

Remove yet to come in FNs to 1<sup>st</sup> May and 27<sup>th</sup> May

December 11<sup>th</sup>

### Memory Verse

Out of the strong came forth sweetness Judges 14:14

For information on this easy verse to learn see 14<sup>th</sup> December's lesson. Children can apply this "riddle" to the Lord Jesus, the Lion of Judah, from whom comes our salvation – and surely that is something very sweet!

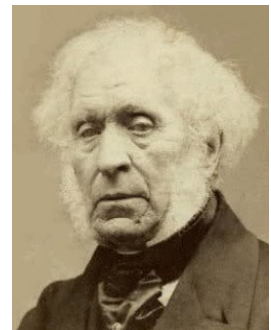
### Something to read from science history<sup>1</sup>

Do you have a kaleidoscope? Get it out today and enjoy the beautiful patterns you can see. Do you know how it works? Use your own science books or encyclopaedias to find out. If you don't have a kaleidoscope today would be a good day to enjoy making one<sup>2</sup> as it is the anniversary of the birth of the Scotsman who invented this beautiful toy. David Brewster (1781-1868), born on 11<sup>th</sup> December, was a brilliant man who was responsible for many other discoveries and inventions in the field of optics.



Brewster is best remembered for "Brewster's Law" which was to lead to the invention of laser technology later. This law showed that a "beam of light can be split into reflected and refracted portions at right angles to each other, both beams retaining full polarization."<sup>3</sup>

Young David Brewster's father was Rector of Jedborough Grammar School and he provided his son with many opportunities to cultivate the things in which he was interested, giving him access to stimulating reading matter. David was also friendly with James Veitch, an amateur astronomer and deep thinker who helped the boy make telescopes and microscopes. As a boy David also acted as secretary to Dr Thomas Somerville a local minister, historian and amateur scientist. As a result of all this encouragement, David's mind developed so rapidly that he went to the university at Edinburgh at the age of 12.



David Brewster graduated in theology but he went on to study in the field of optics. A fellow student stimulated his interest in this area. Among his many discoveries was the ordered fibrous arrangement of the parts of the eye. He was a man of tremendous energy who edited encyclopaedias, preached, wrote, researched, experimented and taught. But despite his theology degree he did not yet have a personal knowledge of the Saviour.

Although zealous for the truth of the Bible which he studied daily and a staunch supporter of the traditions of his church he held many strange ideas such as the existence of intelligent life on other planets and even on the moon, speculating that perhaps these were the places where the faithful would spend eternity. Trying to harmonise these thoughts with Scripture led to further difficulties. David Brewster was a friend of Thomas Chalmers<sup>4</sup> and agreed with his mistaken ideas.

1 Information from Margaret Gordon, *The Home Life of Sir David Brewster* (Second Edition, Edinburgh, 1870), <https://creation.com/sir-david-brewster-scientist-creationist-preacher> and other sources.

2 Instructions can be found here: <https://www.tate.org.uk/kids/make/cut-paste/make-kaleidoscope>.

3 Quoted from Dan Graves, *Scientists of Faith*, p.94, Kregel Resources, ©1996 in <https://www.christianheritageedinburgh.org.uk/2016/08/23/sir-david-brewster-1781-1868/> For more on Lasers see the lesson for 22<sup>nd</sup> March.

4 See the lesson for 17<sup>th</sup> March which explains Thomas Chalmers's mistaken ideas.

After the death of his first wife, David Brewster's difficulties came to a head. His daughter wrote that:

His mind and conversation at home constantly turned upon religion. The days of satisfaction with a creed were for ever done with, and it seemed as if he were rent by a great internal struggle.... ..he was in that most painful state, a mind and opinions in complete inconsistency, and in a consequent state of civil war and anarchy. Sermons were no longer listened to with interest, weariness, or indifference, but each was fought over in his active mind, till Sunday was indeed anything but a day of rest to him....

Frequently, in the earliest morning, when the writing and the microscope, and the Bible-reading were over, have I been awakened to listen in awe to the sounds of prayer and weeping below. A year or two later the following touching incident and conversation took place. Mrs. Macpherson [David Brewster's daughter-in-law] writes: –

“It was in March 1856 that I had a long talk with dear Papa upon the suffering of Christ, from which we passed on to speaking of the gratitude due to God. He said he never could feel that there was any such strong ground for a claim of gratitude as people spoke of, since he felt that he had received no more good than was absolutely necessary to enable him to do the work that God required of him. Then we spoke of the possibility of feeling any love towards God, and agreed that such a sentiment of love as is possible between man and man, was impossible between man and God. 'How can we love Him,' he said, 'One whom we have not seen? We admire Him in His works, and trust from the wisdom seen in these that He is wise in all His dealings, but how can we LOVE Him?’”

After this conversation, his daughter-in-law being herself led to understand how alone the love of the unseen Christ can be shed abroad in the heart by the working of the Holy Spirit, felt that she must confess this change in her views and feelings. “He listened most attentively, and when I had finished, took me in his arms, kissed me, and said in such a child-like manner, 'Go now, then, and pray that I may know it too.’”

The prayers of David Brewster's daughter-in-law were answered. He gradually came to faith and peace in his Redeemer. He talked everything over with his wife (he had married again) trying to lead her also into the security he had now found. Once he had considered it presumption and hypocrisy to say that one was sure of salvation. Now he could say, “I see it all so clearly myself. It can't be presumption, to be SURE, because it is CHRIST'S work, not ours; on the contrary, it is presumption to doubt His word and His work.”

Despite his strange ideas David Brewster had clung tenaciously to the things he had been taught as a child. However, he lacked a true faith in the Saviour, recognising that although he believed all the correct facts about Him, he did not love Him. Does this strike a chord with you? If so take courage from his story. God has promised that if we pray for His Holy Spirit, He will send Him (see Luke 11:13). Because we are trusting in Christ not our own works or even our own changeable feelings we can be sure!

### Something to revise or read from history

It was on **11 December** 1688 that James II fled to France leaving England for good. We learned about this in the lesson for 21<sup>st</sup> April and today would be a good day to re read the story. Also on **11 December** was the birth of Giovanni di Lorenzo de'Medici (1475-1521) who went on to become Pope



Leo X. Leo X was the first member of the powerful Medici family from Florence to become a pope. He was a man who loved the arts and he is supposed to have said “God has given us the papacy; let us enjoy it!”



Leo indulged his passion with costly buildings and lavish ornament for the churches of Rome and the Vatican palace. This was largely funded through the sale of the Indulgences that Luther so detested. These documents granted remission of punishment in purgatory for sins. They could be purchased on one's own behalf or on behalf of one's dead relatives. Luther was incensed that the poor were being tricked out of their money in this way. You can read or re read about this in the lesson for 16<sup>th</sup> July. The picture on the left shows an Indulgence certificate from the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The Council of Trent (about which we learned a few days ago<sup>5</sup>) confirmed the validity of Indulgences and they continue in use, albeit in a modified form, today.

### A missionary story to read<sup>6</sup>

Do you remember the lesson for October 20<sup>th</sup> in which we learned about the hyperpolyglot Sir Richard Francis Burton who spoke 29 languages? On the 11 December 1910 in the village of Benagaria in Jharkhand, India, a Norwegian missionary passed into glory. His name was Lars Skrefsrud and he too was a hyperpolyglot. When the King of Denmark once asked him if it was true that he spoke 42 languages he replied, “Your Majesty! It is not a question of how many languages a man speaks, but what he has to say in the languages he masters.”

Lars Skrefsrud (1840-1910) came from a very different background to that of Sir Richard. Sir Richard had had wealth and privilege. Lars background and early life were such that at first he was turned down by the Norwegian Missionary Society because he had been in prison!

Lars's mother was a Christian but his father was a drunkard whose habits he copied until his wild living and drunken behaviour landed him in gaol. At this time, the Norwegian evangelist Hans Nielsen Hauge<sup>7</sup> was preaching all over Norway. It was through Hauge that Lars Skrefsrud heard the gospel although I cannot find out exactly how. Hauge spent many years in prison himself, not for any wrong doing but because he insisted on preaching everywhere whether there was an ordained Lutheran minister present or not and that was against the law in Norway. Maybe they met in prison!

We do know that it was in prison that Lars was confronted with the gospel. At first he almost despaired for he realised that he had transgressed against God, not just against his fellow men. He prayed and prayed, confessing his sin but it all felt useless. Then one night as he prayed he was filled with peace and the realisation that “the old was past and all had become new.”<sup>8</sup>

With his conversion came a thirst for knowledge and he read everything in the prison library that he could. In the library he found a Christian magazine that told the life of Peter Fjellstedt, a Swedish missionary who had come from a poor background. He read the article over and over again and it made him weep. He was being called to missionary service. Now he worked hard in his prison cell,

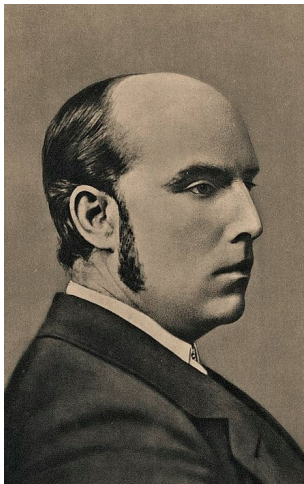
5 See the Lesson for 4<sup>th</sup> December.

6 Information from Johan Nyhagen, *From Prison Cell to Mission Station*. Translated by Georgina Dieson Hegland (Norway, 1964)

7 See the lesson for 29<sup>th</sup> March.

8 Nyhagen p.4.

teaching himself German and English using materials in the prison library.



After his rejection by the Norwegian missionary school he had help from an elderly man who led an assembly of Christians in Stavanger. Through his help Lars was able to travel to Germany for missionary training. Every day he went to church. He needed to learn as much as he could and he loved to praise the Redeemer who had saved him. Every day too he was careful about what he ate; no expensive or luxurious food for him from now on. He put himself on a strict economical diet of bread, cheese and water. He sailed for India in 1863. In order to do this without paying a fare he worked as a sailor on board ship.

Lars's field of work was among the Santal people who lived to the north of Calcutta. His fiancée, Anna, who had helped him when he was in prison came out to India and they married. Working alongside a Danish missionary, Lars's work among the Santal was blessed and many were converted. Now they wanted to live a better life and Lars helped them. He set up workshops and taught them carpentry and other life skills. Best of all he studied their language. This enabled him to translate the Bible so that they could read it for themselves in their mother tongue. He also made verse paraphrases of Bible passages for the Santali people and translated many hymns. He made a grammar of the Santali language which is spoken by about 7 million people in the world today in India, Bangladesh and other places. He also studied their traditions, legends, folk stories and culture and wrote about them. Lars went on to learn other Indian languages as well as Santali.

There is no doubt that Lars was a brilliant speaker, both in his own language and Santali. "He really had something on his heart, and he had an exceptional gift for telling it so that it made an impression."<sup>9</sup> Thus it was that his preaching in Norway, Sweden, Denmark, England and Scotland when home on furlough also made a profound effect with crowds gathering to hear him.

He died as he had lived, serving his Master in India. God had brought him a very long way from his prison cell.