

BELLARIA XXXVIII



Initial page of the Lindisfarne Gospel of St Matthew

Incipit evangelii gene(a)logia mathei

LIBER GENERATI/ONIS IHU [IESU] CHRI [CHRISTI] FILII DAVID PHILII ABRAHAM

Note the huge, highly decorative LIB and the 'stacking' of the letters in the bottom line

CHRISTMAS SPECIAL 2020

Comparative criticism

Whatever translation of the Bible we hear over Christmas, there is much to be said for examining how Jerome latinized Matthew's Greek, and how that was Englished by two important sources of our 'original' (*cough*) King James' version.

Here, then, is St Matthew's Christmas story in the pen of:

- The Greek of St Matthew, c. AD 70 (via Erasmus, 1516)
- The Latin Vulgate of St Jerome, c. 400
- The Wessex Gospels, Old English West Anglo-Saxon dialect of Northumbria, c. 990
- John Wycliffe, 1384
- Willam Tyndale, 1526
- King James, 1611

The story has been split into chunks of 3-5 verses, each chunk featuring all the above versions. A single verse of the Wessex Gospel is given, *exempli gratia*.

***St Matthew* AD 70**

1 τοῦ δὲ Ἰησοῦ γεννηθέντος ἐν Βηθλέεμ τῆς Ἰουδαίας ἐν ἡμέραις Ἡρώδου τοῦ βασιλέως, ἰδοὺ μάγοι ἀπὸ ἀνατολῶν παρεγένοντο εἰς Ἱεροσόλυμα 2 λέγοντες, ποῦ ἐστὶν ὁ τεχθεὶς βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων; εἶδομεν γὰρ αὐτοῦ τὸν ἀστέρα ἐν τῇ ἀνατολῇ καὶ ἦλθομεν προσκυνῆσαι αὐτῷ. 3 ἀκούσας δὲ ὁ βασιλεὺς Ἡρώδης ἐταράχθη καὶ πᾶσα Ἱεροσόλυμα μετ' αὐτοῦ, 4 καὶ συναγαγὼν πάντας τοὺς ἀρχιερεῖς καὶ γραμματεῖς τοῦ λαοῦ ἐπυνθάνετο παρ' αὐτῶν ποῦ ὁ Χριστὸς γεννᾶται.

***St Jerome* AD 400**

1 *cum ergo natus esset Jesus in Bethlehem Juda in diebus Herodis regis, ecce magi ab oriente venerunt Jerosolymam, 2 dicentes: ubi est qui natus est rex Judaeorum? vidimus enim stellam ejus in oriente, et venimus adorare eum. 3 audiens autem Herodes rex, turbatus est, et omnis Jerosolyma cum illo. 4 et congregans omnes principes sacerdotum, et scribas populi, sciscitabatur ab eis ubi Christus nasceretur.*

***Wessex Gospels* AD 990**

2 [saying] hwær is se iudea kyng þe akenned is.

***Wycliffe* AD 1384**

1 Therfor whanne Jhesus was borun in Bethleem of Juda, in the daies of king Eroude, lo! astromyenes camen fro the eest to Jerusalem, 2 and seiden, Where is he, that is borun king of Jewis? for we han seyn his sterre in the eest, and we comen to worschipe him. 3 But king Eroude herde, and was trublid, and al Jerusalem with hym. 4 And he gaderide to gidre alle the prynces of prestis, and scribis of the puple, and enqueride of hem, where Crist shulde be borun.

***Tyndale* AD 1526**

1 When Iesus was borne at Bethleem in Iury in the tyme of Herode the kynge, Beholde there came wyse me from the eest to Ierusalem 2 saynge: Where is he yt is borne kynge of ye Iues? We have sene his starre in ye eest and are come to worship him. 3 When Herode ye kynge had herde thys he was troubled and all Ierusalem with hym 4 and he gathered all ye chefe Prestes and Scribes of the people and axed of them where Christ shulde be borne.

***King James* AD 1611**

1 Now when Iesus was borne in Bethlehem of Iudea, in the dayes of Herod the king, behold, there came Wise men from the East to Hierusalem, 2 Saying, Where is he that is borne King of the Iewes? for we haue sene his Starre in the East, and are come to worship him. 3 When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Hierusalem with him. 4 And when he had gathered all the chiefe Priests and Scribes of the people together, hee demanded of them where Christ should be borne.



Fragment of the 'Magdalen' MS of Matthew 26.7-8, dated to c. AD 200
αυτου ανακει[μενου. ι]δοντες δε οι [μαθηται] ηγανακτη '[...oil poured over the head of] him relax[ing]. But [s]eeing
(this) the [disciples] complain[ed]...'

St Matthew 70

5 οἱ δὲ εἶπαν αὐτῷ, ἐν Βηθλέεμ τῆς Ἰουδαίας· οὕτως γὰρ γέγραπται διὰ τοῦ προφήτου· 6 καὶ σύ, Βηθλέεμ γῆ Ἰούδα, οὐδαμῶς ἐλαχίστη εἶ ἐν τοῖς ἡγεμόσιν Ἰούδα· ἐκ σοῦ γὰρ ἐξελεύσεται ἡγούμενος, ὅστις ποιμανεῖ τὸν λαόν μου τὸν Ἰσραήλ. 7 τότε Ἡρώδης λάθρα καλέσας τοὺς μάγους ἠκρίβωσεν παρ' αὐτῶν τὸν χρόνον τοῦ φαινομένου ἀστέρος, 8 καὶ πέμψας αὐτοὺς εἰς Βηθλέεμ εἶπεν, πορευθέντες ἐξετάσατε ἀκριβῶς περὶ τοῦ παιδίου· ἐπὶ δὲ εὗρητε ἀπαγγείλατέ μοι, ὅπως κἀγὼ ἐλθὼν προσκυνήσω αὐτῷ.

St Jerome 400

5 *at illi dixerunt : in Bethlehem Judae : sic enim scriptum est per prophetam :*
6 *et tu Bethlehem terra Juda, nequaquam minima es in principibus Juda : ex te enim exiet dux, qui regat populum meum Israel.* 7 *tunc Herodes clam vocatis magis diligenter didicit ab eis tempus stellae, quae apparuit eis :* 8 *et mittens illos in Bethlehem, dixit : ite, et interrogate diligenter de puero : et cum inveneritis, renuntiate mihi, ut et ego veniens adorem eum.*

Wessex 990

5 Ða sægden hyo him. on iudeissere bethlëem. Witodlice þus ys awriten. þurh þanne witegan.

Wycliffe 1384

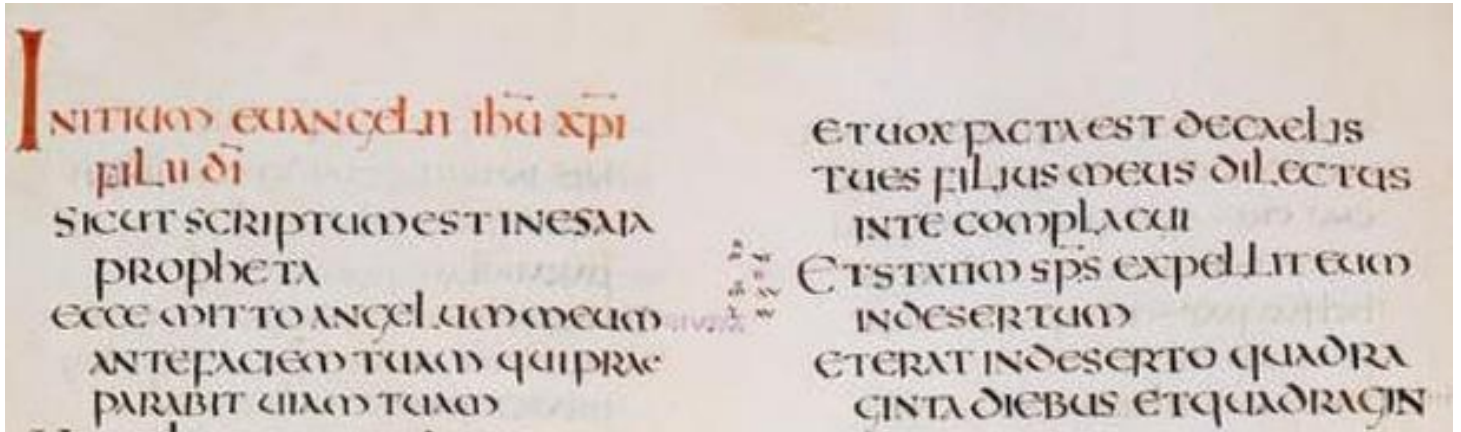
5 And thei seiden to hym, In Bethleem of Juda; for so it is writun bi a profete, 6 And thou, Bethleem, the lond of Juda, art not the leest among the prynces of Juda; for of thee a duyk schal go out, that schal gouerne my puple of Israel. 7 Thanne Eroude clepide pryueli the astromyens, and lernyde bisili of hem the tyme of the sterre that apperide to hem. 8 And he sente hem in to Bethleem, and seide, Go ye, and axe ye bisili of the child, and whanne yee han foundun, telle ye it to me, that Y also come, and worschipe hym.

Tyndale 1526

5 And they sayde vnto hym: at Bethlee in Iury. For thus it is written by the Prophet. 6 And thou Bethleem in the londe of Iury art not the leest concernynge the Princes of Iuda. For out of the shall come the captayne that shall govern my people Israhel. 7 Then Herod prevely called the wyse men and dyligetyly enquiryed of them ye tyme of the starre that appered 8 and sent the to Bethleem saynge: Goo and searche dyligetyly for ye chylde. And when ye have founde hym bringe me worde yt I maye come and worshippe hym also.

King James 1611

5 And they said vnto him, In Bethlehem of Iudea: For thus it is written by the Prophet; 6 And thou Bethlehem in the land of Iuda, art not the least among the Princes of Iuda: for out of thee shall come a Governour, that shall rule my people Israel. 7 Then Herod, when he had priuily called the Wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the Starre appeared: 8 And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Goe, and search diligently for the yong child, and when ye haue found him, bring me word againe, that I may come and worship him also.



Mark 1. 1-2 and 11-13 from Jerome's *Vulgate* in the Codex Amiatinus (8th C)

initium evangelii Iesu Christi Filii Dei sicut scriptum est in Esaia propheta ecce mitto angelum meum ante faciem tuam qui praeparabit via tuam...

et vox facta est de caelo tu es filius meus dilectus in te complacui et statim spiritus expellit eum in desertum et erat in deserto quadraginta diebus et quadraginta noctibus...

St Matthew 70

9 οἱ δὲ ἀκούσαντες τοῦ βασιλέως ἐπορεύθησαν, καὶ ἰδοὺ ὁ ἀστὴρ ὃν εἶδον ἐν τῇ ἀνατολῇ προῆγεν αὐτοὺς ἕως ἔλθων ἐστάθη ἐπάνω οὗ ἦν τὸ παιδίον. 10 ἰδόντες δὲ τὸν ἀστὴρα ἐχάρησαν χαρὰν μεγάλην σφόδρα. 11 καὶ ἐλθόντες εἰς τὴν οἰκίαν εἶδον τὸ παιδίον μετὰ Μαρίας τῆς μητρὸς αὐτοῦ, καὶ πεσόντες προσεκύνησαν αὐτῷ, καὶ ἀνοίξαντες τοὺς θησαυροὺς αὐτῶν προσήνεγκαν αὐτῷ δῶρα, χρυσὸν καὶ λίβανον καὶ σμύρναν. 12 καὶ χρηματισθέντες κατ' ὄναρ μὴ ἀνακάμψαι πρὸς Ἡρώδη, δι' ἄλλης ὁδοῦ ἀνεχώρησαν εἰς τὴν χώραν αὐτῶν.

St Jerome 400

9 *qui cum audissent regem, abierunt, et ecce stella, quam viderant in oriente, antecedebat eos, usque dum veniens staret supra, ubi erat puer.* 10 *videntes autem stellam gavisii sunt gaudio magno valde.* 11 *et intrantes domum, invenerunt puerum cum Maria matre ejus, et procidentes adoraverunt eum: et apertis thesauris suis obtulerunt ei munera, aurum, thus, et myrrham.* 12 *et responso accepto in somnis ne redirent ad Herodem, per aliam viam reversi sunt in regionem suam.*

Wessex 990

9 [abierun] & soðlice se steorre þe hƿe on east-dæle geseagen. heom beforen ferde. oððe he stod ofer. þær þæt child wæs.

Wycliffe 1384

9 And whanne thei hadden herd the kyng, thei wenten forth. And lo! the sterre, that thei siyen in the eest, wente bifore hem, til it cam, and stood aboue, where the child was. 10 And thei siyen the sterre, and ioyeden with a ful greet ioye. 11 And thei entriden in to the hous, and founden the child with Marie, his modir; and thei

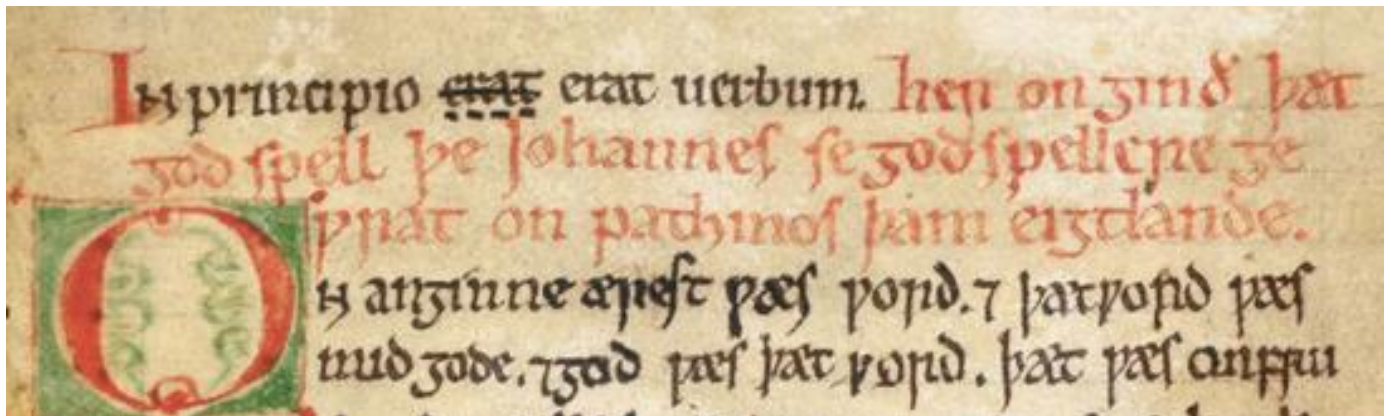
felden down, and worschpiden him. And whanne thei hadden openyd her tresouris, thei offryden to hym yiftis, gold, encense, and myrre. **12** And whanne thei hadden take an aunswere in sleep, that theischulden not turne ayen to Eroude, thei turneden ayen bi anothir weie in to her cuntrey.

*Tyndale*1526

9 When they had heard the kynge they departed: and lo the starre which they sawe in ye eeste went before them tyll it came and stode over the place where the chylde was. **10** When they sawe the starre they were marvelously glad: **11** and went into the house and found the chylde with Mary hys mother and kneled doune and worshipped hym and opened their treasures and offred vnto hym gyftes gold frackynsence and myrre. **12** And after they were warned of God in a dreame that they shuld not go ageyne to Herod they retourned into their awne countre another waye.

*King James*1611

9 When they had heard the King, they departed, and loe, the Starre which they saw in the East, went before them, till it came and stood ouer where the young childe was. **10** When they saw the Starre, they reioyced with exceeding great ioy. **11** And when they were come into the house, they saw the yong child with Mary his mother, and fell doune, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented vnto him gifts, gold, and frankincense, and myrrhe. **12** And being warned of God in a dreame, that they should not returne to Herode, they departed into their owne countrey another way.



John 1 from the Wessex Gospels (prefaced with Latin note and 'Here begins ...')

In principio erat erat uerbum. her onginð þæt god-spell þe Iohannes se godspellere ge-wrat on pathmos þam eiglande. On anginne ærest wæs word. & þæt word wæs mid gode. & god wæs þt word.

*St Matthew*70

13 ἀναχωρησάντων δὲ αὐτῶν ἰδοὺ ἄγγελος κυρίου φαίνεται κατ' ὄναρ τῷ Ἰωσήφ λέγων, ἐγερθεὶς παράλαβε τὸ παιδίον καὶ τὴν μητέρα αὐτοῦ καὶ φεῦγε εἰς Αἴγυπτον, καὶ ἴσθι ἐκεῖ ἕως ἂν εἶπω σοι· μέλλει γὰρ Ἡρώδης ζητεῖν τὸ παιδίον τοῦ ἀπολέσαι αὐτό. **14** ὁ δὲ ἐγερθεὶς παρέλαβεν τὸ παιδίον καὶ τὴν μητέρα αὐτοῦ νυκτὸς καὶ ἀνεχώρησεν εἰς Αἴγυπτον, **15** καὶ ἦν ἐκεῖ ἕως τῆς τελευτῆς Ἡρώδου· ἵνα πληρωθῇ τὸ ῥηθὲν ὑπὸ κυρίου διὰ τοῦ προφήτου λέγοντος, ἐξ Αἰγύπτου ἐκάλεσα τὸν υἱόν μου.

*St Jerome*400

13 *qui cum recessissent, ecce angelus Domini apparuit in somnis Joseph, dicens: surge, et accipe puerum, et matrem ejus, et fuge in Aegyptum, et esto ibi usque*

dum dicam tibi. futurum est enim ut Herodes quaerat puerum ad perdendum eum.
14 *qui consurgens accepit puerum et matrem ejus nocte, et secessit in Aegyptum :
et erat ibi usque ad obitum Herodis :15 ut adimpleretur quod dictum est a Domino
per prophetam dicentem : ex Aegypto vocavi filium meum.*

Wessex990

14 He aras þa & nam þæt chylde & his moder on niht. & ferde into egypte.

Wycliffe1384

13 And whanne thei weren goon, lo! the aungel of the Lord apperide to Joseph in sleep, and seide, Rise vp, and take the child and his modir, and fle in to Egipt, and be thou there, tilthatlseie to thee; foritisto come, that Eroude seke the child, to destrie hym. **14** And Joseph roos, and took the child and his modir bi nyyt, and wente in to Egipt, **15** and he was there to the deeth of Eroude; that it schulde be fulfillid, that was seid of the Lord bi the profete, seiynge, Fro Egipt Y haue clepid my sone.

Tyndale1526

13 When they were departed: beholde the angell of the Lorde appered to Ioseph in dreame sayinge: aryse and take the chylde and his mother and flye into Egypte and abyde there tyll I brynge the worde. For Herod will seke the chylde to destroye hym. **14** The he arose and toke the chylde and his mother by night and departed into Egypte **15** and was there vnto ye deeth of Herod to fulfill that which was spoken of the Lorde by ye Prophet which sayeth out of Egypte haue I called my sonne.

King James1611

13 And when they were departed, behold, the Angel of the Lord appeareth to Ioseph in a dreame, saying, Arise and take the young childe, and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and bee thou there vntill I bring thee word: for Herode will seeke the young childe, to destroy him. **14** When he arose, he tooke the yong childe and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt: **15** And was there vntill the death of Herode, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the Prophet, saying, Out of Egypt haue I called my sonne.



John 1 in a Wycliffe manuscript (heading in red), c. 1390 'In þe bigynnyng was þe word ...'

St Matthew70

16 τότε Ἡρώδης ἰδὼν ὅτι ἐνεπαίχθη ὑπὸ τῶν μάγων ἐθυμώθη λίαν, καὶ ἀποστείλας ἀνεῖλεν πάντας τοὺς παῖδας τοὺς ἐν Βηθλέεμ καὶ ἐν πᾶσι τοῖς ὁρίοις αὐτῆς ἀπὸ

διετοῦς καὶ κατωτέρω, κατὰ τὸν χρόνον ὃν ἠκρίβωσεν παρὰ τῶν μάγων. **17** τότε ἐπληρώθη τὸ ῥηθὲν διὰ Ἰερεμίου τοῦ προφήτου λέγοντος, **18** φωνὴ ἐν Ῥαμὰ ἠκούσθη, κλαυθμὸς καὶ ὄδυρμὸς πολὺς· Ῥαχὴλ κλαίουσα τὰ τέκνα αὐτῆς, καὶ οὐκ ἤθελεν παρακληθῆναι, ὅτι οὐκ εἰσίν.

***St Jerome*400**

16 tunc Herodes videns quoniam illusus esset a magis, iratus est valde, et mittens occidit omnes pueros, qui erant in Bethlehem, et in omnibus finibus ejus, a bimatu et infra secundum tempus, quod exquisierat a magis. **17** tunc adimpletum est quod dictum est per Jeremiam prophetam dicentem : **18** Vox in Rama audita est ploratus, et ululatus multus : Rachel plorans filios suos, et noluit consolari, quia non sunt.

***Wessex*990**

18 Stefne wæs on heahnyse gehyrd. wop & michel þotorung. rachel weop hire bearn. & hye nolde beon gefrefred. for þam þe hyo næren.

***Wycliffe*1384**

16 Thanne Eroude seyng that he was disseyued of the astromyens, was ful wrooth; and he sente, and slowe alle the children, that weren in Bethleem, and in alle the coostis therof, fro two yeer age and with inne, aftir the tyme that he had enquerid of the astromyens. **17** Thanne it was fulfillid, that was seid bi Jeremye, the profete, **18** seiynge, A vois was herd an hiy, wepyng and moche weilyng, Rachel biwepyng hir sones, and she wolde not be coumfortid, for thei ben noyt.

***Tyndale*1526**

16 Then Herod perceavyng yt he was moocked of the wyse men was excedyng wroth and sent forth and slue all the chyl dren that were in Bethleem and in all the costes there of as many as were two yere olde and vnder accordyng to the tyme which he had diligetly searched oute of the wyse men. **17** Then was fulfilled yt which was spoken by the Prophet Ieremy sayinge: **18** On the hilles was a voyce herde mornynge wepyng and greate lamentacion: Rachel wepyng for her chyl dren and wolde not be confortid because they were not.

***King James*1611**

16 Then Herode, when hee saw that hee was mocked of the Wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent foorth, and slewe all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two yeeres olde and vnder, according to the time, which he had diligently enquired of the Wise men. **17** Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Ieremie the Prophet, saying, **18** In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.



John 1 from a copy of the Tyndale 1526 edition

St Matthew 70

19 τελευτήσαντος δὲ τοῦ Ἡρώδου ἰδοὺ ἄγγελος κυρίου φαίνεται κατ' ὄναρ τῷ Ἰωσήφ ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ 20 λέγων, ἐγερθεὶς παράλαβε τὸ παιδίον καὶ τὴν μητέρα αὐτοῦ καὶ πορεύου εἰς γῆν Ἰσραὴλ, τεθνήκασιν γὰρ οἱ ζητοῦντες τὴν ψυχὴν τοῦ παιδίου. 21 ὁ δὲ ἐγερθεὶς παρέλαβεν τὸ παιδίον καὶ τὴν μητέρα αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰσῆλθεν εἰς γῆν Ἰσραὴλ.

St Jerome 400

19 *defuncto autem Herode, ecce angelus Domini apparuit in somnis Joseph in Aegypto, 20 dicens: surge, et accipe puerum, et matrem ejus, et vade in terram Israel: defuncti sunt enim qui quaerebant animam pueri. 21 qui consurgens, accepit puerum, et matrem ejus, et venit in terram Israel.*

Wessex 990

20 & þus cwæð. Aris ænd nym þæt child. & his moder & far on israele-land. Nu synden forð-farene þa þas cyldes sawle sohten.

Wycliffe 1384

19 But whanne Eroude was deed, loo! the aungel of the Lord apperide to Joseph in sleep in Egipt, 20 and seide, Ryse vp, and take the child and his modir, and go in to the lond of Israel; for thei that souyten the lijf of the chijld ben deed. 21 Joseph roos, and took the child and his modir, and cam in to the loond of Israel.

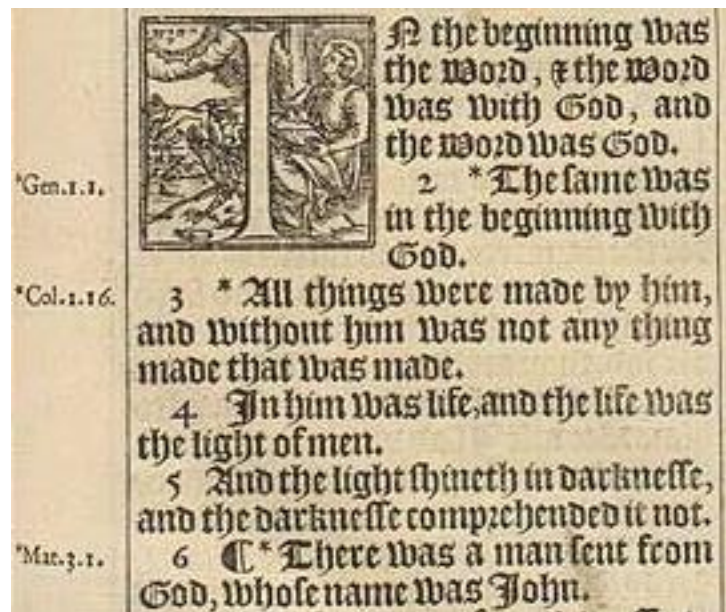
Tyndale 1526

19 When Herode was deed: beholde an angell of ye Lorde appered in a dreame to Ioseph in Egipte 20 sayinge: arise and take ye chylde and his mother and go into ye londe of Israel. For they are deed which sought ye chylde's life. 21 The he arose vp and toke ye chylde and his mother and cam into the londe of Israhel.

King James 1611

19 But when Herode was dead, behold, an Angel of the Lord appeareth in a dreame to Ioseph in Egipt, 20 Saying, Arise, and take the yong childe and his mother, and goe into the land of Israel: for they are dead which sought the yong childes life. 21

And he arose, and tooke the yong childe and his mother, and came into the land of Israel.



John 1 from a 1611 edition of the King James Bible

Alphabetical observation

If you go back to the Wycliffe manuscript and look carefully at 'In þe bigynyng was þe word ...', you will see that þ ('thorn', = th) has changed its shape to þ̅. But while this was happening, 'th' was becoming more common and starting to win the day.

This is where the fun starts. The original printers of the KJV preferred not to use 'th' for the word 'the' because it would take up too much space, and opted for þ̅ instead. Unfortunately early printing presses came from Germany and Italy and did not possess such a letter. So in the very first texts of the Bible, the London printers replaced it with 'y'. Result? 'Ye', meaning and pronounced 'the' at the time, but in time becoming the 'ye' we know and love as in 'ye olde village shoppe'.

I skied the web up hill and down dale in search of a text of the KJV illustrating this phenomena (as we now have to say), without success.

NOTE: *Bellaria* will be paused over Christmas and the New Year.