

December 7th

Memory Verse

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night;
in the which the heavens shall pass away
with a great noise,
and the elements shall melt
with fervent heat,
the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. 2 Peter 3:10

“The day of the Lord” is that great day when this earth will come to an end as the verse explains. “As a thief in the night” means “when we do not expect it.” For memorizing you can think of the verse as a statement followed by a list of three things that will happen. The first two of those happenings also have a few words of description attached to them by the word “with”. Young children can learn the words in bold and understand that Christians look forward to that great day when Jesus will come again, although we do not know when it will be. Then there will be a new heaven and a new earth.¹ When Christians look around at the world and see terrible things happening it is a comfort to be able to say, “But the day of the Lord will come.”

Something to read from history²

American author Nathaniel Hawthorne was on a visit to London in 1857. This is how he described the dense fog that covered London on December 7th that year:

When it was time to rise, there was but a glimmering of daylight, and we had candles on the breakfast table at nearly ten o'clock. All abroad there was a dense dim fog brooding across the street. At eleven o'clock I went into the midst of the fog-bank which for the moment seemed a little more interfused with daylight; for there seemed to be continual changes in the density of this dim medium, which varies so much that now you can but just see the cabs dashing out of the duskiness a score of yards off.

This would have been a bright sunny day but for the interference of the fog; and before I had been out long, I actually saw the sun, looking red and rayless, much like the millionth magnification of a new halfpenny.



I went home by way of Holborn, and the fog was denser than ever – very black, indeed, more like a distillation of mud than anything else. So heavy was the gloom, that gas was lighted in all the shop-windows; and the little charcoal-furnaces of the women and boys, roasting chestnuts, threw a ruddy, misty glow around them. And yet I liked it. This fog seems an atmosphere proper to huge, grimy London.

On reaching home, I found the fog diffused through the drawing-room, though how it could have got in is a mystery. Since nightfall, however, the atmosphere is clear again.

This was not the first or the last terrible fog or “smog” to afflict London in times when factories and homes all burned soft coal for fuel. Sulphur dioxide and soot poured out of chimneys. This mixed with the natural water vapour of the Thames Valley and formed above the streets a layer of greasy and bitter mist. The greenish-yellow colour of the fog gave rise to the nickname “pea-souper”. Anyone with respiratory (breathing) problems could become very ill and even die as a result of this pollution. November and early December was the most common time of year for smogs and

¹ Revelation 21:1.

² Adapted from Owen, Evan, *What Happened Today* Volume 3, available on the *Mothers' Companion* Flashdrive. <https://motherscompanion.weebly.com>.

December 7th 1952 also found the city and suburbs covered with fog that had begun on 5th December and lasted until 9th December. Here is what my late father wrote for a children's magazine around 2004 about his family's experience of the 1952 Smog:

I was aged 20 and had just completed two years National Service in the Royal Air Force. Then in December came the smog. To be in it was an awful experience; it was cold and clammy, sound was muffled, one easily became lost and many older people or those with asthma or other chesty complaints died for lack of pure air. The smog got onto your clothes, on your face and all external paintwork became dirty. It spread its tentacles through window frames and into the houses. It was very difficult to get to work. There were few buses. The train service was erratic as the drivers could not see the signals. Few cars were on the road and people would get lost even in their own streets. Torches were quite useless as they could not pierce the gloom. Day and night were no different; one had to grope one's way at all times.



We lived in South London, my parents, my young sister and I. My parents were not Christians, but I was converted before I joined the RAF. I had a young lady, she was a Christian and her parents (Mr and Mrs Davis) were Christians. Later we married and have now been married for 52 years.

During that smog my little sister became unwell. My mother took her to the doctor who said it was just a little tummy upset, and not to worry. Soon, however, she became much worse and was taken to hospital (I can't remember how she got there) where she had to have emergency surgery for appendicitis – but it was too late. She developed peritonitis and in those days that could be fatal.

My parents were terribly worried; they were good parents and loved us both, they did get through the smog to visit my sister who was by now very ill – but only with great difficulty.

My parents were very friendly with my fiancée's parents and at length they said to me, “Will you ask Mr Davis (my future father-in-law) if he will come and pray with us?” I did ask him and he did come and he did pray. God answered that prayer for my sister and she began to mend. At last she regained her normal health but we discovered by talking to her surgeon that her illness began to mend at the very time we prayed together.

It was not long after that my parents saw that they needed the Saviour and they were soundly converted. They joined the local company of Christians where I was a member, and where that young lady and I were married.

My father became a door-keeper in the “House of the Lord” and towards the end of his life a deacon in that local church. Never will I forget that in the smog my sister's life was saved and as a result my parents souls were saved.

Can I ask you, young reader, “Is your soul saved?”

Lord Amulree, a doctor specializing in the care of the elderly, later explained in the house of Lords the particular reasons for the 1952 smog:

I gather that this particular fog was due to some rather abnormal meteorological [weather] conditions. There was no wind, no movement of the air at all, and mild air at the top, with a layer of warm air rising from below to the top and cold air coming down. The effect was rather like putting a lid upon London, as upon a saucepan: sulphur fumes and exhaust fumes accumulated under that warm layer and could not get away.

After 1952 the government restricted what fuels could be burned in cities and smogs returned to being just harmless fogs.

Something to think about³

We can see from the examples we have just read that atmospheric pollution is not something new in the twenty-first century. Because of the fall of mankind and the resulting curse on the earth, things are no longer perfect and good. Christians understand from God's word that we should do good to everyone where we can and that includes fighting the bad effects of the fall such as disease and pollution. To the best of our ability we should strive for clean air, clean water, and the preservation of natural resources for everyone. Smogs killed weak or elderly people and made life difficult and unpleasant. God gives governments the responsibility to make laws to prevent such things but does not give them the responsibility to somehow save the planet from destruction.

Christians understand that the Bible tells us the earth is temporary. Unbelievers are appalled at the task they imagine is facing them: they think that the care of the planet is in their hands and that they have to somehow make it last for ever! That is why they put up signs like the one in the picture on the right. But however much we recycle or use wind power, God has planned the end of the earth and there will come a time when the earth and all He has created will be destroyed. Today's memory verse tells us that "the heavens shall pass away... the elements shall melt... the earth... shall be burned up." (2 Peter 3:10). Creation is "groaning" (Romans 8:20-22) in expectation of that end. Christians understand that they should direct their efforts not to "saving the planet" but to the saving of souls.



John Newton wrote as the last verse of *Amazing Grace*:

The earth shall soon dissolve like snow,
The sun forbear to shine;
But God, who called me here below,
Will be forever mine.

Something to do

How good would you be at finding your way if a smog came down and you could not see? You could experiment with a blindfold. If you do this outside make sure someone without a blindfold is with you!

If you want to play an indoor game, try Blindman's Buff. One player is *It* and wears a blindfold. They must spin on the spot



³ Information from <https://www.gotquestions.org>

five times while the rest of the players scatter in search of a good hiding place, which must be accessible to *It*.

It yells “Stop,” when the five spins are done and all the players must freeze where they are. *It* must track down the players by the sense of hearing only. They can dodge *It* without moving their feet or put *It* off by making misleading noises. If *It* discovers a player, that player must become *It* and put on the blindfold and the game begins again.

An Experiment

Make your own mini fog!

You need:

a large glass jam jar

sieve or strainer

hot water

ice cubes

Fill up the jar completely with hot water and leave for about a minute.

Pour out almost all the water, but leave about 2 cm in the jar.

Put the sieve over the top of the jar.

Place a few (3-4) ice cubes in the sieve.

Watch what happens. You should see a mist or “fog”.

The cold air from the ice cubes collides with the warm, moist air in the jar causing the water to condense and forming a fog. This is what happens in certain weather conditions in the Thames Valley, causing harmless fogs. However, when there was pollution from smoke in the air and no wind to blow the fog away, a smog would result with disastrous consequences.