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Free



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Puzzles

Young folk are encouraged to complete the various puzzles in the magazine and send them in to:

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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 tales



SKIPPER AT HOGMANAY

How many of you stayed up on Saturday 31st December 2016 until midnight? Many Scottish people like to celebrate at that time which we call HOGMANAY. As far as I know we Scots are the only nation in the world that have a special name for the last day of the year and I decided to look it up and see what it meant. No one seems to know and the best I could find was an ancient French word meaning 'gift'.

That word seems appropriate as, of course, you all know that Hogmanay is the last day of the year and at midnight we enter into a New Year. This year the first of January fell on the Lord's Day so we were all in church anyway. But in the old Scottish tradition, which our church still holds, there is usually a special service held on New Year's Day no matter which day of the week it falls on. During the service the minister often reminds us of the wonderful gift of a New Year. He will encourage us to trust in God who holds the future and thank him for his keeping of us in the year we have just left.

What has all this to do with Skipper, you might ask? Well, we still hold to the old tradition of waiting up for the New Year and last year was no exception. There are some traditions we hold to, like making a special supper with fruit cake and making sure the whole house is clean and tidy. So Hogmanay is a busy day of preparation.

Skipper, as you can imagine, doesn't like being bothered with housework! He HATES the noise of the vacuum cleaner and as you know he chases the brush and barks at it. Because of all the tidying up that was going on he was a bit fed up all day and only happy when he went out his walk.

And then came the evening and poor old Skipper was going to have even more annoying things happen to him. He likes his night time routine and he is ready for bed a good bit before midnight. When we stay up longer he wanders around looking

annoyed and only settles for the night when he sees us going upstairs. Well, as far as Skipper was concerned this Hogmanay business just went on and on. He just didn't understand this idea of sitting up drinking tea and eating cake at midnight. Especially as he can't have fruit cake; it is very bad for dogs! We did give him a wee treat but he was only happy when we headed off for bed and settled with a sigh and a look as if to say ' About time!'

Lots of countries have traditions, and lots of people and families too: things we do, sometimes regularly and sometimes only once or twice a year. Traditions are not bad things if they are good traditions. The tradition of going to church on New Year's day, for example, is a good one.

There is a much better tradition than that of course and that is to go to church EVERY Lord's day. Off course this far more than a tradition; it is a command. This year why not start that tradition if you haven't done it before. It is amazing how quickly tradition becomes a habit and habits are hard to break.

God has given us another year and we do not know what it will hold, there will be good times and not so good times but we know that He will be in control of it all and if we ask him he will help us and guide us. Ask someone to help you learn Ps 65v11. It is a small verse but it says a lot.



From The Editor

Dear Friends

In the Explorer this month we have an article from Rev W. B. Scott in which he tells us about a shepherd whom he knew who was particularly good at caring for his flock. As I was sitting at my desk doing some final preparations for Mr Scott's article and choosing a picture to accompany it a strange thing happened. My telephone rang. Who was this but a young friend of mine who needed help with a sheep that had got stuck!

The sheep should have been in a pen with the others but it escaped from the safety of the pen, explored the barn and ended up in danger. The poor animal had got itself wedged in a deep hole between some huge bales of hay. It was completely out of sight and had it not been for an observant dog it might not have been discovered until it was too late. It could never have escaped and in fact it took three of us (and two very excited dogs!) to eventually set it free.

There's an important lesson in all of this. Like that sheep we have also wandered from the safety we had when God first created us. Adam and Eve believed they would have great freedom if they 'escaped' from God and his law. Instead they (and we) ended up lost. Like the sheep we got ourselves stuck fast in a dark place. Because of sin we have become separated from God and unable, by ourselves, to ever make our way back to him.

We also need three to set us free. We need the combined work of the Trinity: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, to reach down and bring us to a place of safety. We need to be brought to a place where our sins have been forgiven and we have peace with God. The Bible tells us to cry out to the Lord with the promise that "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (John 8:36)

Murdo A N Macleod

AMAZING ANIMALS

FACTS

God created all the animals. He designed them all very differently.



ZEBRA

He created every Zebra, white with black stripes, yet every one has a different pattern just like our fingerprints. Horses, zebras and donkeys are able to inter-breed with one another. For example, a zedonk is half a donkey and half a zebra. It is very likely that they all came from the original pair which Noah took into the ark. He would have had one pair of the equine kind.

SPIDERS

Spiders are born knowing how to build a web: they don't have to learn. This is amazing when you think of how complex their webs are! There is even a spider that makes a little hole in the ground and weaves a little door over the entrance. It is called a "trap-door spider" for this reason. It can shut the door quickly if it is in danger and open it just as easily to catch its prey. It camouflages the little door so that it looks just like the ground around it and waits for its food to come walking by.



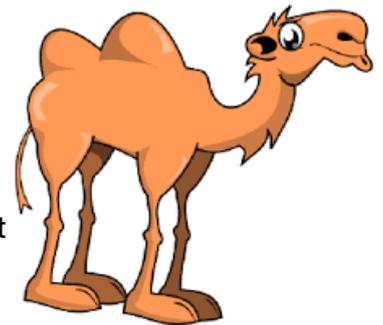
Chameleon



The chameleon is an amazing animal. Its tongue is twice the length of its body. The chameleon's eyes can go in different directions, enabling it to watch two different objects at once. The chameleon is most famous for being able to change its skin colour. God created them like this to help them catch their food and hide from other animals that would want to eat them.

CAMELS

Camels live in the desert where the dry sand can be difficult to walk on. So God created camels with two-toed hooves. This gives them extra support on the sand. The camel can also close its nostrils when a sand-storm comes. We all know that the camel can drink lots of water. Did you know that it can drink over 50 litres at a time? That is the equivalent of 25 two-litre containers of milk! Their humps contain fat which they can feed off when they have no food. God designed them to live in this desert environment.

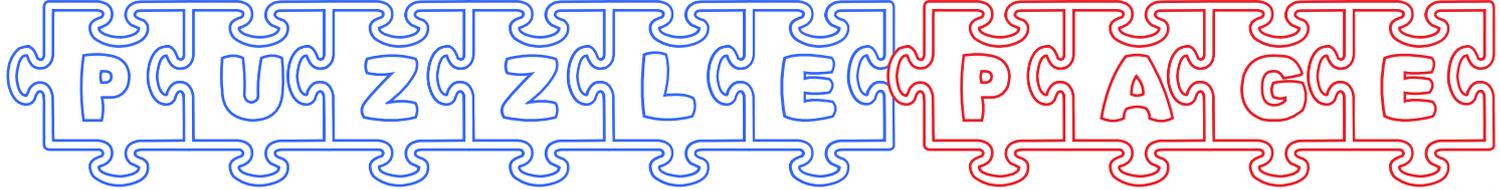


Seals



Have you ever wondered why God gave animals whiskers? Whiskers are very sensitive and can help animals like seals to detect changes in water pressure. This is one reason that they are so good at catching fish even in murky water.

These are just a few amazing facts about some of the animals that God created. Each has been uniquely designed to fit into God's world in the best possible way. Even although sin has affected the animal kingdom we can still see clearly God's wisdom and power in the way he made them all but we see it even more wonderfully in the way he created man. We are the most wonderful creatures of all. David says in Psalm 139 :14, "I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made".



- 1. Samson was stronger when his hair was longer ✓ True or ✗ False
- 2. The devil was once a holy angel ✓ True or ✗ False
- 3. There may be another flood that will destroy the whole Earth ✓ True or ✗ False
- 4. Jesus knew Peter would deny him ✓ True or ✗ False
- 5. A stone covered the entrance to Jesus tomb ✓ True or ✗ False
- 6. Jesus only appeared to **men** after he was risen ✓ True or ✗ False
- 7. Jesus is only ever mentioned in the New Testament ✓ True or ✗ False
- 8. At communion we remember Jesus death ✓ True or ✗ False
- 9. Only serious sins need to be punished ✓ True or ✗ False
- 10. People who were crucified died quickly ✓ True or ✗ False

★ ★ ★ Bonus Question ★ ★ ★

Who are the Trinity? _____

<p style="text-align: center;">December entries</p> <p>1st Prize:- Sarah Craig</p> <p>Runners Up:-</p> <p>Lochalsh & Strath: Mina MacInnes, Sandy Iain MacInnes</p> <p>Partick:- Kenny MacKinnon</p> <p>Stornoway:- Lily Craig, Thomas Craig, George MacDonald, John MacDonald, Lydia MacDonald, Peter MacDonald & Susanne MacDonald.</p> <p>Tarbat: Lily Grace MacLeod</p>	<p>Name _____</p> <p>Age _____</p> <p>Congregation _____</p> <p>Address _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>
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The Lord is my Shepherd

Not too many of us have been able to watch a real shepherd at work with his sheep. He cares for them, feeding them, finding safe places for them, and he is especially busy when the ewes (the mother sheep) are about to give birth to their lambs – “the lambing”! When we see the sheep with their shepherd’s mark in blue or red, somewhere on the backs, and we see the lambs, running and jumping together in the fields, we might say to ourselves; “That lot must have a good shepherd!”



A shepherd who cares for his sheep.” Jesus made a great claim for Himself in John 10:11, “I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.”

A friend of ours died a few years ago. He was quite old. He had been a farm manager with lots and lots and lots of sheep to look after. Sometimes he would be out in the snow and the storms to look after these sheep when they were having their baby lambs. He risked his own life time after time looking after them.

Many, many years ago, I met a man who had been a missionary doctor in Peru. Years after that we were missionaries ourselves living in the same buildings which had been the hospital where he worked in Moyobamba, Peru. I was told that from time to time when he was operating on some poor person, that if they were so ill that they needed a blood transfusion right there and then, he would fix a needle in his own arm and connect it to a tube, and a needle in the arm of the patient he was operating on and who so desperately needed blood to live. His blood would flow from his arm right into the dying person. In that way he would save their lives. There was no blood bank in that hospital as we have in our modern hospitals.

Jesus went much further than that – the good shepherd gives his life for the sheep. Indeed he tells us; “I lay down my life for the sheep”. he did just that at Calvary. We know that he was nailed to the cross, and that he was horribly wounded in his side by a soldier’s spear, but that did not take his life away. He gave his life, no one took it from him – he laid down his life for his sheep.

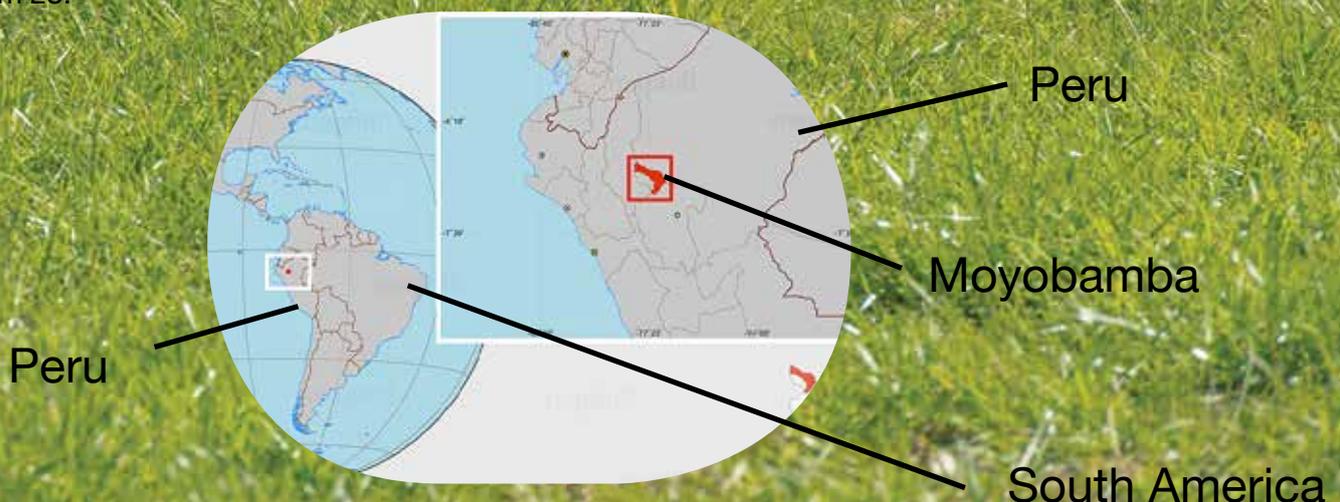
These two kind brave men risked their own lives to care. One cared for his patients and one for his sheep and lambs. Both of them did good things, but they weren’t good for only God is good. The Lord Jesus is good for he is the only begotten Son of God. He became a man and as the God-Man Redeemer “He went about doing good”. He never did anything bad or wrong – never ever – not even once. “There was no sin in him.” The good Lord Jesus is good for he knows and he loves his sheep. He knows everything about each one of us, the bad words we use, the lies we tell, the cheating – Oh he knows it all. He knows and loves his sheep and his lambs. So much does he love them that he didn’t just risk his life for them in the snow storms and in giving a little bit of his blood for them as Donnie and Dr Lindsay did, but in laying down his life for the sheep, he gave every last drop of his blood on that cruel cross at Calvary. “I am the good shepherd and know my sheep. I lay down my life for the sheep.”

And, wonder of wonders, he knows each of his sheep. Each one of his sheep and his lambs is so very precious to him, and he knows and loves each one, just as if that was the only sheep or lamb that he had. Still more wonderful, his sheep know him and they recognise his voice, and they trust him. I knew my friend the shepherd of so very many sheep very well indeed. I knew that doctor, not a whole lot, but I did know him. Jesus said: “I am the good shepherd. I know my sheep and am known of mine. They know not the voice of strangers.”

Now, it gets even more wonderful still for we can know Jesus for ourselves. We can know the good shepherd, know his voice, for when he gave his life and died, he didn’t stay dead, he took his life back again, and he rose from among the dead to live forever. He is in Heaven now waiting until his Father will send him back again to take the very last of his sheep and lambs to be with him. He says: “Come to me” “learn from me” “follow me”. His sheep and lambs follow him. Are you following him, because you love him, and so want him to be your shepherd so that he will take all your sins away?

The Lord is my shepherd. I hope he is yours too.

Perhaps you can read this for yourself, or get someone to read it for you in the Gospel of John, Chapter 10, and then wouldn’t it be good to sing the Psalm of the sheep and the Shepherd. Of course, yes, it’s Psalm 23.



THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES - CHAPTER 13



THE FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY

THE WORK AND THE WORKERS (vv1 - 3)

The Bible tells us that all of us are born as rebels who are opposed to God's authority. The Gospel is sent out to offer peace terms. It tells us how we can be reconciled to God through faith in Christ. Our sinful hearts resist this message and Satan opposes the message and the messengers. We see examples of this in the chapter.

Paul and Barnabas were separated by the Spirit for this work. God supplied the men and gave them the necessary gifts. God chose the men, and you'll notice they were men and not women. They were obedient to the Lord going wherever he sent them. The church at Antioch fasted, prayed and commended the new missionaries to God's care. The church should still follow their example and remember the missionaries who are serving the Lord in different places.

POWER AND OPPOSITION (vv 4 - 12)

Paul and Barnabas sailed to Cyprus which was the nearest island to Syria. The Governor of the island, Sergius Paulus, was interested to hear their message but the devil opposed them and used a Jewish false prophet against them. Those who believe they can be saved by keeping the law always oppose salvation by free grace. Paul called upon the power of God and he blinded the enemy and saved the Governor. (v 12)

DISAPPOINTMENT OVER MARK (v 13)

Perhaps Mark had wrong expectations about the ministry and was put off by the hardships. Perhaps he was just too young for the work. Matthew Henry, the Bible commentator, puts it like this "Either he did not like the work or he wanted to go and see his mother".

MORE PREACHING DESPITE THE DISAPPOINTMENT (vv 14 - 43)

The others pressed on without Mark. Arriving in Antioch Pisidia Paul preached, firstly, in the Jewish synagogue. We are given quite a lot of detail about his sermon. He began by reminding them of God's mercies to their nation. He then told them that Messiah had come and just as the Old Testament had predicted he had been rejected and put to death by his own people. But if Christ died how could he reign as king? Paul tells them the wonderful news of the resurrection. He has conquered death. He is still alive! He also points out that this was also predicted by the prophets. (vv 30-37)

The good news was that though they couldn't be saved by keeping the law of Moses (no one can) yet by faith in Jesus Christ sinners can be saved. Paul ended his sermon by warning them against unbelief of their own scriptures, exhorting them to seek salvation by grace and not works. This is a great model sermon for preachers.

JEWISH ENVY AND THE APOSTLE'S RESPONSE (vv 44-52)

Of course Satan was not happy and when Gentiles crowded into the same synagogue a week later to hear this message he stirred up trouble. The Jews resented the Gentiles coming to hear the Gospel and began to contradict what was being said.

Paul responded by proclaiming that salvation was not limited to one nation but that Christ was the Saviour of sinners from all nations. All those chosen by God to be saved heard the Word and believed it. (v48) Sadly the Jews reacted by having Paul and Barnabas driven out of the city and in this way they actually sent the Gospel to other cities! How have you responded to the message which Gospel preachers have brought to you? Are you, perhaps, a bit like these folk in Antioch who sent the message away?