**HOW WE GOT THE BIBLE**

# **Oral Tradition**

# Remarkable memories (modern Jewish youths: Talmud, ancient commentary on OT)

# **Writing**

# From 3,100 BC onwards – Egyptian ‘papyrus’, pithy stem of reed; Israelite slaves aware of these skills (Exod.17:14).

# Later, leather used, also wax tablets (Exod 34:27-8), broken pottery as scrap paper; soft clay baked in sun (Ezek.4:1). Employed writers for letters, documents, Jer.32:10 (Baruch, Jer.36:1-8; 45:1; letter, Jer. 29:1-23). Numerous OT refs to writing for permanence (plastered stone, Deut.27:1-8) and portability (Isa.8:1; 2 Kgs.22:8; Neh.8:1).

# LXX (Septuagint, Greek OT, 2nd c BC.

# Dead Sea Scrolls, Qumran community; huge collection, precious but deteriorated fragments, commentaries (abt 100 are OT bks in Hebrew) ?from 2nd c.BC onward. Perhaps in Jewish/Roman war of AD 66-73 stored in caves for safety.

# **Early Church**

Immense importance to Church of OT Scripture (2 Tim.3:14-17), gradual emergence of NT (Lk.1:1-4; Jn.20;30-31;21:24-5;Acts 1:1; 2 Peter 3:15-16) all copied by hand and treasured (John Chrysostom preaching in 4th c. Antioch - read and discuss *Matthew* when you get home) – not only in scrolls but in codex form (book)

**We owe most to monks**

Production of manuscripts, meticulous concern for accuracy and availability, e.g. Bede, 673-735 (*John)*, King Alfred (871-901) *Exodus* & *Psalms*

**John Wycliffe (1330-84)**

Team trans. from 5th c. Latin ‘Vulgate’ (by Jerome of Bethlehem) into English; copied by hand; Lollards’ passion for vernacular Scripture (forbidden) – invention of printing (1450-1525) - Erasmus’ Greek & Latin version printed, e.g. Bilney converted by 1 Tim.1:15; influence of Luther (German Bible)

**William Tyndale, (1494?-1536)**

Gifted linguist, translated all NT, Greek text into English, (later, part of OT from Hebrew) first to be printed in English, (‘repent’ replaces ‘do penance’) and anti-Pope marginal refs - forbidden – copies bought and burnt; Tyndale outlawed, price on his head, exile to continent, his last letter from Belgium in cold winter – betrayed by a friend, strangled and burnt (‘Lord, open the king of England’s eyes’) 1536 but previous year first complete Bible printed, work of

# **Miles Coverdale (1488-1569)**

# Brilliant compiler/editor (rather than translator), using Vulgate, Tyndale, Luther’s German; much of the Coverdale Bible (the first with chapter headings and summaries) in The Great Bible, chained to lectern in every parish Church 1538, Tyndale’s prayers answered – king allows ‘ploughboy’ to read.

# Various other Bibles in this period – ‘Matthew’s Bible’, mainly Tyndale (Thomas Matthews, pseudonym for reformer John Rogers, first to be burnt at stake in Mary’s reign) and so-called ‘Wicked’ Bible (from misprint – ‘Thou shalt commit adultery’)

# **King James Version 1611**

# Requested by king, no marginal notes, for use in church

**Many versions followed**

Revised Version NT (1881, OT 1885), Weymouth NT, Moffatt, Revised Standard Version, New English Bible, New International Version, Good News Bible, CEV, To-day’s New International Version, and translations by/for Roman Catholics – Knox’s translation, Jerusalem Bible.

**This ‘inestimable treasure’ (KJV) God’s gift to us, at great human cost – meticulous translation work and the blood of heroic martyrs like Tyndale and Rogers.**