

January 16th

and they shall beat their swords into plowshares,
and their spears into pruninghooks:

nation shall not lift up a sword against nation,

neither shall they learn war any more. Micah 4:3b

More information about this verse in the lesson for 18th January.

Keep a weather record¹



The weather in January is often severe but in the second half of the month in 1776 it was unusually bad. There was heavy and continuous rain during the first week of the month so that when the snow began to fall the earth was saturated with water. From January 14th the snow increased daily. By the 16th many main roads were completely blocked and Gilbert White (1720-1793), who we met in the lesson for 14th January, tells us in his journal about a company of travellers stranded at Marlborough on their way to celebrate the Queen's birthday.

The ladies fretted and offered large rewards to labourers, if they would shovel them a track to London; but the relentless heaps of snow were too bulky to be removed... leaving the company in very uncomfortable circumstances at the Castle and other inns.

Can you find out who was the queen whose birthday they wanted to celebrate? Shovelling a track all the way from Marlborough to London sounds a very mad idea. Look both places up in your atlas and find out how far apart they are! We will follow Gilbert White's journal entries as he records the progress of this cold spell in this month's lessons. Don't forget to keep your own weather records this year.

Something to think about



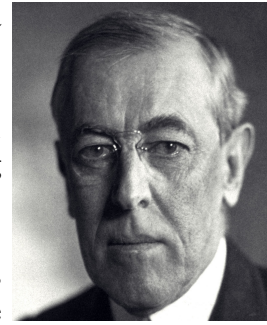
On 16th January 1920 the first meeting of the League of Nations took place in the grand room you see pictured on the left. The League of Nations was the brain child of American President Woodrow Wilson (1856-1924). After the First World War he wanted to prevent another such war by having nations settle disputes peacefully. His idea was to have an international organisation which would facilitate this. After the war, the Allies met at Versailles in Paris to set the peace terms for the defeated Central Powers. This Paris Peace Conference drew up the peace treaties that were designed to settle affairs after the

war. Woodrow Wilson made sure the mechanism for setting up the League of Nations was written into all the peace treaties. He insisted it should have priority in peace talks and the Covenant of the League of Nations was agreed by all the victorious powers. Why did the League of Nations have a “Covenant” as its founding document not a “Constitution” or a “Treaty”?

Woodrow Wilson had had a Christian up-bringing in a Presbyterian church. He deliberately chose the word “Covenant” because of its Biblical resonance. “Covenant” is a Bible word describing a solemn relationship and it is found at key points in the history of salvation from Genesis (Noah,

¹ Adapted from Owen, Evan, *What Happened Today?* Book 1 available on the *Mothers' Companion* flashdrive <https://motherscompanion.weebly.com/>

Abraham) onwards. Woodrow Wilson wanted the League of Nations to have a religious significance. But was it a truly *Christian* significance?



When Woodrow Wilson went to university he began to dilute the ideas with which he had grown up with the fashionable social gospel and liberal teaching that was all the rage at the time.

The social gospel was the idea that Christianity was about improving things here and now on earth. It's promoters were not interested in preaching the Gospel of Salvation from sin and Salvation from hell. The main duty of Christians was to work for peace and the alleviation of poverty in this life, according to the social gospel. Liberalism is linked to this. It puts fallen human reason above the Bible as our authority. Liberal teaching says that there are mistakes in the Bible. It says that Jesus was a good man whom we should follow but that we can interpret the Bible in new ways to bring it up to date. Liberal teaching abandoned the account of creation in the early chapters of Genesis. Following on from this the need for individuals to be saved from sin through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ was also given up. Woodrow Wilson thought that by having a League of Nations there would be world peace. He thought this was the kind of peace Jesus came to give. Nations would live in harmony and this would be the pinnacle of human evolution.²

We can see from this that the League of Nations was not a Christian organisation. Woodrow Wilson was twisting what the Bible says. The Bible teaches that Christ came to bring peace *between God and His people*.

Another enthusiastic architect of the League of Nations was Jan Smuts (1870-1950),³ president of South Africa. He too had abandoned true Christianity for a philosophy which he made up for himself called Holism. He described this philosophy in his book *Holism and Evolution*. By Holism he meant a progressive movement towards a *whole* in human affairs which was the outworking of evolution. He saw the League of Nations as a stepping stone to *whole* world government.

As it turned out, the League of Nations was unable to prevent a recurrence of world war for many reasons which are too detailed to go into here.⁴ Underlying all these practical reasons, however, are what we might call the theological, or Bible, reasons.

War is a consequence of sin. This was not recognized by the League of Nations and it therefore failed to keep the peace. War is not usually a consequence of nations having disputes to settle which could be settled by peaceful means. This was Woodrow Wilson's idea. The realities of life are that there are aggressors who will not listen to reason. Powerful evil nations will prey on weaker nations. They have to be faced with force and stopped from pursuing their evil ways by force or the threat of force. The problem of putting that force into the hands of an international body is one of control. Who is to say what is right and who is the evil aggressor? In the nature of things the aggressor himself and his supporters are members of the international organization. The only way individual nations can protect themselves is the scriptural one, "righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people." Godly nations have throughout history been protected internationally. Think of England under Cromwell or Victoria, The Netherlands in its fight against Philip II, Gustav Adolphus of Sweden and so on. The League of Nations was an attempt to bring peace by purely human means without regard to righteousness. Its founders distorted and ignored what the Bible has to say. It was a failure.

² For a discussion of evolution see the lesson for 19th April.

³ For more about Jan Smuts see the article here: <https://creation.com/be-still-and-know-what-god>.

⁴ If you are interested in the history of the League of Nations there is an audio lesson here https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D0mui1qJ_yM with class notes here <https://hisstoryolevel.weebly.com/unit-6-world-order.html> (download *Lesson 2*).

A story of exploration to read



On **January 16th** 1909 three members of Earnest Shackleton's South Polar Expedition reached the Magnetic South Pole – at least that's what they thought at the time!

It had been a gruelling journey and I think that shows in the faces of the three young men in the picture: Douglas Mawson, Alistair MacKay and Edgeworth David. Towards the end, to add to the hardship of the cold and the effort of sledge hauling over deep crevasses in the ice, they had to put themselves on short rations of food as well. This was because the journey was taking longer than they had bargained for. By January they had reached the Polar Plateau. Here the air is thinner making breathing difficult. No wonder they are not smiling in the picture.

There is more about Shackleton's 1909 expedition in the lesson for 12th June but where exactly were Mawson, MacKay and David on **16th January** 1909 and where did they *think* they were?

If you have a globe which is fixed on a stand it will help you understand this part of the lesson. A magnetic compass would be handy too. The globe rotates on its axis which passes through the Geographic North and South Poles. These two locations do not move but are fixed points on the earth's surface as indicated on your globe. However, the N needle in your magnetic compass does not point exactly at the Geographic North Pole nor does the S needle point exactly at the Geographic South Pole although they point *near* to those locations. The compass needles point to the Magnetic North Pole and the Magnetic South Pole. Not only are these not the same as the Geographic Poles, they also *move about* as well. They can be several thousand kilometres from the Geographic Poles. All this had been gradually better understood since 1831 when James Clark Ross discovered the Magnetic North Pole in Northern Canada and then Roald Amundsen discovered it in a different place in 1903!

So how would you know if you were at the Magnetic South Pole? Where would your compass point?

At the Magnetic South Pole your compass needle would behave erratically because it would be trying to point *down* at the ground where the Pole is! What is worse the magnetic field lines *start* to bend downwards as you *approach* the Pole making the compass erratic.

Mawson had calculated that to be inside the “area of oscillation” of the South Pole they should make for a point 72° 25' south latitude, 155° 16' east longitude. That is where you see them in the photograph above – they had made it!

It was only later that Mawson realised that he had failed to take into account the recent work of Antarctic explorer Louis Charles Bernacchi: Mawson had miscalculated where they needed to be. Although their journey was a magnificent achievement, they had not been at the Magnetic South Pole at all!

Something to make

If you do not have a magnetic compass you can make your own using a bar magnet and some string. To do this you need to hang the magnet up by tying the string round the centre and suspending it from something. It should be positioned so that it is not near any iron or steel objects. (Can you

think why?) It should also be where it will not get knocked or bumped or swayed – by someone accidentally slamming a door for instance. The magnet will come to rest with one end pointing to the Magnetic South Pole and one end pointing to the Magnetic North Pole.

Another method is to magnetise a sewing needle. This can be done by stroking one end of a bar magnet from top to bottom of the needle a number of times. At the end of each stroke you should lift the magnet clear of the needle and move it back to the top of the next stroke, keeping the magnet well away from the needle as you do so.

When you have your magnetic needle you can float it on a saucer of water. If undisturbed it will gradually settle into a North South line.