

John Wycliffe

Morning Star of the Reformation



LIGHTERS OF THE REFORMATION

Book 1

Have you ever been awake in the early morning just before the sun comes up? If you have and you look in the east you might see a very bright star in the sky. That star is called the "morning star" because it is seen just before the sun comes up.

Many centuries after Jesus and the disciples were here on earth there was a time of great spiritual darkness on the earth. It was called the Dark Ages.

The people were not allowed to have the light of truth. The people had no Bibles. They were not allowed to know what the Bible taught.

John Wycliffe was born in England around the year 1328 AD. He was called the "Morning Star of the Reformation." The light of truth that took away the darkness of the "Dark Ages" is called the "Reformation." The

men who shared this light of truth with the people are called "Reformers."

Wycliffe was the first of the "Reformers" that is why he is called "the Morning Star of the Reformation."

Wycliffe was a very learned man. But he was also a very godly man. Wycliffe loved God a lot. But he didn't know God had a special work for him to do.

The only Bibles in that time were in very old languages the people couldn't read. Only the people who learned the old languages could read the Bible.



One of the old languages was Latin. Wycliffe learned Latin. So while he was still in school Wycliffe started to read the Latin Bible. While reading he learned that many of the things the

Roman Catholic Church taught were not true.

Wycliffe began sharing the truths he found in the Bible. He taught the people that salvation was through Jesus alone. He taught that the church should not control the government.

In Wycliffe's time there were many monks all over England. The monks claimed to give their lives to God and so they didn't do any work. They only begged for money. Though they were supposed to be very poor they got so much money that they became very rich and had fancy buildings and lots of fancy food. The money that should have been given to help poor people was given to the monks.

The pope had given the monks the power to forgive sins. Of course, they didn't really have the power to forgive

sins, the Bible says only God can forgive sins (**Luke 5:21; Acts 5:31**). But the people thought that they had the power and so the people went and paid money to get forgiveness from the monks. The monks wanted the money so they would forgive anything. Even very bad people could get forgiven and keep doing the same sins. Since forgiveness could be bought, people didn't need to be sorry for their sins. Lots of bad things happened because of the monks pretending to forgive sins.

Wycliffe started writing little books about the monks and how they were not following the Bible. He taught the people that only God can truly forgive sins. Wycliffe taught the people that only the Bible can tell men what they should or shouldn't do. Only the Bible teaches truth.

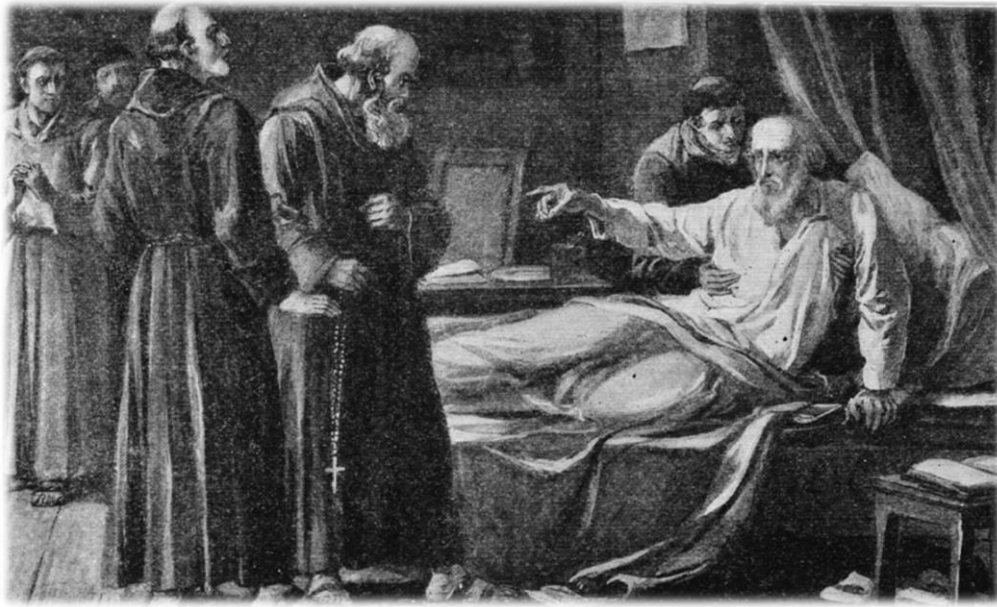
The things Wycliffe taught made the monks angry. They made the pope angry. The Catholic Church wanted to get rid of Wycliffe.

But Wycliffe was obeying God and so God protected him in many ways. The pope sent orders that Wycliffe should be arrested and thrown in jail. But the pope who sent these orders died. Then two popes were chosen to take his place. Now the pope claims to be infallible which means he cannot make a mistake. But now there were two popes, both claiming to be the real pope that can't make mistakes. As the two popes were busy fighting each other, they did not focus on getting rid of Wycliffe. So for a short time he had peace. This fight between the two popes helped the people to see better that the pope was not really telling the truth. They realized that the popes

were making up stories to trick the people.

Wycliffe wanted everyone, even the poor people, to learn about Jesus' love for them. Wycliffe sent preachers out all over the country of England to teach the people the truth. Many people heard the truth and believed in Jesus because of these preachers.

One day Wycliffe became very badly sick. Thinking he was dying some of the monks went to his bedside. They hoped he would now give up the truth he had taught. They wanted him to take back what he had said about their evil works. They said to the sick man, "You are dying. Now with us here, take back all the bad things you have said about us."



Wycliffe listened quietly then told his nurse to help him sit up in bed. Then as the monks waited he spoke in his strong voice, "I shall not die, but live; and again will speak about the evil works of the monks." The unhappy monks quickly left the room.

Wycliffe did not die. Just like he said he got well. And after he got well he gave to the people of England the greatest gift he could. He gave them a Bible in English so they could read it for themselves. Now it would be

harder for the pope and monks to trick the people. The people now had the light that they needed to come out of the spiritual darkness they were in.

There was no way to print in those days so Wycliffe's Bible had to be written by hand. This was a lot of work, so some people could only get parts of the Bible. But still it was the beginning of the great Reformation which would give people in many different languages, Bibles they could read.

The pope and the Roman church were angry about what Wycliffe taught and that he had given the people the Bible in a language they could read. They called Wycliffe to three different trials. They hoped to get rid of him. But each time they failed. Wycliffe was not afraid and he stood very bravely defending the truths of the Bible.

A fourth time he was called to another trial, and this time at Rome. Everyone was sure he would be killed at Rome. But before he went he became sick and instead of going he had to write a letter to defend the truths he taught.

It seemed very likely that Wycliffe would be killed by those who hated him. The pope, the king, and monks all were waiting for the chance to see him burnt at the stake. But it was not part of God's plan that Wycliffe be killed by the pope or any other man. Instead Wycliffe would die from sickness.

On December 31, in the year 1384, Wycliffe died at the age of 56 in his home at Lutterworth. His life was over, but the work of reform he had started would never stop.

Wycliffe was probably the greatest of the reformers. He was pure, loving, wise, and strong in his faith. He laid a strong and large foundation for the reformation that would follow.

But the leaders of the Roman Catholic Church had a great hatred for Wycliffe.



More than 40 years after he died they dug up his bones and burned them. They then threw the ashes into a nearby creek. The creek flowed into a river and that river into another and another until at last it came to the ocean.

Just like the ashes of Wycliffe spread all over the world, so the truth he

taught would spread all over the world.

Next time you read your Bible written in your own language, say a thank you prayer to God that he used men like Wycliffe, the "Morning Star of the Reformation" to give us the light of God's Word.



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