

April 18th

Memory verse

Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth:
and the heavens are the work of thy hands.
They shall perish,
but **thou shalt endure**:
yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment;
as a vesture shalt thou change them,
and they shall be changed.

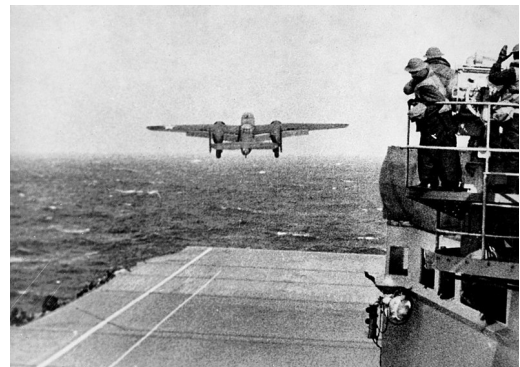
Psalm 102:25-6

Younger children can learn the words in bold and understand that “thou” is God. More about this verse in tomorrow's lesson.

Did you know that this memory verse is one of those verses which can be found in both the Old and the New Testament? Read through the first chapter of Hebrews and see if you can spot it. Anything that God tells us twice in his Word must be very important indeed! In today's lesson we meet someone who spent a lifetime fighting against what these verses teach. God tells us clearly here that He made the world. He also tells us that one day He will end it. This has implications for how we live our lives – and where we put our trust. But first a happier story...

A story to read from the Second World War

On April 18th 1942, sixteen B-25 bombers took off from the aircraft carrier USS Hornet. They were the first fully loaded bombers ever to take off from an aircraft carrier. Four months earlier the Japanese had, without warning or declaration of war, bombed the American Air-force Base at Pearl Harbour, Hawaii. Now the Americans would reply with the Doolittle Raid on Tokyo.



The raid did not go exactly according to plan. The aircraft ended up having to fly much further than originally intended as Japanese radio-equipped picket boats spotted them before they had got as near to the Japanese coast as had been planned. The result was that fuel ran out and almost all the planes had to crash land or ditch, many of them in China. Despite this, of the 16 crews, 14 managed to get back safely to the USA. But some of the planes crashed in areas of China held by the Japanese.



Jacob D. DeShazer, was a bombardier on one of those planes that crashed in a Japanese held area. He spent three and a half years interned at various Japanese Prisoner of War camps after his capture. There he was brutally treated and some of his comrades died. His captors randomly handed out books, and he was thrown a Bible to read for 3 weeks. What he read led to his conversion. He read about forgiveness in the Bible and began to practice what he read. “Suddenly I discovered that God had given me new spiritual eyes,” he said later. Now he could forgive, “guards who had starved and beaten me and my companions so cruelly,”

he said, “I found my bitter hatred for them changed to loving.” One of the guards responded to DeShazer's loving treatment of him. He stopped beating De Shazer and the others which almost certainly saved their lives.

When in 1945 DeShazer went home to the USA he became an evangelist. He trained to do missionary work and with his wife, Florence, and their family he went back to Japan as a missionary. He stayed there for 30 years.

Not long after he arrived in Japan as a missionary he met Captain Mitsuo Fuchida. Captain Mitsuo Fuchida was the bomber pilot who led the attack on Pearl Harbour. Japanese culture was based on the duty of revenge. He had been unable to understand how Christians would be prepared to forgive their enemies. He read DeShazer's evangelistic book, *I Was a Prisoner of Japan* and through DeShazer's witness, Fuchida too became a Christian and a missionary to his own people. Together they preached both in Japan and America. Deadly enemies became friends through the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.



Something to think about for older children¹



Do you have grandparents who teach you things? Many of us do or did and are very grateful. Grandparents often have a way of passing on wisdom that is enjoyable. So enjoyable that you might think that they are “just” playing with you! My grandparents were like that and I praise the Lord for them. They played all sorts of messy games with me, read to me for hours, took me exploring and for walks: it was great fun and I learned a lot.

Here is the story of a very different kind of grandfather. Erasmus Darwin, (1731-1802) who died on 18th April certainly passed on a lot of ideas to his grandson Charles but they were not good ones.

If you ask most people who was responsible for thinking up the idea of Evolution, they will answer, “Charles Darwin”. (You will be able to read more about him in tomorrow's lesson.) But in fact it was really something Charles Darwin's grandfather had come up with quite a long time before Charles was even born.

When Charles Darwin interpreted the natural phenomena he saw in the Galápagos Islands in 1835 he was doing so through the lens of an idea that was already in his mind, an idea that had come to him from his grandfather. Charles had been reading what his grandfather wrote:

Some birds have acquired harder beaks to crack nuts, as the parrot. Others have acquired beaks adapted to break the harder seeds, as sparrows. Others for the softer seeds of flowers, or the buds of trees, as the finches. Other birds have acquired long beaks ... and others broad ones All ... gradually produced during many generations by the perpetual endeavour of the creatures to supply the want of food...

It was a liberating idea. If creatures had just arisen gradually from one another there was no need to believe in a Creator. If there was no Creator, no God, there was no one to whom human beings had to be responsible for their actions. As for the Bible, it could then be discounted – and along with it the moral laws which it contained.

Erasmus Darwin was a medical doctor and one of the most learned men of his day. He had a staggeringly wide range of scientific and literary interests from plant classification to poetry writing. He was an inventor too, although he was often too busy to finish his inventions. He often used verse to express his ideas and discoveries and to describe his inventions. He disliked Christianity and was all in favour of the French



¹ Information from <https://creation.com/darwinism-it-was-all-in-the-family> and other sources. I found out about Erasmus Darwin when doing research for my latest story: *Doctor Darwin's Assistant*. You can get a copy here: <https://www.ritchiechristianmedia.co.uk/product/dr-darwins-assistant>.

Revolution, the atheistic aspects of which appealed to him.² He had good personal reasons for wanting to escape from the moral laws of the Bible. He wanted to live his life according to his own standards.

Being a medical man did not stop Erasmus Darwin from enjoying his food and he was *very* overweight. He had links, through the Lunar Society, a dinner club which he founded, with such great men as James Watt (inventor of the steam engine) and his associate Matthew Bolton, Joseph Priestley (who discovered oxygen), Josiah Wedgwood (founder of Wedgwood Pottery) and the industrialist Samuel Galton. There were Americans in the Lunar Society too, Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin no less.

Erasmus Darwin's family had a coat of arms which included three scallop shells. Erasmus added a Latin motto to this: *E Conchis omnia* which means “everything from shells”. As a doctor he went by horse-drawn carriage from patient to patient and he had the motto painted on his carriage. However, he did not want to offend any of his rich patients who might object to being treated by an atheist doctor. So, when someone in his intellectual circle noticed the motto and exactly what it meant, he had it painted out, leaving it only printed on the bookplates pasted into the books in his personal library.

As he got older, however, Erasmus Darwin became bolder. His theories were often presented in verse and 1792 he published the first part of his *Botanic Garden*, called *Economy of Vegetation*. Here he outlined his idea of where the world originated:

*When high in ether, with explosion dire
From the deep craters of his realms of fire,
The Whirling Sun this ponderous planet hurl'd,
And gave the astonish'd void another world.*

If you don't quite understand this rather pompous-sounding verse, it is a sort of early “Big Bang” theory. Erasmus Darwin is imagining an explosion *in the sun* giving birth to the planet earth.

The second volume of *The Botanic Garden* was immensely popular and in it he put into verse the ideas of Carl Linnaeus.³ Erasmus Darwin added his own ideas as well. Linnaeus believed that God created the world “in the beginning” and the various kinds of creatures on days five and six.

Erasmus Darwin had other ideas:

*Organic Life beneath the shoreless waves
Was born and nurs'd in Ocean's pearly caves;
First forms minute, unseen by spheric glass,
Move on the mud, or pierce the watery mass;
These, as successive generations bloom,
New powers acquire and larger limbs assume;
Whence countless groups of vegetation spring,
And, breathing realms of fin, and feet, and wing.*

Again it sounds very pompous, but at the time it was very popular. Do you understand what he is saying? Life started in the sea. Then *as successive generations bloom* it evolved into vegetable life, fish, land animals and birds.

Then (1794 and 1796) came a two volume medical book *Zoonomia or the Laws of Organic Life* in prose not verse this time. In his list of illnesses he includes, “Credulity, Superstitious Hope, and the Fear of Hell”. As well as a classification of diseases and their treatments, Erasmus Darwin offered an explanation for life itself:

² See the lesson for July 14th.

³ See the lesson for January 10th.

...millions of ages before the commencement of the history of mankind ... all warm-blooded animals have arisen from one living filament, which THE GREAT FIRST CAUSE endued with animality, with the power of acquiring new parts ... and thus possessing the faculty of continuing to improve by its own inherent activity, and of delivering down those improvements by generation to its posterity, world without end!

Anyone who, realising that this was quite unlike anything described in the Bible's account of creation, felt uncomfortable with these speculations might reassure themselves with 'THE GREAT FIRST CAUSE' in capitals. This must be God! But Erasmus Darwin's ideas could not be made to harmonise with Scripture, nor did he intend that they should.

Charles Darwin was born seven years after the death of his grandfather. He grew up in a home where his grandfather's ideas were much respected and his own copies of *Zoonomia* and *The Botanic Garden* are carefully marked with his handwritten notes.

From a purely scientific point of view, Erasmus Darwin might be forgiven for thinking that life could have somehow evolved. Louis Pasteur (about whom you can read in the lesson coming up soon on 20th April) did not conduct his famous experiment proving that life could *not* arise from non-life until 1857. Charles Darwin did not have the benefits of Pasteur's researches, at least at first, either. Both the Darwins considered that it was possible for life to arise spontaneously. Thanks to Pasteur we now know that this is impossible. However, both Darwins had God's first-hand account of creation in the Bible and they chose to ignore it.

God may bless you with grandchildren one day. Think about what ideas you might want to pass on to them.

Something to do

Erasmus Darwin classified "Credulity, Superstitious Hope, and the Fear of Hell" as *illnesses*. But what does the Bible have to say? Look up these verses in your Bible:

Credulity (easy readiness or willingness to believe):

Matthew 18:3; Mark 10:14; Luke 18:17.

Superstitious Hope (by this Darwin meant a Christian hope of heaven):

Romans 15:13; Colossians 1:5

Fear of Hell:

Matthew 10:28.

Something to make



You can design a personal coat of arms or one for your family. You can see our King's Royal coat of arms in the picture.

First draw a shield shape on a large piece of paper. (A4 would do). Leave plenty of space all round the shield because a coat of arms has things above, below and on either side of the shield.

Now divide the shield into four quarters with a straight vertical line down the centre and a straight horizontal line across the middle.

These are the four quadrants. You can choose anything you like to draw in each quadrant. Maybe your pet could go in one.

Your house could go in one. A favourite food could go in one.

Do you enjoy reading? Put a book in one quadrant. Think of some things that relates to your family or your own interest,

even shells perhaps! On the top of the shield you should draw a crown. You can design it in any way you like.

Next you need to draw some supporters. These are animals that hold the shield up. They can be any animals you like: anything from a dinosaur to a snail!

Underneath the shield you need a motto. It can be in English. It does not have to be in Latin like Erasmus Darwin's or French like the King's Royal coat of arms. Draw a long narrow banner to write it on. Part of your memory verse would make a very good motto!