

11<sup>th</sup> September

Memory Verse

**My times are in thy hand:**

deliver me from the hand of mine enemies,  
and from them that persecute me.

Make thy face to shine upon thy servant:

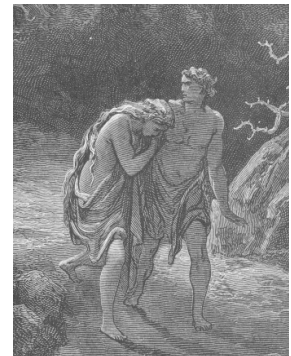
save me for thy mercies' sake. Psalm 31:15 and 16.

Younger children can learn the words in **bold** and understand that “thy” means “your”, in this case indicating God the Lord. More about today's memory verse in the lesson for 13<sup>th</sup> September.

Caves and the people who lived in them<sup>1</sup>

“Our Stone Age ancestors wore bright and garish clothes” announced the *Daily Mail* headlines in astonishment on 11<sup>th</sup> September 2009, continuing, “Archaeologists have uncovered an extraordinary haul of pink, turquoise and black fibres that were used to make thread more than 34,000 years ago. The flax fibres, which were buried in a cave in the hills of the Republic of Georgia, were discovered by an international team of fossil hunters...”

That “early” people should be clever enough to dye and weave their clothes does not come as surprise to Bible-believing Christians, although we would not accept the far back date of 34,000 (more about that below). God himself made the very first clothes for Adam and Eve after the fall. “Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them.” (Genesis 3:21) We often see pictures of Adam and Eve rather like the one on the right by Gustav Doré (1832-1883) which shows them leaving the Garden of Eden in rough, impractical clothing, not “coats”. But would we expect God to have made such inadequate and ungraceful garments? No, when God makes something it is always beautiful. I have heard it said that the clothes in which Adam and Eve left the garden of Eden must have been the most beautiful fur and leather coats the world has ever seen.<sup>2</sup>



So what was it that was found in the cave in Georgia?

It seems to have been some sort of ancient textile or clothing factory! As researchers sifted through the debris on the floor of the cave looking for ancient pollen grains, they found tiny flax fibres. “Some of these fibres were woven, some were cut, and some were dyed black, grey, turquoise, or pink. They also discovered evidence that these people were processing fur (for clothing) and animal hides.”<sup>3</sup>

Historians who do not accept what Genesis says about the age of the earth (about 6000 years according to the genealogies in Genesis) found the discovery shocking. According to the carbon dates obtained from soil samples on the floor of the cave, the people who inhabited the place were making garments there 30,000 years ago.<sup>4</sup> Such historians have a time scale on which they work and according to that scale 30,000 years ago farming had not even “developed” let alone elaborate textile manufacture! If people were still hunting and foraging for food there would be no time to spare for fancy garments in fabric dyed pink and turquoise – with fur and leather trimmings!

This find shows “early” man to be at least as intelligent, industrious, and inventive as man is today.

1 Information from <https://creation.com/ancient-textile-factory> and other sources.

2 Dafydd Morris.

3 See <https://creation.com/ancient-textile-factory>, spelling anglicised.

4 For information on why carbon dating can be unreliable see <https://creation.com/how-carbon-dating-works>.

Sometimes societies can degenerate from more advanced ones. These textile-weavers were living in a cave. They lived after the Flood and some 300 miles North of the Mountains of Ararat. Why did they live in a cave? Any group of people who could harvest, process, dye, and weave plant fibres could build a warm and dry house out in the open. They may have had any number of reasons for doing so, as people have had right down to modern times.



A moment's thought will tell us that people can be sophisticated and still live in caves – indeed they have done so in Britain in living memory. The picture above shows an old “house” in Bridgnorth Shropshire which was inhabited until 1939. Look closely at the picture and you will see just what the “house” really is! Or what about the Rock Houses at Kinver not far from Stourbridge? These are now owned by the National Trust.<sup>5</sup> The pictures below will show you just what kind of life people *can* have in a cave. One of the “rooms” at Kinver is even set up with clear evidence of “textile” work taking place!



I'm not suggesting that people just after the flood had Singer sewing machines of course – or even windows with glass in them – but these examples do show that there is more than one way of living in a cave. In Cappadocia in Turkey, where there are many cave houses, you can even stay in a cave



hotel!

Sadly, the caves in Bridgnorth are no longer accessible to the public. But if you are in the area, Kinver looks like a lovely place to visit.



The Waldensian Christians, about whom you will also read in tomorrow's lesson, were said to have worshipped in a cave called *La Guieisa d'la tana* in times of persecution. However, others say that they did not worship there as they preferred the open woods and fields, where escape was possible, to being trapped in a cave. Churches in other places definitely have used caves in times of persecution. In the lesson for 19<sup>th</sup> May we learned about a church in the Axminster area that used a cave for meetings.

There is more to come tomorrow about caves and the people who lived in them. Meanwhile younger children might enjoy constructing an indoor “cave” home out of furniture and blankets. Older children might enjoy the opportunity to construct something more weather proof in the garden if there is a suitable space!

### A missionary tale from Canada<sup>6</sup>

Do you remember reading back in January<sup>7</sup> about missionary Bishop William Carpenter Bompas who distributed Bible literature to the Canadian Indians written in a special syllabic script? Get out your atlas and find a map of Canada because today we are going to look at the invention of that script. Why today? Because it is the anniversary of the death, in a terrible accident, of Thomas Hassall (1811-1841), the Chipewyan interpreter, guide, Methodist lay preacher, and teacher who

<sup>5</sup> Images from <https://plutoniumsox.com/days-out/dog-friendly-family-day-out-kinver-edge-rock-houses/>. Permission granted by email 25/02/23

<sup>6</sup> Information from <http://www.biographi.ca/en/index.php> <https://www.endangeredalphabets.net/alphabets/canadian-aboriginal-syllabics/> and other sources.

<sup>7</sup> See the lessons for 20<sup>th</sup> January.

helped James Evans (1801-1846) who developed the script. If you have a detailed atlas you will be able to follow the story well.

This amazing kind of writing, often called Canadian Syllabic Script, was so successful that one authority states:

Reports from the late nineteenth century say that virtually every adult Cree speaker was literate; even allowing for some exaggeration, Cree may have had one of the highest literacy rates in the world at the time.<sup>8</sup>

This amazing achievement was the work of Evans, helped by Hassall and was the means of reaching many different groups of Canadian Indians with the gospel. The script is still used today to write languages in the Algonquian, Inuit, and Cree families.

The languages in which Evans and Hassall were working were what is known as polysynthetic languages, which means the speakers build up very long words out of small parts. Each word then can carry as much meaning as a full sentence in English. Missionaries found that they were not making good headway teaching the Indians to read using the Roman alphabet i.e. the alphabet in which English is written. Evans knew of a system used in India in which each letter represents a syllable. He was also familiar with various short hand systems including the then new Pitman system about which we learned in January.<sup>9</sup> Using these ideas he came up with a method well suited to the languages found in Canada where he and Hassall were working. The “letters” look like triangles and curves and work in a simple way. Each sign represented a syllable not an individual letter. Every individual consonant was always represented by the same shape. For example, the syllables that start with a “p” sound are written V. To show the vowels, the shapes are rotated. So “pe” would be V while “pa” would be <. The four different positions available were used for the four most common vowels. Additional marks were used for other differences. It is this idea of rotation which is unique to Canadian Syllabic script and was Evans' own invention. Other types of syllabic script had different signs for *all* the syllables which meant many more signs to learn.

Now that the script had been invented, Evans and Hassall needed a printing press and type so that they could begin to print parts of the Bible and reading primers for the Indians. However, the Hudson Bay Company who controlled all trade in the area, refused to import one for him. They did not want literacy to spread among the Indians – for their own reasons.

The missionaries were undaunted. It was extremely difficult, but Evans constructed his own press and cast his own type using lead removed from the insides of tea chests. The first books in the new script were printed. Using the new syllabic script the Canadian Indians learned to read their own language very quickly. Evans taught the Cree Indians by making letters with soot on a birch-bark surface, and so became known among them as “the man who made birch-bark talk.” They began to make great use of their new ability, leaving messages for each other written on tree bark with burnt sticks when out hunting. Best of all they could start to read at least parts of the Bible.

No picture exists of Thomas Hassell. He had worked for the Hudson Bay Company and before that for explorer Sir George Back (1796-1878). He was a valuable support to James Evans who wrote:

He is indeed an indefatigable and useful auxiliary to the Missionary, and deserves my highest commendation. His qualifications, piety, and unremitting labours and anxiety to promote the interests of the cause of God, and to instruct the natives, together with the fact that he speaks English well, French tolerably well, Cree fluently, and Chippewayan, (not Ojibaway, but an entirely different language,) to which nation he belongs, and amongst whom he has been already very

<sup>8</sup> Henry Rogers, *Writing Systems: A Linguistic Approach*, (Oxford,2005)

<sup>9</sup> See the lesson for 4<sup>th</sup> January.





If you find the topic interesting you could try to devise a syllabic way of writing English. Perhaps you could eliminate the vowels from the alphabet and then experiment with rotating the consonants to represent syllables. Maybe you could experiment with some magnetic letters of the sort used for teaching phonics. The results might be an easy to learn personal code.

### An anniversary<sup>10</sup>

It is claimed that everyone who was is old enough to remember **September 11**, 2001 can recall exactly where they were and what they were doing on that afternoon.<sup>11</sup> I can certainly remember that we were in the Toll Cottage children's bookshop in Hay on Wye! Why can everyone remember? Because that afternoon the news flashed around the world that two planes had flown into the twin towers of the World Trade Centre in New York City. After that a third plane hit the Pentagon, just outside Washington, D.C. A fourth plane crashed in a field in Shanksville, Pennsylvania after passengers on board had intervened to prevent the plane reaching whatever its target was – probably the White House. That afternoon no one understood exactly what was going on but it soon emerged that 19 men associated with the Islamic extremist group *al Qaeda* had hijacked four aeroplanes and carried out suicide attacks against targets in the United States. Almost 3,000 people were killed during what became known as the 9/11 terrorist attacks.<sup>12</sup>

You can test the claim that “everyone who was alive on September 11, 2001 can remember exactly where they were and what they were doing” by asking your parents or grandparents. Is there any truth in it?

Who were *al Qaeda* and why did they do such a terrible thing?

Like many of the evil groups who attack others in the name of Islam, such as ISIS and Boko Haram, members of *al Qaeda* come from a particular grouping within Islam. Such terrorists are usually from the *Salafi* grouping and are often defined as *Jihadist Salafi*. The *Salafi* is a subset of the *Wahhabi* group which is in turn a subset of the *Hanbali* School. This is a part of Sunni Islam which is one of the two major divisions of Islam; Sunni and Shia. You could represent all this confusing information as a Venn diagram which would show it clearly.<sup>13</sup>

Although *al Qaeda* and its like are therefore only a part of a part of a part of a part of a part of Islam, it is a powerful part. Most Muslims (perhaps 80 %) are Sunni. Salafism is very widespread in Saudi Arabia, a country made financially very rich by its possession of large amounts of oil. Saudi Arabia is also important for Muslims worldwide because, Mecca, the Muslim place of pilgrimage there. These factors give *Jihadist Salafi* influence within Islam that is disproportionate to the number of its adherents.

All man made religions teach a works-based salvation and Islam is no different. Islam teaches that the day of judgment will involve a person's good and bad deeds being weighed in a balance. The standard for judgment is one's own actions. The Qur'an forbids anyone from bearing another's burden of sin and denies that Jesus died on the cross. If you will be saved, you must save yourself, according to the teachings of Islam.

Like Mohammed himself, *Jihadist Salafi* believe in the advancement of Islam through violence. By killing themselves in a violent act that would kill thousands of non-Muslims, the 9/11 hijackers

10 Information from <https://www.gotquestions.org/difference-Christianity-Islam.html> and other sources. For the origin of Islam see the lesson for 29<sup>th</sup> May.

11 It was early afternoon in Britain and morning in the USA.

12 There is more information on this topic in the lesson for 23<sup>rd</sup> September.

13 For how to do this see the lesson for 4<sup>th</sup> April.

thought they were gaining paradise for themselves.

Examine the paragraph highlighted above. Can you compare each of the teachings of Islam listed in that paragraph with what the Bible teaches? What do you notice?

Why do we call people who commit such deeds “terrorists”? They have this title because they aim to achieve their objectives by spreading terror. Should we be afraid when we see terrible things happening, whether they are acts of terrorism, natural disasters, wars or accidents? Such things can make us feel frightened as we wonder if something like this will happen to us. Christians do not need to be afraid. Today's memory verse tells us who is in charge of our lives. “My times are in thy hands...”. That does not mean that Christians will never suffer. It means that everything that happens to us is part of God's plan and that his plan is for our ultimate good. He will enable us to face whatever circumstances he sends us. The whole of history is being worked out by God according to his marvellous purposes. And what are those purposes? God tells us something astounding about them. He says “all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”