

22<sup>nd</sup> March

Memory verse for the week:

And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude,  
and as the voice of many waters,  
and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying,  
**Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.**

Revelation 19:6<sup>1</sup>

Map Work<sup>2</sup>

Find **Albania** in an atlas. You will see that it is a small country with a sea coast facing **Italy** across the **Adriatic Sea** and surrounded by **Montenegro, Kosovo** and **North Macedonia**, three countries that used to form part of Yugoslavia. On **22<sup>nd</sup> March** 1992 in a parliamentary election in Albania, the Democratic Party of Albania won a decisive victory. This was an important election because it marked the end of Communism in Albania. Under Communist rule, no elections had been allowed. This date therefore signalled a big change in Albania.



Just before the outbreak of the Second World War, Albania was occupied by Italy which was at that time ruled by the dictator, Mussolini. Mussolini was Hitler's ally in the war and when Hitler's Axis Powers collapsed, Albania became a Communist state, the Socialist People's Republic of Albania.

For most of the Communist period (1946-1991) Albania was ruled by Enver Hoxha (died 1985), a cruel dictator who controlled the country through secret police called *Sigurimi*. They had the job of stopping all political activities in Albania and enforcing the strict control that made Albania very isolated, hard to visit and hard to leave.

But it was not just political activity that Hoxha wanted to stop. He was against all religion except atheism and wanted to stamp out all Muslim, Catholic, and Orthodox religious belief in Albania. He persecuted Bible believing evangelicals too, although they were a very small minority of Albanians. In fact, the only evangelical church ever known to have existed in Albania before 1991 is the one in Korçë, which is thriving today. In 1967 Hoxha proclaimed that Albania was the world's first officially atheist state. Of course, there were at the time (and still are) many countries whose rulers tried to force atheism on their people. However, they generally declared some kind of religious freedom in their constitution, even though it was not carried out in practice. In Albania forced atheism was official. “Was not the crushing blow dealt to religious dogma, that ancient plague, that poisonous black spider, in our country the most heroic, the most daring, the wisest, the most well-considered and the most skilful act?” wrote Hoxha.<sup>3</sup> But he added, “the fight to eradicate this cancer from the mentality of the people is still far from ended. A cure for cancer has not yet been discovered, but for religion it has been, and if a struggle is waged in this direction, consistently and with conviction, the cure will no longer take centuries but a few decades, a few generations.”<sup>4</sup>

1 See tomorrow's lesson for tips on learning this verse.

2 Prepared with advice from David Young, former director and founder of the Albanian Evangelical Mission.

3 <https://institutit.org/the-evangelical-faith-an-alien-body-introduced-into-albanian-culture-by-agents-of-foreign-powers>

4 Notice how Hoxha calls all belief-systems “religion”, except the belief-system that denies the existence of God. In



Enver Hoxha's "cure" for non-atheist religion was intense and cruel persecution. He and his Communist followers saw all religion except atheism as imports into Albania from abroad. Catholicism, for example was associated with Italy, which had oppressed Albania under Mussolini and Islam with the Ottoman Empire of Turkey which had also ruled Albania at different periods between 1479 to 1912. Orthodoxy was associated with Greece which was given Albania by the Paris Peace Conference of 1919. But what about true Biblical religion? Did that have unpleasant foreign associations for Albanians too? The most successful evangelists in Albania by far in the nineteenth century and beyond were actually Albanians themselves. The most famous of these Christian pioneers were the four members of the Qiriazi family, whose memory is still revered in Albania today for their promotion of the Albanian language and identity. The brothers Gjerasim Qiriazi (1858–1894) and Gjergj Qiriazi (1868–1912) together with their two sisters Sevasti Qiriazi-Dako (1871–1949) and Parashqevi Qiriazi (1880–1970) were Albanians from Manastir or Bitola in modern Macedonia. When they began their work in the city of Korçë, Albania was ruled by the Turks. Gjerasim worked with the British and Foreign Bible Society and, since it was difficult to do outreach work, got diplomatic help to open a school for girls in the Albanian language which became a headquarters for evangelistic efforts,

Bible studies and chapel services. The school was often suppressed by the authorities and its teachers arrested but the work still went on in the Albanian language. When Gjerasim died of pleurisy (contracted while held captive by bandits demanding a ransom) his brother Gjergj took over the work. When he died, his sisters carried on the school and its associated mission. The poet Byron called Albania the "rugged nurse of savage men". There were certainly times in the nineteenth and twentieth century when Albania was in great turmoil. At one stage there were ten different governments in ten years. In the inter-war period, an American missionary couple, Edwin and Dorothy Jacques, worked alongside native Albanians especially in providing Bibles and Scripture portions and tracts in Albanian which were very widely spread. They also helped lead the evangelical church in Korçë. They had to leave when the Second World War broke out but were confident that, even under Communism, some of the huge number of these Bibles and tracts would have survived.

As with many other languages, the translation of the Bible was key to the consolidation of Albanian. Kostandin Kristoforidhi (1827-1895) was a scholar, translator and Albanian patriot who translated the New Testament into both of the dialects of Albanian, Geg and Tosk. At this time Albanian could be written using a variety of alphabets. Kostandin Kristoforidhi adopted the Roman alphabet in the north, where Geg was spoken, and the Greek in the south, where Tosk was spoken. His work was fundamental in spreading literacy in Albanian.

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fact, atheism is a religion too. Everyone has a religious belief : that of the atheist is that God does not exist.

We can see from all this that true religion was not an import into Albania from a domineering foreign power but was, if anything, associated with Albanians' love of their own country and language. But could it survive the harsh persecution of Communist rule?

After the death of Hoxha, his wife and the Communist Party continued to govern Albania. Albania was running out of most natural resources and food was scarce. Despite the party control of all news, it began to be known in Albania that Communism was falling in other countries. The young people spearheaded a peaceful revolution, pulled down Hoxha's statues in the various towns and an interim government took charge. This led to the elections and the **22<sup>nd</sup> March** 1992 Democratic Party victory.

Albania was again open to foreign visitors and when missionaries arrived they found that, despite all the harrowing events they had been through, there were still a few Christians in Albania. Koci Treska from Korçë, for instance, who died in 1991 just before his prayer for Albania was answered and the ban on Christianity lifted. He had been an associate of Edwin Jacques before the Second World War and had been imprisoned under Hoxha's regime. His cousin Kristaq Treska, and also his fellow believer, Ligor Çina, survived beyond the fall of Communism. They had supported one another all through the Communist years.

The whole Bible is available in Albanian today and is published by the Albanian Bible Society. Here is today's memory verse in Albanian:

Dhe dëgjova një si zë i një turme të madhe,

dhe si zë shumë ujërash

dhe si zë bubullimash të forta, që thoshte:

“Aleluja, sepse filloi të mbretërojë Zoti, Perëndia ynë, i Plotfuqishmi!”

The church in Albania is poor economically and many Albanians leave the country in search of a better life for themselves and their families. This means that the Albanian church is not very stable. Remember Albania in your prayers.

### **A science experiment to do**



On **22<sup>nd</sup> March** 1960 – Arthur Leonard Schawlow and Charles Hard Townes were granted the first patent for a laser. Laser stands for “light amplification by stimulated emission of radiation.” Ordinary white light is made up of photons (light “particles”) of many different wavelengths. This

is what you see when you shine an ordinary battery torch. In a laser beam, the photons are all at the same wavelength and the troughs and peaks of the waves are all in line. Imagine someone with wavy hair. If the hair is tangled and not combed, the waves will not be apparent. When the hair is combed the dips and rises in the waves lie together. This is rather like a laser light beam. In a laser beam, since the light is of only one wavelength, the beam has a specific colour. White light consists of all the different wavelengths. If you shine your battery torch, the beam it gives is diffuse or spread out. A laser beam is very directional and stays focused over very large distances – even as far as to the moon and back! If you look at the picture above of laser lights over the Dutch city of Utrecht, you will see what this looks like. Laser beams are used at supermarket checkouts to scan bar codes on groceries and to scan CDs in your home CD player. Their cutting powers can be used for eye surgery and to cut metal.

Can you see what is happening to the ice in the picture on the right? A Laser beam is shining on it. Small laser pointing devices are inexpensive and can be used for many home science experiments. However, laser pointers **must be handled with great care**. This is because, if a laser beam is pointed at the eye, blindness can result. If you are doing experiments with a laser pointer therefore you should always have an adult with you who can help you be extra careful.



If you shine a laser pointer at a piece of white paper, you will see a small dot. Move the pointer further away from the paper or nearer to the paper the dot remains the same size. If you repeat the experiment with an ordinary torch the size of the dot on the paper will be larger when you move the torch further away from the paper and smaller when you move the torch nearer. You may need to darken the room to see this. This demonstrates the difference between the laser beam and ordinary light. The laser beam is directional and stays focused.

Because a laser beam is directional and stays focused we can use it to demonstrate some of the properties of light. These properties are the same in all light but the laser beam's focused character makes it easy to see them. For example when a light wave reaches a boundary such as a piece of glass or some water, it bends. When it passes through the boundary and out into the air again the angle of the wave will be different. The size of the change in angle depends on factors such as the thickness of the boundary, its smoothness and its transparency. This is easy to observe using a laser pen. Experiment with shining your laser beam through different thicknesses of glass and plastic using different kinds of bottles and drinking glasses. Again this will work best in a darkened room. You can also experiment with old CDs and observe the reflection. What happens if you shine your laser at a bottle of water? Now try a bottle of tonic water. What do you notice? Tonic water contains quinine. Photons from the laser hit the molecules of quinine and get absorbed. Then they are re-emitted in a random direction. This is what enables us to see the laser beam as it passes through the tonic water.

It was James Clerk Maxwell (1831-1879), scientist, Scot and devout Christian who first formulated the classical theory of electro magnetic radiation. This brought together for the first time electricity, light and magnetism as different manifestations of the same phenomenon. Dr David Stone from Michigan, a Christian who is an expert in laser physics, explains how he became interested in the subject:

I was struck with the brilliance and the beauty of Maxwell's equations describing electromagnetism. Those are God's thoughts! Laser devices and the propagation of laser beams are wonderful applications of electromagnetic theory... Purpose suffuses all of God's creation and it is a humbling

privilege to conduct research, hoping to ‘think God’s thoughts after Him,’ as the great astronomer Johann Kepler said... <sup>5</sup>

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5 <https://creation.com/laser-expert-evangelist>