the Explorer

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Free

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Mrs Elizabeth Nicolson
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Puzzles

Young folk are encouraged to complete the various puzzles in the magazine and send them in to:
Miss Anne Macaulay
30 Mackenzie Place,
Maryburgh IV7 8DY
Email: **macaulayanne@hotmail.co.uk**

Younger readers who find the questions too hard may like to do a drawing based on one of the articles and send it to the same address.

Contact the Editor

Rev. Murdo A N Macleod
Free Church Manse, Skeabost Bridge,
Isle of Skye IV51 9NP
Tel: 01470 532725
Email: **explorer@fccontinuing.org**

Design by: **Donald Smith Graphic Design**

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We are grateful to Rev. William Macleod, minister at Knightswood, Glasgow and Moderator of the 2020 General Assembly for giving us a New Year Message.

Moderator's Message

Who gets to be Moderator? Maybe you are wondering what a Moderator is? Well, every year all the ministers and many of the elders in the church meet in Edinburgh and plan and make decisions for the following year. The Moderator is chairman and in charge of the discussion and debates. It is an honour to be asked to be Moderator but there is also quite a lot of work involved. You are asked to do extra things like writing a January article for the Explorer.

Most ministers who have been a minister for about fifteen years are asked to be Moderator of the Assembly. A few ministers who have been many years in the ministry get asked twice. But then that is it. Last January, after having been Moderator for the second time, I wrote my second article for the *Explorer*, and I thought that would be it. I would never again be Moderator. But then something unusual happened. The Coronavirus came along and it meant that our church could not hold its General Assembly in the usual way in Edinburgh. It had to be done by Zoom on telephones and computers from our homes. Therefore I was asked to stay on for a further year – a third time as Moderator.

Your Editor asked me if I would write another message for you this year. I think he expected me to complain and say "No! I did it last year and that is my share!" But actually I am very happy to do this as it is a great

New College and Assembly Hall, Edinburgh. Originally built for the Free Church

opportunity for me to write to you about something very important. The one thing I want more than anything else is that you will be saved and that you and I will go to heaven when our time in this world is over. There is of course another place. Sadly, nowadays most people when they die go to hell where they are miserable for ever.

Most of you belong to Christian homes. Your parents fear God and teach you to keep his commandments. They love the Lord Jesus Christ and trust Him as Saviour and want you to be true Christians too. Many of you will have been baptised as babies. You can't remember it happening but I am sure your parents will have told you about it. In Baptism your parents hand you over to God to be His children. That is the great longing of every Christian parent. When you were baptised water was sprinkled on your head. This symbolises washing. In a sense you were washed that day. All of us are sinners and we all need our guilty sins to be washed away. Of course water will not wash sins away, but it pictures for us the blood of Jesus which cleanses us from all sins. You were baptised in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and this pictures you being united to Him. It means that you belong to God. God then commanded your parents to bring you up to be one of His people and a servant of God. Outwardly, because you are baptised, you are now a member of His church. It is very important that you do not deny God, turn away from the church and rebel against Jesus Christ. God is expecting you as you grow up to become a real Christian. The whole congregation prays for you.

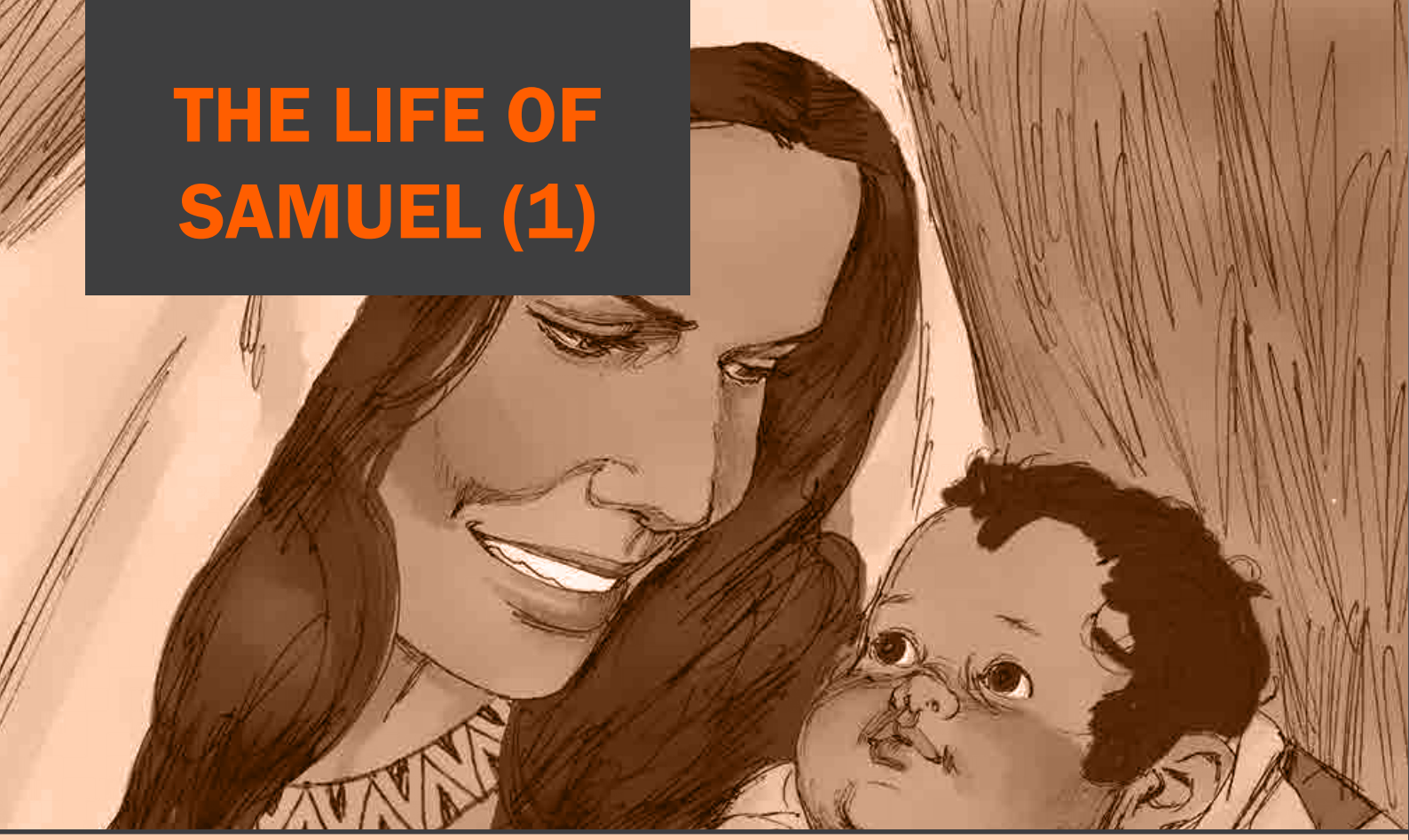
But there is another danger. Some people think because they have Christian parents and have been baptised and brought up in the church that they are automatically saved. That is not the case. Nicodemus in John chapter 3 was a bit like that. He belonged to the people of God. He had the covenant sign from childhood. It was circumcision in Old Testament times but today it is baptism. He had been taught well in the Scriptures and had never rebelled. In fact when he grew up he became a minister. But Jesus had to say to him that there was something far wrong, “You must be born again”. To be born once is not enough. Nicodemus is shocked and asked, “How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?” (John 3:4). How can this happen?

Jesus explained that it was a huge spiritual change that was required. He told him that it could only be performed by the Holy Spirit. He needed God to come into his life and change him into a new man. It is not a change which we can bring about ourselves.

Have you been born again? If not, you will never get to heaven. It is not enough to go to church and try to live a good life. We all need to be converted. Pray to God for this. Do not rest content till you are sure you have been born again. There is nothing more wonderful than for God to come into your heart and live there.

With all good wishes,
William Macleod

THE LIFE OF SAMUEL (1)



This month we begin a new series of articles in which we shall be looking at the Old Testament prophet Samuel. I'm sure most of you have heard of Samuel; maybe you know someone who is called Samuel, but I'm sure we shall all learn new things about this wonderful man. Before we come to Samuel's own life we need, first of all, to look at his family and especially his mother.

HANNAH

Samuel's mother was called Hannah, which means "grace". She was married to a man called Elkanah and they lived about 1,000 years before Christ was born. Like Hannah herself, Elkanah also followed the Lord. For many years Hannah was not able to have a child and then the Lord gave her Samuel. What a wonderful day it must have been when "she bare a son, and called his name Samuel". (1 Samuel 1:20) As we read this chapter we see that Hannah saw little Samuel as a gift from the Lord. Sadly, in this world not every child is welcomed into a good home but it is important to remember that every child comes from God and is a precious gift.

SAMUEL'S FIRST TEACHER

Hannah knew the Scriptures and taught Samuel from the Word of God. She also taught him by her own example; she prayed to God and followed God's Word. The Word of God shows us how we are to live our lives, how to go through this world and it also tells us of a 'better country' beyond this one. No doubt, because he was not perfect, Samuel, as a child, would have made many mistakes and his mother was there to correct him. She would have done her best to explain what was good and what was bad. We all need to be taught what is right and what is wrong. Because we have sinful rebellious hearts we don't always like this guidance and sometimes we rebel against it. It is a great blessing to have a good teacher like Hannah in our early years and the best teacher we can have is someone who themselves are being taught by the Lord.

Hannah thanked God for Samuel but she was also concerned that Samuel himself would be a child of God. Would you like to be a child of God? How do we become God's children? We become children of God through faith in Christ and by the work and power of the Holy Spirit. (Galatians 3:26) In 1 Samuel 2: 1-10, Hannah sings about God's care for his children. If we put our trust in the Lord, as Samuel did later we will find that His care of us is everlasting.

GOD'S PLAN FOR HIS LIFE

For many years Israel had been led by different judges who were not judges in a court of law but military leaders. God's plan, however, was for Israel to eventually have a king and Samuel would play a very important role in bringing that about. We don't know what plan the Lord might have for our own lives but if we trust in Him as our Saviour we can trust Him to bring it about. The Lord would use Samuel in the work of God's kingdom in this world and there can be no better life than one which is useful for the Lord's work in this world. We should all pray that the Lord would make us His children and use us in His service in this world.

Sabbath School and Bible Class Examinations 2019 - 2020

Maurine Murchison Memorial Prize: Grade 1 - Kyle MacDonald, Kirsty Marie MacDonald and Chirsty Bella Morrison (All Scalpay)

Maurine Murchison Memorial Prize: Grade 4 - Callum Arie Morrison; Grade 3 - Anna Marie Morrison; Grade 2 - Joanna Brooks (All Duthil-Dores)

The Pharisee and the Publican

(Luke 18: 9 – 14)

In this parable, Jesus tells us about two different men with two different prayers. One of them belonged to a very religious group called the Pharisees whilst the other worked as a publican, or tax collector, a group who were not very religious or important. One honoured God in prayer and the other didn't. One was answered and the other left unanswered. Let's look at them.

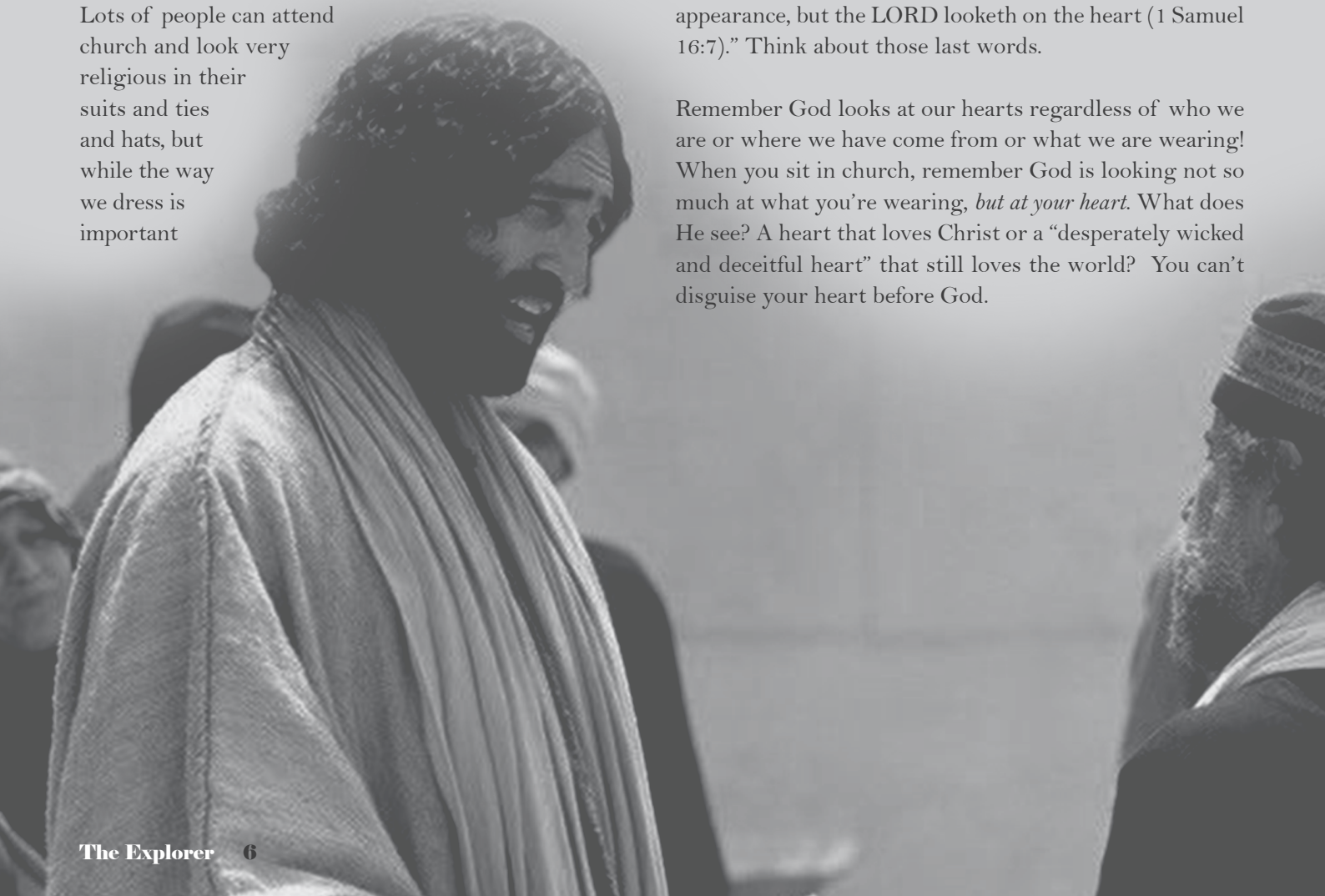
Firstly, here are two different men

Jesus began by saying, "Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican." Outwardly, these were very different men. One was religious and the other was not. Perhaps if you were standing in the Temple watching them come in, you might assume that because the Pharisee *looked* religious he was a good man who was a true follower of the Lord. But appearances can be very wrong and things are not always the way they seem.

Lots of people can attend church and look very religious in their suits and ties and hats, but while the way we dress is important in church, it is not the all-important thing. The biggest question is, "do we love God, and His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ?"

If the Pharisee walked into your church one day, you might look at him and say to yourself, "he looks like a church-goer. He's probably a Christian!" What if a scruffy-looking man came in instead? Maybe you might think, "he probably doesn't go to church. He's probably not a Christian." How easy it is to judge people based on how they look! Did you know Samuel the Prophet made a similar mistake? He went off to search for Israel's next king, and King David's father, Jesse, presented all his sons to the prophet but not David. Samuel was rather impressed with Eliab, David's older brother, but God said, "Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart (1 Samuel 16:7)." Think about those last words.

Remember God looks at our hearts regardless of who we are or where we have come from or what we are wearing! When you sit in church, remember God is looking not so much at what you're wearing, *but at your heart.* What does He see? A heart that loves Christ or a "desperately wicked and deceitful heart" that still loves the world? You can't disguise your heart before God.



Secondly, here are two different prayers

Things now take an interesting, unexpected turn. Jesus often liked to surprise His hearers by putting things in ways which kept them interested and got them thinking. Prayer is a window into our hearts. Read over the Pharisee's prayer again. Did it strike you as a humble prayer? What do you think God thought of the Pharisee's heart? Hopefully your answer is the same as mine: it wasn't a humble prayer, nor did the Pharisee love God as he should. While it looked as though the Pharisee loved God, his prayer in fact reveals he secretly loved someone else – *himself!* He prayed "with himself." Count the number of times he says "I" – no less than five times! The Pharisee was a *proud* man. Not once does he mention his sin. Though outwardly religious, he didn't love God at all!

But what about the publican's prayer? He may not have *looked as religious as the other man*, but unlike the Pharisee, he knew he was a sinner. Read his prayer again but this time pay attention to *his posture*. He "stood afar off" – he realised his guilt. He "would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven" – he realised his shame. "But [he] smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner." Now he prays, but he is so upset all he can manage is *seven words*. Ah, but how heart-felt they were! He realised his need. He knew he deserved death. But he also realised God was merciful.

The publican somehow knew of the *mercy-seat* that was in the Temple. Once a year, the High Priest went into the Most Holy Place and sprinkled the blood of a lamb on the *mercy-seat*, where the sin of Israel was symbolically forgiven for that year. The mercy-seat is important in the Old Testament because it pictures for us the cross of Jesus Christ. It is the place where God shows *mercy*. The publican knew of it and said (in his own language) "God, be *mercy-seated* to me a sinner." The wonderful news of the Gospel is that there is a mercy-seat for "publicans and sinners" who come to Jesus Christ, confessing their sin and rejoicing in God's provision.

Thirdly, here are two different outcomes

We read, "I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other." The Pharisee might have worn special religious robes, but the publican went home wearing the most important robe: *the robe of God's righteousness*. The publican looked to God for mercy and found mercy and went home forgiven, wearing (as it were) God's robe of righteousness, forever pardoned of his crimes. The Pharisee sadly returned home still wearing his religious clothes, proud and unaware of his sin. Many go to church and return home unforgiven, still not wearing God's special robe of righteousness! How sad! Are you forgiven? Are you wearing God's special robe of righteousness?

Jesus ends the parable by saying, "For every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." This is the point Jesus is making. Proud prayers turn away God. Humble prayers draw God. What are your prayers like? "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble." (1 Peter 5:5) Re-read the publican's prayer. Memorise it, then pray it back to God *feelingly* and *believingly*. It's a short prayer, but that's the point. God isn't interested in cold, dull long prayers but heart-felt prayers that are full of humility and full of faith. "O God, be mercy-seated to me a sinner."

HOW MANY IN THE LIFE OF PETER?

1. How many books of the Bible did Peter write?

_____

2. How many people believed on the Lord Jesus Christ after Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, spoke on the day of Pentecost? Acts 2:41

_____

3. How many times did Peter deny Jesus? Matthew 26:69-75

_____

4. How many times did Jesus ask Peter if he loved him in John 21:15-17?

_____

5. How many tabernacles did Peter want to build on the Mount of Transfiguration? Matthew 17:1-4

_____

6. How many fish did Peter and the disciples catch when Jesus told them to cast their net on the right side of the ship? John 21:1-14

_____

7. How many times did Jesus find Peter and the disciples sleeping? Matthew 26:36-46

_____

8. How many times did Peter see the great sheet with all kinds of animals in it? Acts 10:9-16

_____

WHICH QUESTION IS THE ODD ONE OUT? _____

Name: .....

Age: .....

Congregation: .....

Address: .....

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Latest entries

1st prize: Ellie Joy Phiri - Tarbat

Runners up:
Sarah Craig - Ayr Amelie MacLean - Inverness
Elizabeth Anne MacInnes, Catherine MacInnes, Seumas MacInnes - Lochalsh & Strath
Kenny MacKinnon - Partick
Eliana Kok - Smiths Falls
Lily MacLeod - Tarbat
Abigail Blaney - South Grove Free Presbyterian Church
Peter MacDonald, John MacDonald, Peter MacDonald, Marybeth MacDonald, George Kenneth MacDonald, David Gillies - Stornoway

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Elizabeth Anne MacInnes: 10 Entries
Peter MacDonald: 20 Entries
John MacDonald: 30 Entries
Kenny MacKinnon: 70 Entries

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