

## Lesson Five

# HOW WE GOT OUR BIBLE

### A. MANUSCRIPTS:

The Bible was originally written on long sheets of parchments and then rolled on wooden rollers. These were called “manuscripts” meaning, “written by the hand.” The men who copied the Word of God on these manuscripts were called “scribes.” These manuscripts were very expensive and had to be read to the congregation.

At the beginning skins of parchments were known as “scrolls.”

The Jewish scribes exercised the greatest possible care in copying the Hebrew manuscripts. Each new copy had to be made from an approved manuscript, written with a special kind of ink, upon sheets made from the skin of a “clean” animal. The writers had to pronounce aloud each word before writing it, and on no account was a single word to be written from memory. They were to reverently wipe their pen before writing the name of God in any form, and to wash their whole body before writing “Jehovah.” The new copy was carefully examined with the original, and if there was even one incorrect letter, the whole copy was rejected. In Hebrew documents of the Old Testament, any variations introduced by the copyists amounted to less than one-thousandth of the entire text.

The Hebrew language was originally written entirely in consonants without any vowels and spacing to divide the words.

The name JEHOVAH was simply written JHVH. If we were to write the Lord’s prayer in this manner it would look like this: RFTHRWHCTNHVNHLLWDBTHYNM...

### B. SEPTUAGINT:

About 227 BC seventy scholars at Alexandria, Egypt began a translation of the Old Testament into the Greek language. This Greek translation of the Old Testament was known as the SEPTUAGINT that was a Latin word meaning seventy. The Septuagint was widely circulated and was used as the basis for many future translations.

It is said that it was in the Septuagint that the present familiar titles, by which the various books of the Bible are known, were first adopted. The order in which they were arranged has been followed ever since although it is quite different from that of the original Hebrew Scriptures.

This translation was a loose and free translation and was faulty in many respects. It was in existence in the time of our Lord but neither He nor the apostles ever made use of it.

It is most probable that our Lord spoke Aramaic.

### **C. THE VULGATE:**

The vulgate was a Latin translation of the Septuagint version of the Old Testament and of the original Greek of the New Testament. It means, “to make common or public” (vulgar). It was made in North Africa and was revised in the 4<sup>th</sup> century by Jerome.

For a thousand years this was the standard Bible in the Catholic Church. The common people could not read Latin. The leader read to the people. During the dark ages, God’s Word was locked up in the Latin language.

### **D. JEROME:**

Jerome was one of the ablest scholars of the 4<sup>th</sup> century. He was born in 340 AD in Dalmatia. He then studied in Rome and was baptized in the year 360.

He studied the Hebrew language and lived as a hermit not far from Antioch from 373 to 379. He returned to Rome, traveled through Palestine and Egypt. He went to Bethlehem in 386 and as head of the monastery, he made his headquarters there till his death in 420.

The older Latin versions of the Bible were crude and Pope Damasus proposed to Jerome that he would make a revision. He completed the New Testament in the year 388. He then translated the Old Testament using the ancient Hebrew manuscripts. The result of Jerome’s work was the Vulgate that is still in use in the Roman Catholic Douay Bible.

### **E. FIRST ANGLO-SAXON TRANSLATION:**

In the year 450 the Anglo-Saxon language was introduced into England by the invaders. However, for many centuries the Word of God was only available in handwritten copies of the Latin Vulgate. Because of this it was available only to the learned and rich. Nevertheless it had sufficient influence in the land that paganism died out.

In the eighth century Venerable Bede, one of the greatest literary men of those times, translated the Psalms and the Gospels into the Anglo-Saxon language. He died in the year 735.

Alfred the Great who was crowned King at the age of twenty-two was a man of prayer and a lover of the Bible. He instituted great reforms and expressed a desire that every youth should be able to read the Scriptures before studying any other subject.

He ordered a translation of the whole Bible to be made into Anglo-Saxon but did not live to see its completion.

England was conquered by the Normans under William the Conqueror in 1066 after which the English language was introduced and the country became priest-ridden.

#### **F. FIRST ENGLISH TRANSLATION:**

John Wycliffe, the great Reformer, was born around the year 1320. He became a lecturer at Oxford, one of the ablest theologians and scholars in England at that time. He was convinced that the Bible was God's Word and he determined to give it to the people of the English tongue.

He translated the whole Bible into the English language from the Latin Vulgate. It was divided into chapters, and although it was copied in handwriting, its circulation was large. Some one hundred and fifty manuscripts survive.

The translation took about twenty-two years to accomplish and each copy took ten months to write out. Each copy would cost about \$800.00 in our money to buy. Those who could not afford to buy a copy would pay a large sum to be able to read it one hour each day. Sometimes a load of hay would be given in exchange for a few pages of it.

The Roman Catholics opposed this translation and eventually forbade the reading of this English Bible under penalty of death. History records a long list of martyrs who died at the stake rather than give up this English Bible.

Wycliffe died of paralysis in 1384. Forty years after his death the Roman Catholic authorities dug up his bones and burned them, scattering the ashes on the River Swift.

Wycliffe's Bible was printed in four volumes in 1850.

Wycliffe has been called "Morning Star of the Reformation."

The principle that directed his life was his claim, “The Sacred Scriptures are the property of the people and one that no one should be allowed to wrest from them.”

#### **G. THE INVENTION OF PRINTING:**

Gutenberg who is said to have printed a Bible invented printing in Europe around 1450. Caxton introduced printing into England in 1476 about which time some of the Old Testament was printed in Hebrew. This invention increased the circulation of the Scriptures.

#### **H. WILLIAM TYNDALE:**

In 1525 Tyndale, one of the Protestant reformers and a contemporary of Luther, made another English translation. He was the first to publish and print an English New Testament. He had to do this partly at Cologne and partly at Worms. He worked under great difficulty, in exile, poverty and distress. Several editions were printed.

The Testaments were smuggled into England in bales of cotton, sacks of flour, etc. The Catholics made every effort to prevent it and burned thousands of copies.

He translated from Greek and his translation was very accurate. He also translated the Pentateuch and the book of Jonah into English. In 1535 he issued a Revised Version of the New Testament from original Greek.

In 1536 Tyndale was first strangled and then burnt at the stake by the Roman Catholic authorities. His last words were, “Lord, open the King of England’s eyes!”

#### **I. THE FIRST PRINTED ENGLISH BIBLE:**

Miles Coverdale first printed the whole Bible in English in 1535. This Bible also contained the apocryphal books. Coverdale died in 1568.

# SELF HELP TEST

## LESSON FIVE

State whether the following are TRUE or FALSE:

1. The Septuagint was written in Bethlehem. \_\_\_\_\_
2. The old Hebrew language left out all vowels. \_\_\_\_\_
3. In 1536 Tyndale was burnt at the stake. \_\_\_\_\_
4. The Bible was divided into chapters for the purpose of a Latin Concordance.  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Alfred the Great was a lover of the Bible. \_\_\_\_\_
6. Wycliffe was burnt at the stake in 1384. \_\_\_\_\_
7. The Vulgate was a Greek translation of the Bible. \_\_\_\_\_
8. Pope Damasus requested Jerome to revise a Latin version of the Bible. \_\_\_\_\_
9. Manuscript means “written by hand.” \_\_\_\_\_
10. Tyndale was a contemporary of Luther. \_\_\_\_\_
11. Miles Coverdale printed the whole Bible in English in 1535. \_\_\_\_\_
12. Jerome made his headquarters in Rome. \_\_\_\_\_

If you wish to obtain your AIS Bible and Theology Certificate or work toward your B.A. Degree from Indiana Bible College, complete this Self-Help Test as completely as possible and return it to: AIS, P.O. Box 47917 Indianapolis, IN 46247 or email it to: [ais@apostolic.edu](mailto:ais@apostolic.edu) or fax it to: (317) 781-7700.

# Bible Introduction