



MARY JONES 1784 - 1866

In 1804, a group of influential evangelicals helped form the British Foreign Bible Society for the purpose of wider distribution of the Scriptures. Their sole concern was to allow people access to the Bible, and for the last two hundred years, they have worked closely with many missionary groups to make this happen throughout the world. Such worldwide movements do not happen by accident and this one was no exception. It was started by godly men and women who were inspired by the simple desire of a 16 year old to have her own Bible. It's the story of a girl from Wales named Mary Jones. Mary may have not done great things for the Lord as far as the world knows, but her story shows how her faithfulness caused others to do great things for His glory.

Mary was born in 1784 and died 82 years later in a Welsh village where a monument is inscribed with her claim to fame.

To the remembrance of Mary Jones who, in 1800 at the age of 16, walked from here to Bala in order to buy a Bible in the Welsh language from Reverend Charles. The event was the cause of the foundation of the British and Foreign Bible Society.

The story behind the monument is a rather simple one: Mary was born in 1784 to a poor Christian family and walked an hour to and from school each day where she excelled in reading. She went to a neighbor's home each week to read the neighbor's Bible since Mary's family was too poor to purchase one of their own. However, Mary longed to have her own Bible and decided to work to earn the money to purchase one. She raised chickens and sold the eggs, she babysat other children, weeded gardens, knitted socks and, after six years, earned enough to buy one from the pastor who sold them in the town 25 miles away. She walked the distance with her money in hand, and although Bibles were difficult to obtain, the Rev. Charles was so touched by her diligence in saving for so long and walking so far, that he sold her his last Bible.

It was two years later that the story of Mary's efforts convinced a committee of Christians to found the Bible Society to share Bibles with the whole world. This organization would be non-sectarian, and its governing committee was interdenominational. The members set as their goal "the wider distribution of the Scriptures, without note or comment." The Society had no interest in fostering any particular interpretation of the Bible. Its sole purpose was to provide people with easier and less expensive (or free) access to the Scriptures.

The society provided missionaries with Bibles for people being evangelized. William Carey (1761-1834), missionary to India, was funded by the society in his translation work. The society helped Robert Morris, the first Protestant missionary to China, with a translation of the Bible into Chinese, and aided Henry Martyn, who was working on a Persian translation. Satellites of the main society sprang up. In just 10 years, 60 other Bible organizations had formed. By 1907, the Bible Society had distributed 204 million Bibles, New Testaments and portions of Scripture throughout the world. An international organization providing Bibles to people around the world had been inspired by the needs of one girl in Wales, Mary Jones. Only in eternity will we know how many people today have Bibles because of this teenager's hard work and inspiration.