept in the attic, they tugged at Mr. Maldon's arms until he let go.

-- John G. Nichols, ed., *Narratives of the Days of the Reformation, Chiefly from the Manuscripts of John Foxe the Martyrologist* (Westminster, England: J. B. Nichols and Sons, 1859), pp. 349-351.



Reading a chained Great Bible

V. The Authorized Version

In the seventy years after Tyndale died, other people also translated the Bible. Soon there were several different versions. People in one congregation used one version while those in another place used a different one. The Puritans liked the Geneva Bible but the Anglicans wanted the Bishops' Bible.

LearningTask: research the qualities of the Geneva Bible and explain why King James and the bishops did not like it.

In 1603, a group of Puritan ministers came to the palace of Hampton Court. They gave King James a petition asking him to finish reforming the Church of England. Although the king refused most of their requests, he did agree that a new Bible translation should be undertaken.



King James wanted this to be a translation that all his people would use. He appointed the most learned men skilled in the ancient languages (Hebrew and Greek) and able to accurately translate the Bible into correct, pure, and simple English. These men worked in several committees. Each committee worked on a part of the Bible. After they had finished their assigned part, each committee checked over the work of the other groups.

For seven years, the translators worked hard to give the English-speaking people of all places and all times a faithful translation. While translating, they often looked back to the work of Tyndale and other earlier translators. Most of the New Testament came directly from Tyndale: it was down-to-earth, vigorous, and thoroughly English. The Lord helped the translators to give us an outstanding Bible. God has blessed His special gift to many people throughout many generations. The Authorized or King James Version remains the most reliable English version of the Holy Scriptures. It is the version we should use in our homes, schools, and churches.

Today, many use other translations. Satan does not want us to have a sound translation of God's Word. He is 'more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made' (Genesis 3:1). In the times of Wycliffe and Tyndale, Satan's henchmen banned and burned God's Word. Some countries today do not want their citizens to have the Scriptures. Furthermore, the devil has confused the church by encouraging critics to print several alternative but unreliable translations. Having many different translations confuses Christians and makes them lose confidence in the inspiration, purity, and trustworthiness of God's Word. Remember that the King James Version is a translation of the best ancient manuscripts and was translated by trustworthy scholars. Stay with this version and pray the Lord to bless the reading and study of it to your eternal profit.

*Divine Instructor, gracious Lord,
Be Thou forever near;
Teach me to love Thy sacred Word,
And view my Saviour there.*

Anne Steele
'Father of Mercies, in Thy Word'