

May 22nd

Memory Verse

What manner of man is this, that **even the winds and the sea obey him!** Matthew 8:27

Map work

Another sea voyage today!



Braving the Atlantic ocean in their three-masted caravels, Portuguese seamen set out on expedition after expedition during the fifteenth century. They were trying to find a way to India round Africa.

On May 22nd 1498, after ten months at sea, the west coast of India was sighted by a fleet of caravels under the command of Vasco da Gama. The following day they dropped anchor off Calicut and their long search was over.

Now it would be possible for Portugal to trade direct with the far east. Before Vasco da Gama's arrival, the only route from India to Europe was by land across Asia and the Turks and Egyptians made Europeans pay high prices for the goods they allowed through.

The Portuguese were expecting to find India traders eager to send spices, silk and muslin, and precious stones back to Portugal in exchange for cheap trinkets but the Indians laughed at Vasco da Gama when he produced his gifts.

“Send us gold, silver, corals and scarlet cloth,” they said, “and you may have spices and precious stones.”

So the Portuguese fleet left Calicut for home. The voyage to Lisbon took thirteen months and many of the sailors were taken sick and died. One of the ships had to be destroyed. So many of her crew died or were too ill to work that she could not carry on.

When the fleet set out from Portugal at the start of the expedition there were 170 men with Vasco da Gama but he returned to Lisbon with only fifty-five.

The Portuguese were not satisfied with the rich trade that this new sea route brought them, they wanted to rule India.

So the next time Vasco da Gama sailed for India, in 1502, he did not go in peace. His ships bombarded Calicut and his men looted the town, returning to Portugal with their holds loaded with valuable goods.

He returned again, many years later, as ruler of the territories that had been seized by the Portuguese, but now he was an old man and the climate killed him.

His discovery of a sea route to India enabled Portugal to build a new empire; it also linked East with West for the first time.¹

I think you will agree that this is a rather horrible story, although told as nicely as possible above. The beginnings of direct contact between Europe and India do not reflect credit on the Europeans! Vasco da Gama travelled from **Lisbon** to the **Cape Verde Islands**, then he and his fleet were blown by a storm to within 600 miles of **Brazil** before resetting their course for **South Africa**. They sailed up the coast of East Africa to **Malindi**, north of Mombasa, at the mouth of the Galana River, where

¹ Adapted from Owen, Evan, *What Happened Today?* Book 2 available on the *Mothers' Companion* flashdrive <https://motherscompanion.weebly.com>

they found a pilot willing to guide them across the Arabian Sea to **Calicut** (also called Kozhikode). Can you use an atlas to trace Vasco da Gama's voyage?

Some things to follow up from earlier lessons

If you enjoyed the lesson on Samuel Morse on April 2nd you might be interested to know that he carried out his famous test on **22nd May**. Also on **22nd May** 1689 the Act of Toleration was passed. On the 18th and 19th of this month we looked at a couple of milestones on the slow and uneven route to religious freedom in Britain. The Act of Toleration was another milestone and it allowed Christians to worship outside the Church of England. There were many restrictions and the freedom of worship Christians had enjoyed under Oliver Cromwell had been much greater. It would be a long time before such freedom would be regained. Nevertheless, Christians such as those who worshipped with the little church at Axminster² hailed the act with great rejoicing.

Something to do³

Nowadays in Britain Bibles are easily and cheaply available and no one in Britain can prevent us reading God's Word. This has not always been the case. For hundreds of years there was no widely available Bible in English. In the Middle Ages, the Bible was only available to people in Latin, a language only understood by educated people. Most people had no knowledge of Latin. At the end of the 14th century, John Wycliffe (1330-1384) was the prime mover of what may have been a group of translators who produced, for the first time, a Bible in English. The pope did not like what Wycliffe taught and he did not like what he was doing.

On **22nd May** 1377 Pope Gregory XI issued five papal bulls to denounce Wycliffe's doctrines. A crack down began and the Bible in English was banned. Many people, however, disobeyed the law. Christians should obey those in authority, of course, but when we are forbidden by them to do what God commands then we have no alternative but to break the law. God commands us to read, study and learn his word. He commands us to meet together and to sing his praise.

Although the hand-copied Bibles were expensive and it was hard for people to get hold of them if they were not well off, so many were made that about 250 manuscripts of the Bible in varying states of completeness survive. Many, many more must have been destroyed or worn out. It helped that Wycliffe had powerful friends at the court of King Richard II, including the king's uncle, John of Gaunt (1340–1399) who were able to afford him some protection.



Here is the beginning of John's Gospel in one of these surviving manuscripts. It is not so hard to read as you might think. Get a piece of paper and a pencil and we will "translate" (or transliterate) the text on the left from Wycliffe's style of writing into our own.

To start with you need to know that there are no verse divisions. These were not "invented" until much later. The very first letter of the verse is the huge blue decorated capital. The next letter of that word is next to it on the first line. I think you will read the first word easily.⁴ The next word is easy too but you need to know that the letter that begins it and looks a bit like a large *v* or *y* is really a letter we no longer have in our alphabet, called "thorn." It is roughly the same as our *th*. So the

² See 19th May

³ We learned about Wycliffe in the lesson for 1st February and there is more to come on 10th June.

⁴ In

next word is not *ye* but....?⁵ The next word has two real *y* s in it. Can you see how they differ from the *thorn* letter? Sometimes in writing of this time a letter *n* or *m* would be left out and replaced by a line over the previous letter. The rest of the letters in this word are easy. Can you make out: *b i g y (n) n y n g*? Can you read the word now? If not, it helps to remember that *y* and *i* make the same sound.⁶ Now we have another word with a letter written above. This time it is the vowel that is missing. The first letter may puzzle you too. It is a *w* written with a rather bendy final stroke. Look down the page and you will see it many times. So we have a word here that is *w_s*. Can you guess it?⁷ This word occurs some more on the page but with the missing letter filled in. I think it is only left out here because the scribe got to the end of the line and did not have much room.

The next line begins with a word you already know how to read now.⁸ Next is a word beginning with one of those wiggly *w* s. The next letter is easy to read and so is the last letter of the word. Can you guess the missing letter and so read the word – it occurs again on the same line?⁹ the next letter is a rather fancy looking + sign, equivalent to our &. You have already had the next two words.¹⁰

The next line begins with a word you have already had but written out in full this time.¹¹ Study the middle letter closely because it is also the letter that begins the next word. If you are familiar with this text already the next word may surprise you.¹² This preposition obviously had a wider range of meaning in Wycliffe's day than it does in ours. The word that follows is easy and occurs again after another + sign.¹³ You know the next word too.¹⁴ With the information you now have you should be able to read all of the next line. The word at the end of the line is carried on on the next line. It too is a word you have had before as are the two words that follow it.

Now comes something a little bit harder. Have you noticed the faint slashes / that separate the phrases? The one on this line is so close to the letter *d* that precedes it that it touches it. Then comes a new letter, a capital *A*. This is followed by double *l* and then an *e*. Ignore the *e* to get the modern spelling of this word.¹⁵ The next word begins with a “thorn” and the *i* has a line over it meaning that it should be followed by a *n*. Can you read the word?¹⁶ The next line begins with a word that in modern English does not have an *n* at the end.¹⁷ The first letter of the next word may look like a *w* but remember that Wycliffe's *w* has a wiggly side. What could it be?¹⁸ You can work out this word now but we do not spell it like this today.¹⁹

For the next word remember that *y* and *i* make the same sound.²⁰ The next word has an *m* missing, indicated by the line above the *i*, then there is a big colon. The rest of the text carries on on the next page but if you are enjoying this detective work you can easily decipher the last two words on the page as you know all the symbols.²¹

As you get to know the letters and signs, reading Wycliffe's English becomes easier. There are one

5 the

6 bigy(n)nyng = biginning = beginning.

7 was

8 the

9 word

10 the word

11 was

12 at

13 God

14 was

15 All

16 *thingis* = things

17 were

18 m

19 *maad* = made

20 by

21 + (= and) with

or two other letters you need to know such as the long *s* (ʃ), and *ȝ* which is a kind of *g* or *y*. If you treat *v* and *u* as interchangeable and just sound out the words you should be able to read Wycliffe's Bible easily if you practice.²²

Here is your memory verse in Wycliffe's translation:

What manere man is he þis, for þe wyndis and þe see obeiþen to hym?

Try writing it out with decorations similar to the one in the page we looked at above. If you prefer you could illustrate it in your own style.

²² You will find it here [https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Bible_\(Early_Wycliffe\)](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Bible_(Early_Wycliffe)) in printed form.