After the fall of Constantinople in 1453, many of the Greek scholars fled to western Europe taking with them their Greek manuscripts copied from the original Koine Greek of the New Testament. The Old Testament was penned primarily in Hebrew along with a little Aramaic. During the reign of Alexander the Great, Hellenism was spread throughout his kingdom which extended down to Northern Africa. Greek was the language of that culture and part of being integrated into Hellenistic culture was the demand to learn the Greek language.

After the death of Alexander the Greek empire was divided into 4 divisions. The Ptolemaic dynasty ruled over Northern Africa and in the 3rd century BC Ptolemy Philadelphus hired 72 Jewish scholars to translate the Hebrew Old Testament into the Koine Greek in order to house it in the Alexandrian library at Alexandria. The Alexandrian Jews were fluent in the Koine Greek and in the time of Christ the Koine Greek was the fluent language even in Jerusalem.

So to understand that the Roman empire was divided into eastern and western segments is very important especially since the eastern leg of the empire maintained the Koine Greek language and manuscripts. The western part of the empire was under the influence of the Latin language which had originated from the region of Italy. So until the fall of the Byzantine Empire in 1453, the western portion of Roman culture was not exposed to the Greek manuscripts.

As the Greek scholars fled the Turks, they settled in western Europe and began to teach Koine Greek in the learning institutions. One of these scholars was George Hermonymus who taught in Paris. One of his students was Desidarius Erasmus of Rotterdam.

**1516 AD - Erasmus produced the first complete Greek New Testament**

As Erasmus immersed himself in the Koine Greek, he was amazed at how much deeper and more intricate the language was compared to the Latin. He felt that even the best Latin scholarship and manuscripts of the New Testament could not come close to the Koine Greek. In fact he demonstrated that the Latin Vulgate had many significant translation errors that produced much doctrinal misunderstanding. Many of these discoveries would strike at the heart of Roman tradition comparing things such as penance vs. repentance and Mary as a dispenser of grace vs. Jesus being the only one full of grace and truth.

Erasmus’s translation was unique in that each page had a column of the Koine Greek next to it’s Latin translation in another column. Meanwhile in Germany, a monk would come to the end of his deep struggle over penance and guilt when the Lord had caused him to realize through scripture that the “just shall live by faith”
1517 AD - Martin Luther and his 95 theses

On October 31st, 1517 Martin Luther was compelled to put out for discussion 95 specific doctrinal errors that he felt the Roman church was actively practicing that could not be supported by scripture. Among these challenges were the subjects of penance, the pope’s authority, and abuses in the selling of indulgences.

1518 AD - Luther defends his theology

At Heidelberg, Germany Luther was called before a council to defend his position and later appeared before Cardinal Cajetan at Augsburg, Germany, but refuses to recant. He was ultimately protected by Frederick the Wise who kept him from being turned over to Rome.

1519 AD - Luther questions Rome and Erasmus a second edition

As Luther had freedom to in Germany under Frederick, he began preaching and teaching on the New Testament. He raises the proclamation of error in the belief of Papal infallibility. At the same time, Erasmus completed a second and more thorough edition from Greek manuscripts of the New Testament and Ulrich Zwingli begins New Testament sermons in Switzerland, thus ushering in the Swiss reformation.

1520 AD - Papal bull declared against Luther

On June 15th, 1520 Pope Leo X issued “Exsurge Domine” (Condemning the Errors of Martin Luther) ordering him to recant. Luther provides an extensive written statement that once again points out the doctrinal error of the Roman church and burns the issued Bull in front of the east gate of Wittenburg.

1521 AD - Luther is excommunicated by Rome

Luther was officially excommunicated from the catholic church by the Pope and at the Diet of Worms refuses to recant of his writings. An edict is given to condemn Luther as a heretic and an outlaw, banning the possession of his writings. While the edict declared that anyone was permitted to kill Luther without consequence, it was not enforced.

1522 AD - Luther completes his German translation of the New Testament

In 1522, Luther completed his German translation of the Bible based on the newer Latin translation of Erasmus. William Tyndale begins teaching the Bible to the English and is charged with heresy. Influenced by Luther and others he also believed that the Bible should be in the hands of all people. But he is forced to flee England when the church finds out of his plans.

1525 AD - Teachings of the Anabaptists

The Anabaptist movement, predecessor to Brethren and Mennonite churches, teaches believers’ baptism only, democratic decision making, and separation of church and state. Martin Luther marries former nun Katherine von Bora and writes “The Bondage of the Will” in response to Erasmus’s writing on free will.
While in Germany, Tyndale successfully finishes and prints all of the New Testament and much of the New in the English language. Tyndale was dubbed the “apostle of England” and he hated Papal rule and was so driven to get the Bible into the hands of common people that he said to a local cardinal “I will cause the boy who drives the plow to know more about the Bible than thou doest.”


**1527 AD - Persecution against Anabaptists**

The city of Basel, Switzerland, orders corporeal punishment and confiscation of property for Christians who are baptized as adults and who shelter Anabaptists. Martin Luther penned “A Mighty Fortress” and writes against Zwingli’s views on the Lord’s Supper. And the first Protestant university in Marberg, Germany, is founded.

**1529 AD - The Reformation Parliament**

King Henry VIII of England summons the “Reformation Parliament” and begins to cut ties with the Church of Rome. And in Germany at the “Diet of Speyer”, Luthers followers are first called “Protestants” and the term Protestantism becomes associated with Lutheranism, Zwinglianism, and Calvinism. The Tyrolean Anabaptists flee to Moravia, a region of the Czech Republic.

**1530 AD - The Diet of Augsburg**

The Diet of Augsburg attempts to calm rising tension between Protestantism and Roman Catholicism and Luther being condemned as a heretic cannot attend. Philipp Melanchthon, Luther’s friend and collaborator on the German Bible translation, presents the Augsburg Confession, a statement of Lutheran beliefs.

**1531 AD - Ulrich Zwingli killed**

Ulrich Zwingli urges civil war in Switzerland to force remaining Catholic districts to accept Protestantism and dies in the Battle of Kappel

**1532 AD - Changes in England and France**

English clergy submits to Henry VIII, beginning process of declaring the king, rather than the pope, supreme authority over spiritual matters while in France John Calvin starts the Protestant movement and publishes his commentary on Seneca’s De Clementia.

**1534 AD - Translation completions and King Henry VIII**

William Tyndale’s revised New Testament is printed and Martin Luther completes a translation of the Bible into German, 13 years after he began the work. Meanwhile in England, Act of Supremacy makes
1526 AD - Tyndale produces first English Bible

King Henry VIII head of the English church, breaking away from Roman Catholic control. After reportedly seeing a vision of Mary, Roman Catholic priest Ignatius Loyola founds Society of Jesus (Jesuits) in Paris to spread Counter-Reformation and to evangelize the lost catholic sheep. This counter reformation is cloaked in the ecumenical movement today whose sole purpose is to bring all under the authority of the Pope.

1535 AD - Tyndale produces first English Bible

Myles Coverdale, close friend of Tyndale, translates portions of the Old Testament not completed by Tyndale and publishes the “Coverdale Bible”, the first complete Bible with the Old and New Testament. In Munster Germany, the Anabaptists are slaughtered by Catholic residents when the Anabaptists attempt to take over the city and eventually Menno Simons causes the Anabaptists to adopt pacifism.

Anabaptists (“re-baptizers” from the Greek) were Christians who believed that infant baptism was not valid. They “re-baptized” adults who had been baptized as infants. Their distinctives were a drive toward the restoration of “primitive Christianity,” including the rejection of oaths and capital punishment, and the refusal of roles in civil government. Their beliefs included:

- Belief in the absolute supremacy of the Bible as sufficient for faith, but with private inspiration playing an important part.
- Rejection of infant baptism and the doctrine of justification by faith alone.
- Holding of goods in common was to be the underlying principle of new Kingdom of God.

1536 AD - Tyndale burned at the stake

William Tydale had spent 15 years in a tiny prison cell that ended with his strangulation and burning at the stake for heresy. He was killed because he translated the Bible into English and because of his public denouncing of King Henry VIII’s divorce. At his execution, he said “Oh Lord, open the eyes of the King of England.”

At the same time Denmark and Norway became Lutheran, Erasmus died, Henry VIII disbands 376 Roman Catholic monasteries and convents in England and John Calvin wrote Institutes of the Christian Religion to explain Protestant beliefs.

1537 AD - The Matthews Bible printed

A contemporary of Tyndale and Coverdale and familiar with their work effectively combined their works to produce the first complete English Bible printed in England with the approval of the king. Up until this point, all previous English bible translations were smuggled into England.

1538 AD - John Calvin banished Geneva, Switzerland

John Calvin was forced to go to Strasbourg, France when Geneva’s city council ousted him over disagreement on the withholding of communion, moral censorship, and punishment by excommunication.
1539 AD - The “Chained Bible”

In 1539 Thomas Cromwell petitioned King Henry VIII to produce an up to date Bible for the Church of England. So the Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer commissioned Myles Coverdale for the job and the finished work was known as the Great Bible because of its size. The copies were chained to each pulpit and therefore became known as the Chained Bible. This was the first Bible that was approved by the King for use in the church and public teaching.

The King required that every church had a reader so that even those who could not read could hear the Word of God. Three years after Tyndales death, the Lord answered his prayer to open the kings eyes.

1545 AD - The Council of Trent

Roman Catholic Counter-Reformation condemns the selling of indulgences, immorality of clergy, nepotism (appointing family members to church offices), and Protestantism.

1546 AD - Martin Luther dies

1547 AD - King Henry dies

King Henry’s son Edward takes the throne and becomes known as a “Josiah figure” as he firmly supports the Protestants. He worked on totally reforming England from any Roman influence. On his death bed, only 6 years after he took the throne, he named his cousin Lady Jane Gray as his successor, but she was only queen for 9 days. Edwards sister Mary had her put to death in spite of Edwards wishes and Mary, a devout catholic became known as “bloody Mary” for her crusades against the Protestants.

John Rodgers (writer of the Matthews Bible) became her first martyr. She also had Thomas Cranmer put to death and had some 288 men women and children burned at the stake for the crime of reading the bible or being the translators of it. John Knox, Miles Coverdale and some 800 other scholars and students of the Word fled to Geneva Switzerland.

1555 AD - Peace of Augsburg Treaty

A treaty was signed in Germany allowing individual Princes to choose their own religion and Lutheranism and Catholicism had a “dual existence” in Germany.

1557 AD - The Geneva NT

While under the shelter of Geneva, the reformers put together all of the best work on the Bible without any influence from the crown or Rome. They based their work on Tyndales most up to date work.

1558 AD - Queen Mary dies

She was replaced by her protestant sister Elizabeth I who rejects Rome and supports the Reformers.

1560 AD - The Geneva Bible completed

This was the bible that became the “Bible of the Pilgrims” and from 1560-1644 there were over 200 copies produced. It was the first study bible with over 300,000 words of commentary included by the authors. It was also the first translation with chapter and verse divisions incorporated.