

January 27th

Memory Verse:

God is light

and in him is no darkness at all.

1 John 1:5b

Weather

The picture¹ shows you what it is like in Finland at midday at this time of year. The sun will not come far over the horizon today in the far north of Finland and at midwinter it does not come up at all. Even then, however, there is just a little light.

Would you like living in a place where the sun shone at midnight at mid summer but not at all at midwinter? I think it would make one very appreciative of the light and bring home the meaning of today's memory verse very well!



On **January 27th** 1776 England was in the grip of a very severe winter which we have been following through Gilbert White's diary entries.² "Snow all day, fierce frost at night" was his entry for today. The temperature fell to zero in many parts of the country and water froze indoors. Even the Thames was frozen over. Every night seemed to get colder until the sudden thaw arrived on 1st February. You can find Gilbert White's final wintery comments on the weather in 1776 in the lesson for 3rd February.³

If the weather is freezing or even just cold and wet today, don't forget to get out for some exercise just the same. When you've done that you will find some suggestions for winter reading in today's lesson. But first...



Somewhere to visit: the Sedgwick Museum of Earth Sciences

Do you enjoy visiting museums? Have you ever wondered who first had the idea of putting different interesting things on display and allowing everyone to see them for free? One of the people we have to thank is John Woodward (1625-1728) a Bible believing doctor, antiquarian and fossil collector who proposed a theory for the mechanism by which God began the flood of Genesis. His theory is still considered at least partially tenable by Bible-believing scientists today.⁴ Woodward left his collection of rocks, fossils and artefacts in five drop-front walnut wood cases to Cambridge University on condition that they were freely available for anyone who wished to see them. In other words they were to form a small free public

museum – arguably the first.⁵

The cases full of objects have moved around Cambridge since Woodward's death and they are now in a museum started by geologist Adam Sedgwick (1785-1873)⁶ who died on **27th January**. If you live anywhere near Cambridge you could call in at the Sedgwick Museum and ask to see them, just

1 Image: By Timo Newton-Syms from Helsinki, Finland and Chalfont St Giles, Bucks, UK - Ruka Cottage, CC BY-SA 2.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=26292999>

2 See lessons for 16th, 20th and 21st January.

3 Yet to come.

4 <https://creation.com/the-pre-flood-flood-boundary-at-the-base-of-the-earths-transition-zone>

5 See some of the cases and one of the fossils here: <http://www.sedgwickmuseum.org/index.php?page=dr-woodward-s-study>.

6 For more about Adam Sedgwick see <https://creation.com/who-said-this-about-evolution> and <https://creation.com/clergy-mentor-darwin>

as Woodward intended, thanks to Sedgwick. As the home of Woodward's collection the Sedgwick Museum⁷ is the holder of the oldest complete collection of such items to have survived to the present day. If you don't live near Cambridge, don't worry! Do you know where your nearest museum is? What about your nearest *free* museum?⁸ Do some research and find out. Plan a visit today and don't forget, if it is the kind of museum that has fossils in it, to put your "Bible glasses" on when reading the museum signs and labels!



So what was Woodward's theory? It was an important one and he arranged the artefacts in his cases deliberately to illustrate it, as you can still see if you go to Sedgwick's museum today. He thought that God interfered with gravity to initiate the flood, creating a catastrophic mixing of everything. On the 40th day God restored things again. The earth's component parts at once sank into their relative places which accounted for the strata we see today.

What about Sedgwick, in whose museum the Woodward collection now lives, did he subscribe to Woodward's idea?

Sedgwick did not believe that God created the world in exactly the way it says in Genesis because he thought that the evidence of the rocks pointed to long ages of time before mankind came into existence. He would not have agreed with Woodward in this respect. However, he could not stomach the next stage of the evolutionary idea. Darwin's theory of biological evolution (which we will look at in detail in the lessons for 18th and 19th April) horrified him. Before Darwin's book *Origin of Species* was published, Robert Chambers had published a similar idea. Sedgwick commented on Chambers' book:

If the book be true, the labours of sober induction are in vain; religion is a lie; human law is a mass of folly, and a base injustice; morality is moonshine; our labours for the black people of Africa were works of madmen; and man and woman are only better beasts!⁹

On reading Darwin's book itself when it came out in 1859 he wrote in a review for the *Spectator* magazine:

I cannot conclude without expressing my detestation of the theory, because of its unflinching materialism;—because it has deserted the inductive track, the only track that leads to physical truth;—because it utterly repudiates final causes, and thereby indicates a demoralised understanding on the part of its advocates.

“Not that I believe that Darwin is an atheist; though I cannot but regard his materialism as atheistical. I think it untrue, because opposed to the obvious course of nature, and the very opposite of inductive truth. And I think it intensely mischievous.

“Each series of facts is laced together by a series of assumptions, and repetitions of the one false principle. You cannot make a good rope out of a string of air bubbles.¹⁰

Sadly he never realised that Darwin's whole theory was founded upon the idea that the earth has existed for long ages of time – a theory to which Sedgwick subscribed but which cannot be made to

7 <http://www.sedgwickmuseum.org/>

8 Image of the Horniman Free museum by No Swan So Fine - Own work, CC BY-SA 4.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=62788445>

9 Quoted in <https://creation.com/clergy-mentor-darwin>

10 Quoted in <https://creation.com/clergy-mentor-darwin>

fit with the Bible's account of the origin of the universe.

Use your dictionary to make sure you understand the **highlighted** words.

A book to read and a game to play¹¹

“Curiouser and curiouser!” cried Alice (she was so much surprised, that for the moment she quite forgot how to speak good English); “now I’m opening out like the largest telescope that ever was! Good-bye, feet!” (for when she looked down at her feet, they seemed to be almost out of sight, they were getting so far off) “Oh, my poor little feet, I wonder who will put on your shoes and stockings for you now, dears? I’m sure I shan’t be able! I shall be a great deal too far off to trouble myself about you: you must manage the best way you can;—but I must be kind to them,” thought Alice, “or perhaps they won’t walk the way I want to go! Let me see: I’ll give them a new pair of boots every Christmas.” And she went on planning to herself how she would manage it. “They must go by the carrier,” she thought; “and how funny it’ll seem, sending presents to one’s own feet! And how odd the directions will look! Alice’s Right Foot, Esq., Hearthrug, near the Fender. (with Alice’s love.) Oh dear, what nonsense I’m talking!”



You will have recognised that extract, of course, from *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll.

Lewis Carroll was born on **January 27th**, 1832 in Cheshire. His father was Vicar of Daresbury, and there were nine other children in the family. Lewis Carroll's real name was Charles Lutwidge Dodson. The first children he entertained were his own brothers and sisters. While he was still a pupil at Richmond Grammar School he wrote funny magazines for them, as well as humorous poems for his brother Wilfred and sister Louisa.

He was very fond of inventing games for them to play. “The Railway Game” was one of their favourites.

The “train” was made out of a truck, a wheelbarrow and a barrel, and the railway had its own rules, its own waiting rooms and refreshment rooms.

This game was played in the garden, but Charles made up many games for indoors, even when he was grown up, including a word puzzle which he called “Doublets”.

The players take two words of the same length, like HEAD and TAIL, and link them together by putting in other words. Each word put in must differ from the one before it, by one letter only, until, if HEAD is the first word, the player arrives at TAIL. The Doublet will then look like this:

Head
heal
teal
tell
tall
Tail

On the next page are a few examples to try. When you have done them you can make up your own.

¹¹ Adapted from Owen, Evan, *What Happened Today?* Book 1 available on the *Mothers' Companion* flashdrive <https://motherscompanion.weebly.com/>

Turn DOG into POT
Turn OATS into BRAN
Turn COKE into CART
Turn HEN into RAT
Turn BEAR into GOAT

Turn WOOD into GATE
Turn PIG into STY
Turn ALICE into GUIDE
Turn CLOCK into DREAM
Turn HARE into BEAR

(I can't do these things at all!
After POT I'm all at sea.
If you solve them, let me know,
Send your answers in to [me](#).)

If you have a copy of *Alice In Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass* why not dig them out and read or re-read them today?¹²

An old book to read¹³

Look at the picture below. It is an old fresco or wall painting done on wet plaster. For many years it remained covered over by white paint until restoration work was done on the building where it was in Florence. This led to it being uncovered in 1840. The fresco contains the oldest known portrait of a famous poet, Dante Alighieri (c.1265-1321) whose poem *Divine Comedy* is the central epic poem of Italian literature. Dante wrote it in Italian rather than Latin and so helped the standardisation of the Italian language itself.



In the picture, Dante is the figure in deep red standing towards the left with a red cap on his head. Despite the ravages of time he is clearly visible, unlike some of the other figures.

January 27th 1302 was a sad day for Dante. The government of his home city, Florence, was engulfed in quarrels between rival parties. Dante himself had gone to Rome as part of a delegation to the pope. The other members of the delegation had been allowed to return but the pope commanded Dante to remain. Meanwhile he was charged with corruption by an opposing faction in Florence. Since he could not return to defend himself he was declared an absconder and condemned to exile. He was never able to return to his beloved Florence again.

¹² Available on line here: http://www.gasl.org/refbib/Carroll_Alice_1st.pdf and <https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/12>

¹³ Information from <https://www.gotquestions.org/Divine-Comedy-Dantes-Inferno.html> and other sources.

If you would like to read some of Dante's *Divine Comedy* for yourself a good place to begin might be *Stories from Dante Told to the Children* by Mary Macgregor (London, 1907).¹⁴ Even in this simple version I would not be surprised if you did not want to read the whole book.

Dante's poem is a strange mixture. He imagines himself, under the guidance of the ancient Roman poet Virgil, making a journey through the regions of the dead as Virgil has his hero Aeneas do in his poem the *Aeneid*. However, unlike the pagan Aeneas, Dante sees himself travelling through *Inferno* (Hell); *Purgatorio* (Purgatory); and *Paradiso* (heaven). In order to describe these regions Dante calls on the Bible, Roman Catholic teachings, mythology and even some of the Islamic teachings that were becoming known in Italy in his day.

The Bible gives no indication of a purgatory or place of punishment from which sinners can be released to go to heaven once they have paid for their sins. Rather it teaches that only Christ, the perfect sacrifice, can pay for our sins and that we must repent and trust him now, while we are on earth. Once we have died it will be too late! Dante however thought that such a place existed.

Dante also describes (in detail) the torments of hell as he imagined they might be. His ideas include being bitten by insects, wallowing in mire, being immersed in boiling blood and being lashed with whips. Lesser punishments involve having one's head on backwards, chasing unreachable goals for eternity, and walking endlessly in circles. Horrific as these might sound they are nothing like the Bible's "outer darkness" where there will be "weeping and gnashing of teeth". This will certainly be worse than Dante's imaginings!

When it comes to heaven, Dante arranges its inhabitants in different levels according to how good they have been in their lifetime. The Bible is clear, however, that we cannot earn our place in heaven, whether in the lowest or the highest ranks, by our own good works. Once again Dante does not understand the Bible's teaching about trusting in Christ for salvation – and heaven.

If you read the *Divine Comedy* you can keep these things in mind. The book will give you a picture of the spiritual darkness of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries before the dawn of the reformation where everyone was trying to earn their salvation by good deeds – imagining they could do this both before and after death. The book presents rather a miserable picture of the state of religion in Dante's day.

The idea that unbelievers will be punished eternally for their sins is not popular today. However, this was one thing Dante did get right. It was not popular in Charles Spurgeon's (1834-1892) time either. He gave some wise advice not found in the *Divine Comedy* in one Sunday morning sermon:

I must tell you some other things which my Master says, because nowadays the fine new theologians do not like to have them spoken. I have heard him speak them in my very soul, and I must therefore warn you about them. He says there are tares growing among the wheat, and that the day will come when the angels will "gather the tares in bundles to burn them." That is how he expresses the destiny of the ungodly. Hear how the modern divines hiss between their teeth, "Dreadful language. These horrible expressions are borrowed from Dante and Milton, and the old writers." No Dante, Milton, and the old writers did not exist then, but Jesus himself says, "The Son of man shall send out his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and those who do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth." Such will be the lot of some of you, unless you repent. Though growing up among Christian people, and hearing the gospel, and looking very like Christians, you will be separated from among the wheat to be cast into the fire.¹⁵

These are disturbing words. We do not need to be frightened, though, for as Spurgeon devoted his life to explaining, we can run to Jesus for safety – eternal safety!

14 If you can't get hold of a copy you can find it here: <https://digitalarchive.tpl.ca/objects/267006/stories-from-dante-told-to-the-children#>

15 Sunday Morning, September 1, 1878.