

## The Venerable Bede

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The town of Jarrow today is a very hive of industry. Its ship-building yards give employment to many thousands of men. Chief and foremost among them is that which owes its origin to Sir Charles Mark Palmer, M.P. In his works and yards are built war-ships for the English and other navies. The town, though very ancient, looks almost as if it were a place of yesterday. Streets upon streets of workmen's dwellings meet the eye, while numberless chimney-stacks belch forth their smoke. It is indeed a busy place, full of everyday life.

Now I want you to carry your minds a long way back. Previous to Queen Elizabeth's reign; previous to the time when William Rufus built his castle, now time-worn-and black with age, on the northern bank of the Tyne, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, and previous to the battle of Hastings, away back to the time when the Anglo-Saxons ruled over England, you must carry your thoughts and attention.

It was in the year 735 A.D. that the famous monk, Bæda (commonly called the Venerable Bede), died at an advanced age.

He was, perhaps, the most famous scholar of western Europe. To Jarrow-on-Tyne hundreds of students repaired to sit at his feet. He was learned in the literature of Greece and Rome, had written on medicine, rhetoric, astronomy, and many other things besides. But more than that, he took a deep delight in the Bible—the very Bible you have in your hands—only his was written in Latin.

But, better still, whilst mixed up with much error and darkness and superstition he was a true Christian, and loved the Lord Jesus.

When I chance to go to Jarrow, to preach the gospel to some of its busy nineteenth-century artisans, I always think with affection of the dear old man who loved his Bible and his Master.

At the end of his life he longed to translate the Scriptures into the English tongue.

We can almost hear the simple, loving old man—albeit a scholar of erudition and repute—saying, as he did, "I don't want my boys to read a lie, or to work to no purpose after I am gone."

He essayed to translate the gospel of John—that gospel which tells us of the life of Jesus, of His finished work on the cross, and how in believing in Him we have

everlasting life; and which contains those beautiful words, that you have heard so often, “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

A letter has come down to us from one of his disciples, Cuthbert, to a “fellow-reader,” Cuthwin, narrating to us what happened on the day he died; or, rather, passed away to be with Jesus.

“Our father and master, whom God loved,” he writes, “had translated the gospel of St. John as far as ‘What are they among so many?’

“He began to suffer much in his breath, and a swelling came to his feet, but he went on dictating to his scribe. ‘Go on quickly,’ he said. ‘I know not how long I shall hold out, or how soon my Master will call me hence.’

“All night long he lay awake in thanksgiving, and when the ascension-day dawned he commanded us to write with all speed what he had begun.”

So the letter goes on describing the work right through the day. When the shadows of evening were gathering, and the sun was casting its last rays of light into his cell, the dear old man was dictating the few remaining verses of the gospel.

“There remains but one chapter, master,” said his anxious scribe; “but it seems very hard for you to speak.”

“Nay, it is easy,” answered the Venerable Bede. “Take up thy pen and write quickly.”

And so the affectionate scribe wrote amid his blinding tears, for he deeply loved his beloved instructor.

“And now, father,” said he, as he wrote down the last words which fell from the feeble lips, “only one sentence remains.”

Bede dictated it.

“It is finished, master!” cried the young man.

“Ay, it is finished!” echoed the dying saint. “Lift me up, place me at that window of my cell where I have so often prayed to God. Now glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost.”

And with these words he passed peacefully away into the presence of his Lord.

What a beautiful, peaceful death! That was like falling asleep in Jesus.

As you read this, dear children, let me ask you, Do you love the dear old man's Saviour? If called upon to die, could you be so peaceful and happy, knowing that all your sins were washed away in the precious blood of the Lord Jesus?

Carry your minds back previous to the year A.D. 735, even to the time when Jesus, the blessed Son of God, walked this earth. From His very lips came those words, which, I doubt not, the saintly Bede loved to translate, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

What a verse! God so loved. He gave the dearest object of His heart—even His only Son. What love! Gave Him to sorrow and shame and spitting and scourging. And in the moment of His crucifixion by man, out of love to you and to me, God forsook His Son, and meted out to Him the punishment due to sin.

Now, having finished the work, Jesus is sitting on the right hand of God in heaven, waiting to save those who trust in Him.

So that God gave His Son, "that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

As you are, and now, dear child, if you have not already, come in faith to the Lord Jesus, take Him as your own precious Saviour, then (thanking Him first) go and tell your loved ones about it.

*Scattered Seed 1892, p. 162*