

December 25th

Memory verse

To every thing there is a season,
and a time to every purpose under the heaven.

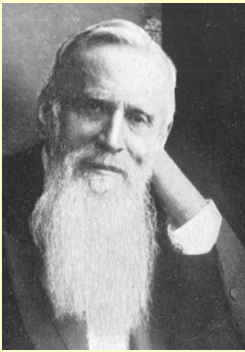
Ecclesiastes 3:1

Younger children could learn the words in bold. More about today's memory verse in tomorrow's lesson.

A missionary story

Get out your atlas and look for the **Caucasus** mountains. You will find them between the **Black Sea** and the Caspian Sea. Transcaucasia, where this adventure took place, is a region to the south of the **Caucasus**. Today it comprises the countries of **Armenia, Azerbaijan** and **Georgia**. Some People called "Tartars" occur in the story. They were Turkic-speaking Muslims who lived in Transcaucasia. If you were on holiday in August you may have missed the story of Dr Baedeker (1823 -1906), the missionary traveller, on August 3rd. It would be well worth reading today.

Dr Baedeker's Winter Adventure:



The doctor used to tell a story of an adventure that befell him on one of his visits to Transcaucasia. He had gone to conduct a series of meetings in a remote Armenian village among the mountains. It was in the end of December. The lateness of the season, the awful loneliness of the district, the risks of sudden snow-storms blinding the venturesome travellers, and covering tracks and waymarks, all united to make the enterprise unattractive to those who knew the country. But the villagers had pressed him to visit them on so many previous occasions, when it was impossible for him to do so, that he could no longer resist their importunities. On a memorable Christmas morning he bade them farewell, and with his Armenian interpreter and guide began the return journey.

A few of the Christian brethren of the village accompanied them a little way to point out the track. Presently these also were left behind, and the two proceeded on their way alone. How long they had been wandering in the wide solitudes before the guide became apprehensive that he had lost his bearings, I cannot remember hearing.

The signs of night oncoming were beginning to appear and when night falls, it falls suddenly in those regions, when the Armenian at length stood still and said: "I can go no farther. I am spent. We have lost our way and we are walking in vain!"

"Is there nothing you can recognise? Nothing to show us our whereabouts, or the direction we should take?" the doctor inquired.

"I have been seeking and watching for some sign or mark in vain! Alas! we shall perish here of cold before the morning comes. The sun will set in a few minutes."

"Then let us just kneel down where we are and tell our Heavenly Father about it."

"Alas ! that I was so foolish as to venture on such a journey, so unfamiliar, and at such a season!"

"God can take care of us and direct us. We will pray about it."

"Most likely we are many hours' journey from a human habitation, and my limbs are very weary. I shall never see my home again!"

“If you don't know the way, God does. Come, cease lamenting, and we will pray together.”

The two men knelt silently side by side for a few minutes. Then the doctor turned his face to heaven, and prayed in his glad familiar manner to Him in Whom he trusted with such triumphant faith.

“Father, we cannot be lost, for we are in Thy hand all the time, and under the shadow of Thy wing. Thou knowest the way that we take. Send us help in our need, and guide us to safety!”

The prayer was interrupted by the distant barking of a dog.

“Listen! There is our Father's answer,” said the doctor. “Praise His name, He hears, and does not keep us in suspense.”

The welcome sound inspired the fainting guide with new strength. They turned in the direction of the sound, and following it, arrived as the night was closing in upon them, at a small Tartar encampment.

The surprise of the Tartars on seeing the new arrivals was very great. “How did you come this way?” they inquired. “We never see travellers hereabouts in December. Are you not afraid of the snows?”

“My Master, who guided me here, can control the snows so that they shall not hurt us; and you can see He has done so, for no snow has fallen.”

“Who is your Master, then?”

“Herr¹ Jesus!” And there and then he opened his mouth and began and preached unto them Jesus. Although they were Mohammedans² they listened attentively to their venerable visitor, who afterwards told how they gave him and his guide the best entertainment in their power. His Christmas dinner that evening consisted of a piece of the common hard black bread, eaten by the Tartars, and a pomegranate! Writing home to his wife on the following day he told her he imagined the feastings in England; and was certain that nobody at home ate their Christmas dinner with more gratitude and joy in the Lord, than he ate his.

In the morning, with much good will, the Tartars sent one of their number along with them to put them into the right road.



This picture shows a region of Transcaucasia in winter. I don't know if it was near where Dr Baedeker travelled. Can you see the figures and the house in the snow?

1 The Lord

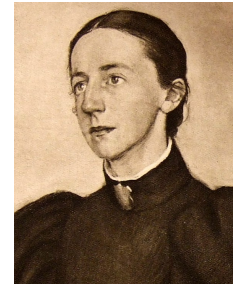
2 Muslims.

Something to do for younger children

With appropriate props younger children might enjoy acting out this simple “lost and found” story with its profound teaching.

Extra reading

Today is also the anniversary of the death of one of Dr Baedeker's close associates in the work in Finland and someone deeply interested in the plight of prisoners. I have put the extract from Dr Baedeker's biography that concerns Baroness Matilda von Wrede (1864-1928) in today's Optional Resources files. It was written during the Baroness's lifetime.



Something to read from science history³



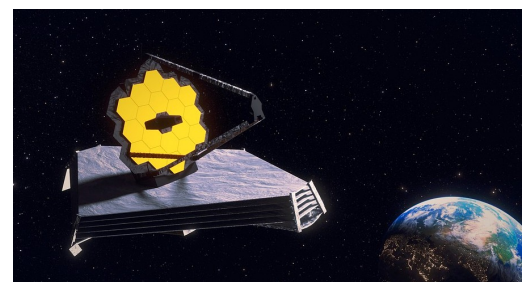
Earlier this month we read about the Scottish scientist David Brewster.⁴ David Brewster's close friend was another scientist, Sir James Simpson (1811-1870) who made one of the most important and useful discoveries in the history of medicine. Sir James was converted one **25th December**. His biographer⁵ wrote:

That Christmas Day on which all doubts left him was followed by days of extraordinarily zealous work, such as would have been expected of him after he had convinced himself that he had a mission to spread abroad this, the latest, and, in his opinion, the greatest, of his discoveries. He plunged at once into the midst of Evangelical societies, missions, and prayer-meetings, amongst the upper and lower classes of Edinburgh, and made excursions into the mining districts of his native county to deliver addresses. He interested himself in the education of theological students, and in foreign missions, and added to his literary work the writing of religious addresses, tracts and hymns. His example had a powerful influence in Edinburgh.

When an interviewer once asked Sir James what was his most important discovery, he replied, “That I have a Saviour!” Use your own reference books to find out what Sir James's other famous discovery was.

Astronomy⁶

Today is the anniversary of the launch of the James Webb Space Telescope on **25th December** 2021. This telescope, positioned in space, can see very clearly compared to a telescope on earth. This is because it does not have to look through the earth's atmosphere. The scientists who designed the telescope hoped not just to learn more about what is out there in the universe. They wanted to look back into the past and find out how the universe was created. Their idea of how the universe came into being and how it operates make them think that the further out into space you look, the further back in time you can see and they think that with their telescopes they can see back in time for millions of



³ Information from <https://www.christianheritageedinburgh.org.uk/2018/12/07/a-scientists-testimony-sir-james-young-simpson-pioneer-of-anaesthetics/> and other sources.

⁴ See the lesson for 11th December.

⁵ Henry Laing Gordon, *Sir James Young Simpson* (London, 1897)

⁶ Information from <https://crev.info/2021/12/jwst-origins/>, <https://www.creationastronomy.com/the-james-webb-space-telescope-first-discoveries-and-their-implications/> and other sources.

years. We know from the Bible that God created the universe in six days about 6,000 years ago so something must be wrong with the scientists' ideas on this topic. If you have a good astronomy book such as those available from Answers in Genesis, Creation Ministries International, Creation Research UK or other Christian outlets such as the [Ossett Christian Book Shop](#) you can follow up the details of this for yourself. If you have ordinary reference books from publishers that are not specifically Christian you will, sadly, only get one side of the story. If someone has given you a book token recently (or even today!) a good Christian book on Astronomy from one of these outlets would be a splendid way to use it.

The thing to notice, however, is that the James Webb Space Telescope did not show the scientists what they expected. At this great distance, they expected to see galaxies of a certain type that they designate as “young”. Instead they saw galaxies of many different types, including types that they considered “mature”. Something must be very wrong with their ideas.

Has this made the scientists change their ideas about the age of the universe? Have they abandoned the idea that it is millions of years old? No. After the initial shock at what they were seeing they settled down to squash and squeeze and twist their theory to try to make it fit what they were seeing. At all costs the theory has to remain regardless of whatever evidence they have, even from their own eyes.

Perhaps that surprises us. We are used to thinking that scientists observe the facts and choose the simplest explanation that offers itself.⁷ But these are scientists who are afraid. If they have to admit that the universe is not nearly as old as they think then, the Bible is right and they are wrong. All sorts of things flow from this that frighten them. The judgement of God on sin is one of them. The need for repentance is another. This is not what they want. They want to make up their own ideas of right and wrong just as they make up their own ideas about the universe so they can continue to live their lives as they please.

It is not just scientists that shut their eyes to evidence is it? If you have the privilege of being brought up in a Christian home you will be aware of the evidence of the Bible every day. Do not ignore it. Make it your business to bring all your ideas into line with it and to repent of your own sins and trust the Saviour. Then you will make the same eternally important discovery as Sir James Simpson.

Something to eat

If you like cheese just imagine this: the Chelsea Pensioners⁸ hold an annual ceremony at this time of year in which one of the pensioners cuts a special cheese with a sword. The ceremony goes back over 300 years to a time when London cheesemongers donated the cheese. Nowadays the Dairy Council presents cheese from cheesemongers all over Britain to the Chelsea Hospital for the Pensioners to enjoy. If you didn't find out about the Chelsea Pensioners a few days ago⁹ you could look in your own encyclopedias now.



How many different kinds of cheese can you name? Where do they all come from? What a good excuse to enjoy some cheese today!

⁷ See the lesson on Occam's Razor 25th May.

⁸ Image: By I, Dmasters, CC BY 2.5, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=2445494>

⁹ See the lesson for 22nd December.

Other things

So many interesting things happened today that I will make a list below for you to choose from if you would like to follow them up.

Do you have a Christian book in which you can look up Christmas Evans (1766-1838), the one-eyed Welsh preacher? He was born on 25th December.

The coronation of Charlemagne (748-814AD) took place on 25th December 800AD. Do you know who he was?

The first missionary radio broadcast took place from Quito, the capital city of Ecuador (so named because it lies astride the equator), by Radio HCJB—the Voice of the Andes on December 25, 1931, with a 200-watt transmitter¹⁰. This makes today a good time to remember the work of all missionary radio stations in our prayers. Can you find Quito in your atlas?



¹⁰ Read about this here: <https://creation.com/created-to-spread-the-gospel>.