

December 22<sup>st</sup>

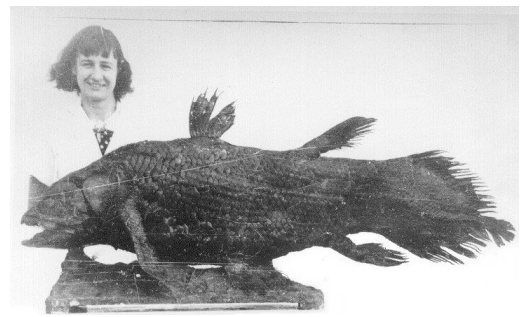
**Memory verse:**

And God called the light Day,  
and the darkness he called Night.  
And the evening and the morning  
were the first day. Genesis 1:5

**Something to think about:** a fishy story continued...<sup>1</sup>

Marjorie Courtenay-Latimer (1907-2004) was a museum curator in **East London, South Africa**. She was a self-taught naturalist and was always on the look out for unusual specimens for the museum collection. On **22<sup>nd</sup> December** 1938 she received a phone call from a fisherman, Captain Hendrick Goosen of the trawler Nerine. He had an unusual fish in his catch; would she like to see it? Miss Latimer came to have a look. "I picked away at the layers of slime to reveal the most beautiful fish I had ever seen," she later wrote. "It was five feet [150 cm] long, a pale mauvy blue with faint flecks of whitish spots; it had an iridescent silver-blue-green sheen all over. It was covered in hard scales, and it had four limb-like fins and a strange puppy dog tail."

Miss Latimer took the specimen away with her to the museum and began to search the reference books to find out just what it was. She could not find anything resembling it. Realising she had a unique fish on her hands Miss Latimer tried to contact Professor J.L.B. Smith of Rhodes University but he was away. How could she preserve the specimen until he could see it? In the end there was nothing she could do but get the fish preserved by a taxidermist – someone who prepares and stuffs dead animals for museum and other displays. You can see Miss Latimer with the resulting stuffed specimen in the picture.



It was not until February of the following year that Professor Smith arrived at the museum. When he did, he recognised the fish at once. It was a coelacanth, a fish only previously known from fossils. At the time the scientific consensus about fossil coelacanths was that they were examples of an extinct creature that died out millions of years ago and which formed an evolutionary link between fish and land creatures. The reason for the idea that they were a link came from the coelacanth's lobe fins that look rather leg-like. The consensus was that these fins were used to allow the fish to "walk" along the sea bottom. We now know from observation that the lobe fins are actually used for deft manoeuvring when swimming but in 1938 no one had ever seen an

unfossilised coelacanth before let alone observed one swimming deep in the ocean. Fossilised coelacanths, as you can see from the picture below, gave no indication of what the soft body parts of the creature were like. The living specimen proved that the soft parts were undoubtedly fish-like and in no way transitional between fish and land creatures.



The discovery of the coelacanth is just one more example of evidence that supports what we read in the Bible: the

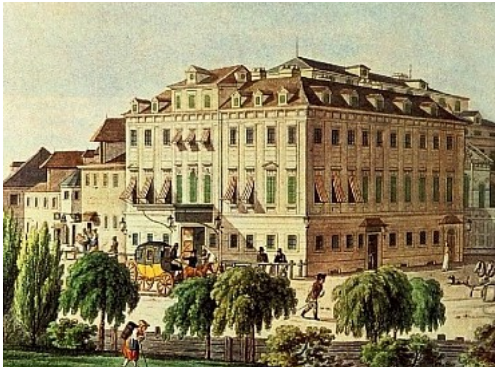
major groups of creatures have always been separate "kinds". The family trees of living creatures

<sup>1</sup> Information from Weinberg, Samantha, *A Fish Caught in Time: The Search for the Coelacanth* (Harper Collins, 2000), <https://askjohnmackay.com/living-fossils-prove-nothing-all-survivors-are-living-fossils-why-make-so-much-of-them/>, <https://creation.com/correcting-the-headline-coelacanth-yes-ancient-no> and other sources. More information in the lesson for 20<sup>th</sup> December.

will never link up to form a single tree pointing to a single common ancestor. The scientific consensus was wrong about the coelacanth. It is not true that what the majority of scientists think has to be the truth.

Miss Latimer called the coelacanth beautiful. Others called it “ugly” – as you will know if you read the lesson for 20<sup>th</sup> December. Who do you think was right?

### Something to listen to

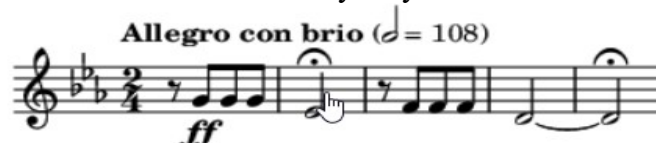


On 22<sup>nd</sup> December 1808 a concert was held at the *Theater an der Wien*, Vienna which you can see in the picture. By modern standards it was a very long concert lasting for four hours. On the programme were two whole symphonies which were both being performed for the first time, a complete piano concerto and a long Choral fantasy. In addition there was an aria and three movements from another choral work. Most of the music was unfamiliar to the audience and in a style that was new to them.

All the music on the programme was by Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827). He also conducted the programme, was soloist in the concerto and pianist in the choral fantasy. Not only that but he also gave an improvisation on the piano. “There we sat, in the most bitter cold, from half past six until half past ten, and confirmed for ourselves the maxim that one may easily have too much of a good thing, still more of a powerful one,” said one of the composer's friends and supporters afterwards.

If you have done the lesson for April 27<sup>th</sup> you will know that Beethoven had begun to go deaf, losing 60% of his hearing by 1801. By 1808, when this concert took place, he was very deaf indeed. His deafness was already hampering him as a conductor and performer and at one point in the concert things broke down completely, apparently due to his having forgotten a repeat in the music.

One of the two symphonies first performed that evening is perhaps the most famous symphony ever written by anyone, Beethoven's fifth. Almost everybody has heard the famous opening motif:



Try to listen to at least the first movement of this symphony today.<sup>2</sup>

### Something to research

Letters patent were issued on 22 December 1681 notifying the king's intention of building “an hospital for the relief of such land soldiers as are, or shall be, old, lame, or infirm in ye service of the crowne”. Who was the king concerned? What was he going to have built? Can you find out using your encyclopedias and reference books? The picture on the right is a clue!



<sup>2</sup> You can find it here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jv2WJMVPQi8>

