**WEEK 11: Lessons from the History of the English Bible**

**Formation of the Old Testament**

* The Hebrew Bible (OT) was written between 1400 BC to 400 BC. The Hebrew Canon was finalized by 300 BC. It consists of 39 books (24 in Hebrew canon.
* The **Septuagint** (70) was a Greek translation of the OT commissioned in 285 BC in Alexandria, Egypt.
* The Masoretes were a group of Jewish scribes that arose between the 5th and 10th centuries AD. Their production of copies of the OT set the standard for centuries to come.
* The **Dead Sea Scrolls**, discovered in 1947, are the most important Biblical archeological find in history. They confirmed the authenticity & accuracy of the OT.
* The **Great Isaiah Scroll** dates to 200 BC and is almost word for word identical to the Masoretic text established 1400 years later.

**Formation of the New Testament**

* The New Testament was written within a span of 50 years (45 to 95 AD). Numerous copies of the NT books spread quickly.
* Over 5000 copies of all or portions of the Greek NT have been discovered thru the centuries. They confirm the authenticity and accuracy of the originals.

**Pre-Reformation Era of the Church**

* In 405 AD Jerome (342-420 AD) completed the **Latin Vulgate** which became the Bible of the Church for the next 1100 years.
* The Vulgate was the first book printed by Johannes Gutenberg in 1454, known as the **Gutenberg Bible**. To date, 49 copies have survived.
* Columba (521-97 AD) was Irish and introduced the gospel to Scotland. A Columban monastery produced the **Book of Kells** in the 9th century, an illuminated manuscript of the 4 gospels in Latin.
* Bede (673-735 AD) is known as the ‘Father of English History.’ He wrote *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* in731. He is also known for translating the gospel of John into Old English.
* In 1382 John Wycliffe (1328-84) started the first full translation of the Bible—the **Wycliffe Bible**—in Middle English. Note: Old English > 500-1066; Middle English > 1100-1500; Modern English > 1500 to present. Wycliffe’s is translation based on the Latin Vulgate.
* In 1428 Wycliffe was officially declared a heretic. His bones were exhumed and burned with his books.
* Johannes Gutenberg (1393-1468) invented the first printing press in 1439 using movable type, revolutionizing the world as we know it.

**Reformation Era of the Church**

* Erasmus (1466-1536) printed his **Greek NT** in 1516. It was based on 6 manuscripts. The Reformers used it to translate the Bible. It was revised 4 more times in the next 20 years.
* William Tyndale (1494-1536) was the first to translate the Bible—the **Tyndale Bible**—from the original Greek and Hebrew into English. His NT was printed in 1526. Copies spread quickly & transformed England. He was captured & burned at the stake in 1536.
* Tyndale completed a translation of Genesis thru 2 Chronicles and Jonah, but he was unable to publish it before his death.
* Two of Tyndale’s associates published the entire Bible shortly after Tyndale was condemned and executed. Both were licensed under the authority of Henry VIII (1491-1547).
* Miles Coverdale (1488-1569) published the **Coverdale Bible** in 1535 just as Tyndale was about to be burned at the stake.
* John Rogers (1505-55) published the whole Bible under the pseudonym Thomas Matthew in 1537. His translation—the **Matthew Bible**—was the better one.
* In 1539, three years after Tyndale was executed, his prayers were answered. Henry VIII ordered the publication of an official Bible. Coverdale oversaw the translation of the **Great Bible**.
* Thomas Cromwell (1485-1540) ordered the Great Bible to be placed in 9000+ churches all across England shortly before he was beheaded for Henry’s failed marriage to Anne of Cleves.
* After Bloody Mary’s reign of terror, many Reformers fled to Geneva where a group of scholars produced the **Geneva Bible**, the 1st English Bible to be fully translated from Greek and Hebrew.
* It had chapters & verses as well as helpful notes for readers—the first study Bible. Calvin, Knox, Coverdale, & Theodore Beza were instrumental in its production.

**Puritan Era of the Church**

* In 1604, James I (1566-1625) called a conference to address church matters. It was suggested by the Puritan John Reynolds (1549-1607) that a new Bible translation be undertaken—the **King James Bible**. James agreed because he hated the Geneva Bible. 54 scholars were chosen to base it on previous translations.
* Archbishop Richard Bancroft (1554-1610) oversaw the committee. It was finally printed in 1611 but underwent numerous revisions due to multiple errors. It became the most influential book in history.
* In 1620, a group of English Puritans arrived from Holland to the New World. They brought the Geneva Bible w/ them.
* The **Bay Psalm Book** was the first book published in the American colonies in 1640. Only 11 copies survive, one of which sold for $14.2 million in 2013.
* By the 1650’s the KJV Bible displaced the Geneva Bible as the Bible of Americans.