

# the Explorer

March 2019

Free



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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

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.

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## SKIPPER'S BEHAVING DIFFERENTLY

Recently we had to go away for a few days and Skipper stayed with his friends next door. They are always very good to him and Skipper loves staying with them. It had been over a year since he last stayed with them and we wondered how he would react: would he have forgotten, or would he be unhappy to go, after such a long time? Well, we would find out soon enough and began to make preparations to leave. Like all pets, Skipper doesn't like any signs of our leaving. When we go into the cupboard for the cases he lies down at the bedroom door with his nose on his paws and a really sad expression on his face which, of course, makes us feel very guilty and then he gets a treat! He's a clever lad; it works every time!

Well, this time was no different, but when we put the cases in the car and Skipper saw the gate open he ran straight through and up the road and barged into his friend's kitchen as if to say 'I'm back!' Then he went straight to the cupboard where he knows they keep doggy treats specially for him and sat looking very nice and obedient until he got one. When we were leaving he didn't even look up. We were a wee bit disappointed; we thought he'd at least pretend to miss us!



# Skipper's Tales

While we were away he had the run of their big garden. It is a strange thing that our neighbours don't have a fence or a gate, but they do have a longer driveway than us. As you know, if our gate is open, Skipper will run away and make his way either next door or to the woods. We have to be very careful to keep the gate closed at all times and we even have a notice on it asking people to please keep it shut. When he's next door, he never runs away even though there is no barrier to stop him! We don't know why. Maybe he is confident that even if he misbehaves like that at home we'll chase after him until we find him and bring him home. Perhaps he is not so sure our neighbours would do that. We know, of course, that they would, but perhaps Skipper doesn't. It's a bit of a mystery but it's good to know he doesn't run away and cause our neighbours trouble and distress. It's not nice having to go looking for him, especially if it's dark!

We are all a bit like Skipper. We are inclined to behave differently depending on who is around. Clearly Skipper behaves better when he is with our neighbours than he does when we are watching him. Have you ever said or done things which you would be ashamed of other people finding out about? Do you behave quite differently with your friends than you do at home? We should never forget what the fifth commandment says about honouring our parents. Trying to deceive them is definitely not honouring them and we will need to give an account of that to God on the Day of Judgement. We should also remember that God sees everything we do and hears everything we say. He is always in our company and he knows if, like Skipper, we behave differently at times. As Hagar said, in Genesis 16 "Thou God seest me". God's knowledge of us makes it all the more important that we repent of our sins and seek his forgiveness for all our sins, not least the secret hidden ones which we hope certain people will never discover.

## *From the Editor*



**Dear friends,**  
**Imagine if gold were discovered near your house! There would be great excitement and very soon many people would arrive to see if they could get a share of the gold. The roads would be filled with cars and the news would soon spread all around the world. In January 1848 gold was discovered at Sutter's Mill, California and there began what is known as the California Gold Rush. The news of the gold brought 300,000 visitors from the rest of the United States and abroad.**

Many of them travelled thousands of miles and endured terrible journeys. Some came by sea, facing terrible storms and, in some cases, loss of life. They were willing to endure all of this in the hope that they might get some of the gold and become very rich. Some of them did become very rich, although no amount of earthly riches will ever bring us real, lasting happiness. Many others had very little to show for all their trouble.

In Psalm 19:10 God's Word is described as more desirable than fine gold. Sadly, this does not result in a rush to read our Bibles! The gold of God's Word, all too often, lies neglected and unappreciated. The Bible also tells us that the Lord Jesus Christ is the most precious possession we can ever have. If we have peace with God and forgiveness of our sins we have a treasure that no money can buy!

Unlike many Californian gold hunters, we do not have to travel many miles as we seek the Lord. We need only to turn to him in prayer. We can also be certain that no-one will ever turn from him disappointed. Some reached California too late: most of the gold had gone. Make sure you do not leave seeking the Lord until it is too late. There are still sufficient riches in Christ for every sinner who comes to him, but delay is dangerous! Californian gold would all be left behind when those who found it left this world. How different it is for the Christian! If we have Christ we shall be with him for all eternity. Have you discovered this gold?

*Murdo A N Macleod*



# OUR WONDERFUL BIBLE (PART 2)

**Last month we saw that Psalm 119 has one great theme: God's Word. As we read through this chapter we are reminded, in many ways, of just how wonderful the Bible is.**

Why is God's Word so wonderful? What is it that sets it apart from every other book in the world? In our last article we began to answer those questions. We saw that the Bible was wonderfully made. Over many centuries and with many different writers it has a wonderful consistency. Every word, from Genesis to Revelation, is in perfect agreement and harmony. The Bible is also wonderful in the way it has been preserved and this is particularly true because it has faced such fierce opposition.

## **IT HAS SUFFERED MANY ATTACKS**

Despite being the very best book ever written it has faced more hatred and opposition than any other book in history. This should not surprise us because it is the Word of God and sinful man does not like God's Word.

If we look back to the time of the Roman Empire we find fierce attacks on the Bible. At that time Christians faced fearful persecution and the authorities tried, many times, to destroy the Bible for they knew that without the Bible the Christian church would be greatly weakened. Believers were burnt to death and thrown to wild animals to be torn apart. During the reign of the Emperor Diocletian as one believer was being led to his death he was asked, "Why do you not

give up this book that the Emperor hates and save your life?" "I cannot give up my Bible," he said, "Eternal life is in that book; and lions or no lions, I cannot give up eternal life."

Eventually the Roman Empire would come to an end. However the centuries which followed saw many fresh attacks on the Word of God. If we move forward to the time of the Reformation, we find that the Roman Catholic Church did not want ordinary people to have Bibles. The great Reformers, such as Martin Luther and John Knox, were opposed to this and it is as a result of their faithful efforts that we have access to God's Word.

The Roman Catholic Church bitterly persecuted anyone whom they found in possession of a Bible. They did not want the people to read the Bible as they knew that the people would begin to see the many errors of the Church of Rome and turn away from them. They would burn the Bibles and sometimes even burn anyone they found with a Bible. Despite the fact that they were responsible for destroying countless copies of God's Word it survived and was gradually translated into many languages, and countless souls were saved as a result.

In more recent times the Bible has been banned in some countries and often the authorities in these nations would destroy any copies they could find. Indeed, as I write, there are still places like that throughout the world.

### **IT HAS BEEN WONDERFULLY PRESERVED**

After all the efforts that have been made to destroy the Bible it is a great wonder that we have a Bible at all. It reminds us of the burning bush which Moses saw in the wilderness. The bush burned with fire but it was not consumed. Imagine meeting a man who had lived for many, many years and who had suffered innumerable attempts to take his life. Some had tried to drown this man and others had tried to burn him to death. He had been attacked and tortured time and time again but he was still alive! Such a person would be a marvel and indeed a miracle! We would find their continued existence quite astonishing. Well, when we think of all that men have done in their attempts to destroy the Truth we are faced with something equally astonishing. The Bible has survived all these attacks because, through it all, God has wonderfully preserved his Word. He has done this in such a way that we can be confident that what we have is indeed the Word of God. Indeed we should not be overly surprised that God who gave his Word has preserved it safely for successive generations.

Many brave people also risked trouble and death in order to keep safe their own copies of God's Word. Many years ago in France, at a time when the Bible was banned there, a Christian man thought of a clever way to keep his Bible safe. He had it fastened to the underside of a stool and made a lid to cover it. If his house were searched no-one would think of looking there! One day a priest came to the house. He was suspicious that this family had a Bible. He looked everywhere he could think of but eventually gave up and sat down on that very stool! We also read of others

saving their Bibles by putting them inside loaves of bread!

### **IT HAS GONE ALL OVER THE WORLD**

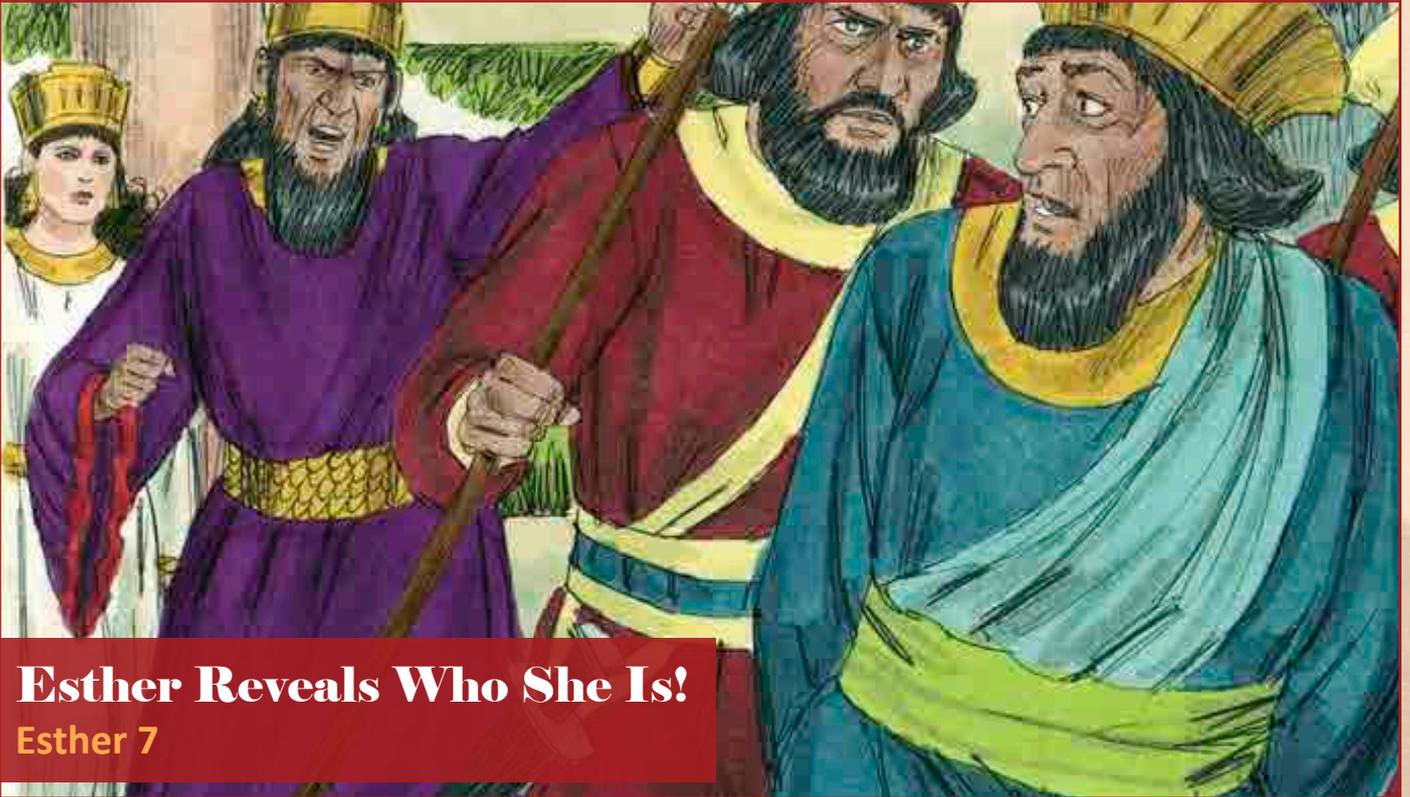
Although there are, sadly, still many languages which do not have a complete Bible, we can only marvel at the way it has gone to so many parts of the world. These places all have different histories and practices but the Bible is suitable to every one of them and wherever souls have been blessed by the Word of God they love that Word! There has never been a book as hated as the Bible and there has never been a book so greatly loved.

Many years ago there were two little boys in London, both their father and mother had died. The boys had been taught to love the Bible and that was one of the few possessions which their parents left them. They had an uncle in Liverpool and they travelled many weary miles to find him. Eventually they reached a place called Warrington, about 20 miles from Liverpool. They had no money left and one cold night the owner of a lodging house offered to buy the Bible they were carrying. "No," said the older boy, "we'll starve before we'll sell our Bible." The man offered them more money but still they refused. He then asked them what would happen if they reached Liverpool and their uncle refused to help. "We'll trust that to God," said the younger of the two; "for in this book it says, 'When my mother and father forsake me, then the Lord will take me up.'"

No doubt you have a Bible, perhaps many Bibles. Do you love the Bible and do you love the Saviour it tells us of? Well, you should, because the Bible is very wonderful and it points us to the Saviour.



# BIBLE FACT FILE



## Esther Reveals Who She Is!

### Esther 7

In the previous chapter we saw events begin to turn against wicked Haman and soon the time for God to judge this man would arrive. The Lord was at work behind the scenes but his mighty arm would now begin to show itself as events quickly develop.

#### **ESTHER'S CONFESSION AND PETITION (7:1-4)**

Up to this point Esther had kept hidden the fact that she was Jewish. In that sense she had been a silent witness. A silent witness for Christ is no witness at all. If she had spoken up earlier it is likely that Haman would not have gone ahead with a plan which would involve violence to the queen and her people. In the New Testament we read of two men who were also silent witnesses: Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathaea. We are told in John's Gospel that Joseph had remained a secret disciple because of fear. It was the death of Christ which took these two men out openly and boldly on the Lord's side. What effect has the death of Christ on you? (Mark 8:38).

Well, Esther can remain hidden no longer and now she openly declares the truth. Sometimes, as in Esther's case, it can take a crisis in our lives to bring a person to a confession of Christ. It is interesting, however, to see the way in which things begin to get better after she comes out on the Lord's side.

#### **THE SUDDEN DOWNFALL OF HAMAN (7:5-10)**

As we have seen, God was at work invisibly and the providence of God in people's lives often surprises us. In just one day, in God's appointed time, Haman is gone and the king changes his attitude to the Jews. We often struggle to understand why God is doing certain things and allowing certain things. The whole picture can seem very confused. We see only a very small part of what the Lord is doing and so we often misjudge how something will end.

The king was angry at being deceived by Haman. Haman had given him only a small part of the story and kept some truths back from the king. We need to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. We should also be thankful that God, in his Word, always tell us all the truth. True preachers of the Gospel will also give us the truth and we should be thankful for men like the Apostle Paul who declared "the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20).

Haman now saw his need for mercy but the king would not give mercy. What a blessing that the Lord, against whom we have all sinned, is ready to give us goodness and mercy! However we must remember that this is only available to us in this world and if we die without it we shall not find it beyond the grave. You must have Christ before you die, because Christ alone is the mercy of God. Our lives can end as suddenly as Haman's but we must not be as unprepared as he was when death came.

# The death of Jesus

Find the following words in the puzzle below:

**Thieves**

**Caesar**

**Centurion**

**Joseph**

**Chief priest**

**Cross**

**Peter**

**Herod**

**Crucifixion**

**Pilate**

**Mary**

**Scribes**

**Judas**

**Barabbas**



Name: .....

Age: .....

Congregation: .....

Address: .....

.....

## Latest entries

1st prize - Marybeth MacDonald

Runners up

Gateshead Presbyterian - Noah Richards

Stornoway - Lydia MacDonald, Susanna MacDonald, George

Kenneth MacDonald, John MacDonald, Peter MacDonald,

Thomas Craig, Sarah Craig Partick - Kenny MacKinnon

# Visit to Sri Lanka (1)



My family with the Vavuniya congregation

**In March 2018 Rev. James MacInnes, accompanied by his son Sandy Iain and daughter Mina visited our missionary in Sri Lanka, Rev. Partheepan. Sandy Iain and Mina have kindly prepared some reports of their trip. Here is Mina's first report.**

Last March Sandy Iain, dad and I went to Sri Lanka. We left rainy, snowy Scotland and went to boiling hot Sri Lanka for three weeks during which we got chased by an elephant (thankfully we were in a jeep at the time) and bitten by the deadliest creature on earth, the mosquito! It was awesome but very, very hot!!

Most Sri Lankans are Buddhist, but in Vavuniya, where we were, a lot of people were Hindu. There are signs of religion everywhere – along the road there are lots of shrines: Buddhist, Roman Catholic, but mostly Hindu. The colours on the Hindu shrines and temples are very bright and cheery, but the images are horrible and gory. Sadly, only about 7% of Sri Lanka is Christian and only a very small number are Reformed.

There are two of our churches in Sri Lanka: one in Vavuniya and the other is a new one in Mullaitheevu, about an hour and a half away from Parthee's house. About 50 children come to church in the morning in Vavuniya and about 30 at night. The people are very kind and welcoming. Not everyone had English but we still made friends.

The church in Sri Lanka don't have all the psalms, as they are still being translated, but they sing the psalms they do have very well. When we were there, we sang in English whilst they sang in Tamil! They have some of the same tunes as us and some different ones. There are lots of young folk in the church. Many Christians are very poor materially, but very rich spiritually. The people are very kind with what they do have: each house we went to spread out a feast and we would leave laden with gifts. Though many people didn't have much they were very content and generous.



Some of the young people in the congregation



Piratheepan's two daughters Filipina and Felincy with myself (Filipina and I are wearing 'salwars' – traditional dress which is mostly worn by young women. Older women tend to wear the sari, while the sarong, a long wrap-around skirt, is traditional wear for men.)