

# The Explorer

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# In Samaria

*And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost. But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity. Then answered Simon, and said, Pray ye to the Lord for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me. (Acts 8:18-24)*

**W**e have seen that before he returned to the Father Jesus told his disciples to remain in Jerusalem. There the promise he had often spoken of would be fulfilled: the Father would send them the Holy Spirit. This was necessary if they were to carry out the great commission they had been given. As the Lord said to them before he was taken up: "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8)

The feast of Pentecost arrived and wonderful things happened in Jerusalem, as you will remember. Then there was a persecution of the church and the believers left the city, apart from the apostles. Although the scattered saints faced difficulties the Lord turned their trouble to good, as he always does: the good news of Christ now spread beyond Jerusalem. Though the gospel was "to the Jew first" it was "also to the Greek" (Rom. 1:16) and would go into all the world.

Philip was among those who left Jerusalem. He had been chosen as one of the first deacons of the church (Acts 6:5), undertaking the ministry of mercy so that the apostles could devote themselves wholly to prayer and the ministry of the word. Yet Philip also preached and he was led by the Lord to the chief city of Samaria where he proclaimed Christ as Lord and Saviour, delivering those who were possessed with demons and healing the sick.

### The Power of Pentecost

In Samaria there was an extraordinary character who had a hold on the people: Simon the sorcerer. He astounded them with his magic, so much so that in their ignorance they thought him to be God, even the Messiah. This shows us that the power which Simon possessed was an evil power, just like Jannes and Jambres who opposed Moses (2Tim. 3:8) and Elymas who opposed Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13:8).

However when the Samaritans heard of Jesus they repented of their sins and were baptised, rejoicing that the true God had visited them and shown them his mercy. Simon was also converted – or so it appeared. He was fascinated by the miracles which Philip performed and full of envy: if only he could do the same things! But what was the secret of Philip's power? Simon was soon to find out.

On hearing of these events the apostles sent two of their number to Samaria.

Simon Peter and John prayed for the new Christians, laid their hands on them and the Holy Spirit descended as he had done at Jerusalem, bestowing remarkable gifts. People prophesied and spoke in languages they had never learned. It was another Pentecost.

Now Simon could see the source of Philip's power: it came from the apostles. So he offered them money, pleading with them to give him the same ability that they had, that he could pass on the power to others. How that would impress everyone, Simon thought, even more than his own magic!

### A Deceitful Heart

On hearing this request Simon Peter was filled with a righteous anger. He refused Simon's money, warning him of his wickedness and the danger of destruction. Simon had not been born again. His heart was unchanged and he was without grace. He knew nothing of salvation for he was a sorcerer still. While we may fool our fellow men about our spiritual state, at least for a time, we will never fool God, for "all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do" (Heb.4:13).

It is humbling to hear what Scripture says about our fallen nature. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (Jer.17:9). How then can we tell if our hearts are right in the sight of God? What are the signs of salvation we should look for?

If we have truly trusted in Christ for salvation then our desires will be toward God and toward heaven. We will want to please our Saviour in all things, keeping his commandments. We will be happy to walk humbly with him and serve him as our Lord. It has to be said, with all sadness, that many who call themselves Christians are not right with God!

### Repentance Required

Peter told Simon that sin was still rooted in his heart and its lusts were holding him fast. His message to Simon was plain. "Repent! Pray to God for his forgiveness!" Simon urged Peter and John to pray for him, that God's judgment would not overtake him.

We need repentance in coming to God. We bow before him with a sense of shame, asking him to take away our sin for Jesus' sake, True repentance is a complete change of heart regarding the course of our life, as you can see from the Psalmist:

"I thought upon my former ways,  
and did my life well try;  
And to thy testimonies pure  
my feet then turned I." (Ps.119:59)

How freely God forgives us when our sorrow is sincere! When we are pardoned and cleansed from our sin we enjoy fellowship with God. We must be obedient to him and we find that as our Father he gives us loving correction if we go back to our sinful ways.

The believer is called to a lifetime of repentance because sin will remain in his heart until death. Yet we have this great encouragement: we walk with a crucified Saviour. The hand which holds us contains a nail-print, reminding us of Calvary where Jesus satisfied God's just demands to provide mercy for many.

Did Simon repent of his sin? We are not told and it is not our concern. *Our* concern is to make sure that we have truly forsaken our own sin. Then and only then will we enjoy the promise of a home in heaven when we leave this poor world.

## Psalmody Test Tunes

Here is the second group of three tunes to help you prepare for the test.

### Leuchars No. 181

Psalm 143(ii):6

Tracks 7 and 8

m:- | m:s | f:m | r:- || m:- | d:d | r:r | m:- |  
Lo, I do stretch my hands To thee, my help a - lone;

m:- | f:m | r:d | t:- || d:- | r:m | r:r | d:- ||  
For thou well un - der - stands All my com - plaint and moan:

This tune does not fit Common, Short, or Long metre. Can you work out what the metre is by counting the syllables of each line \_\_\_\_\_? Now compare how it differs from the other metres.

The composer of this tune, Thomas L. Hatley (1815-1867), is of special interest to us because he was one of the few precentors who came out with the Free Church at the "Disruption" in 1843. He was the precentor at the very first Free Church General Assembly and is included in a picture of this important event. He also composed No. 48 \_\_\_\_\_ and No. 67 \_\_\_\_\_.

### St. Fulbert C.M. No. 113

Psalm 30:4

Tracks:19-20

s | s: d | r:l | s:f | m:s | m:s | l:d | t:- | - ||  
O ye that are his ho - ly ones, sing praise un - to the Lord;

d | s:l | s:d | f:f | m:m | r:m | f:r | d:- | - ||  
And give un - to him thanks, when ye his hol - i - ness re - cord.

Henry John Gauntlett (1805-1876) wrote many tunes for hymns and psalms. One well known one is the tune *Irby* for the Carol, *Once in Royal David's City*. Look up the name and metre of a tune of his that we have in our Psalm book, No. 172 \_\_\_\_.

### Torwood C.M. No. 140

Psalm 57:1

Tracks 21-22

m | r : d | l<sub>1</sub> : r | d : l<sub>1</sub> | s<sub>1</sub> : s<sub>1</sub> | l<sub>1</sub> : d | s<sub>1</sub> m : r . d | r : - | - ||  
Yea, in the sha - dow of thy wings my re - fuge I will place,

d | m : s | r : m . r | d : l<sub>1</sub> | s<sub>1</sub> : d . r | m . s : r . m | l<sub>1</sub> . s<sub>1</sub> : m . r | d : - | - ||  
Un - til these sad cal - am - i - ties do whol - ly o - ver - pass.

Like *Morven* which appeared in last month's *Explorer*, this tune uses notes from a five note scale. Can you remember what kind of scale that is? (P \_\_\_\_\_ c). John Turnbull, born in Paisley in 1804, was a music seller in Ayr and became precentor there and later in Glasgow. He wrote this tune in the ruins of Torwood Castle, near Falkirk.



### In the beginning God created . . .

**G**od made all things out of nothing. God was already existing 'from everlasting' and when he created the universe, time began with it. He did not use pre-existing materials (Hebrews 11:3) as we do when we make something. 'All things were once nothing.' (T. Goodwin). By his Word he called into being 'things which were not' (Romans 4:17). 'He spoke to nothing and it became something.' (A.W.Tozer). Verses 3-31 in Genesis 1 refer to the steps taken to complete the work of creation (2:1 'Thus the heavens and the earth were finished.'). The six days were the same length as the days mentioned in Exodus 20:11 (the Sabbath day was clearly twenty-four hours). The creature cannot say that he has the right to exist — creation was a free and sovereign act of God. There was no one else existing to constrain his will (Job 38:4). The world is thus dependent upon a Power beyond itself. The world is not eternal, it belongs to God and he has the sole right to govern it. Also, the universe, being made, is finite — it has limits. The creation of the world added nothing to the Unchangeable God (Malachi 3:6). The purpose of creation was to manifest his glory, not add to it.

**Creation was an act of the Trinity through Christ the Mediator.** It was an act of the *Father* (Heb.1:2 ) through the *Son* (John 1:1-3; Col. 1:16,17; Heb. 1:2) and by the *Spirit* (Gen.1:2; Job 26:13 & 33:4). Creation would be the stage upon which the glory of God through Christ would be displayed (Eph. 1:9-12). God not only tells us *how* he created but *why* (Ps. 46:10).

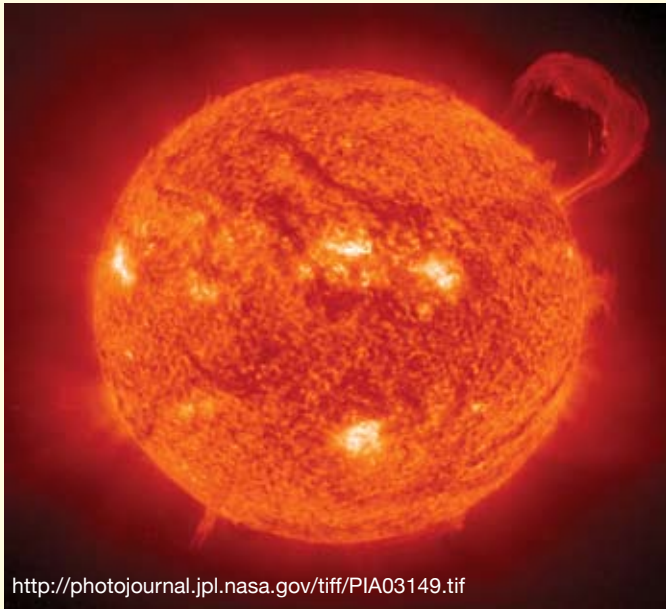
**The original creation was perfect, 'very good'.** (Gen.1:31) God who is perfect can only make that which is perfect. There was no flaw or seed of decay in the original created state. It required an act of the creature's will (whether angel or man) to produce that new and alien monster – SIN.

**The angels were made when the 'heavens' were made.** (Gen.1:1; Job 38:7) God not only made the things which are visible but also the invisible (Col.1:16; Acts 17:24; Ps. 104:4).

The angels were also made 'very good' but many of them, under the leadership of the devil, fell into sin by rebellion (discontented with 'their first estate', Jude 6). This seems to have happened very soon after their creation (just like man's rebellion) as the devil was already evil by Genesis chapter 3. There seems to be a reference in Isaiah 14:4-15 and Ezekiel 28:11-19 to Satan's fall in heaven.

**Creation can only be accepted by faith.** No creature was present to see the making of the Creation, therefore we must accept this truth upon the Testimony of God alone. Christ makes several references to the creation, eg. Matthew 19:4,5. You will not succeed in demonstrating the existence of light to a blind man. Similarly, you will not be able to persuade anyone of creation by arguments according to reason, 'because the carnal mind is enmity against God', Rom. 8:7. Only faith will accept God's Testimony (Heb. 11:3), as creation belongs to the realm of 'things not seen',v.1. Faith must see it for itself. We cannot be sure of anything except through faith. 'Through faith we understand . . .' (Heb.11:3). Only faith will believe it, because sin blinds the mind to the evidence. Hugh Martin replied to Hugh Miller, when the latter discoursed about how long it would take for rocks to grow, 'If a scientist were to have met Adam as he came forth from God's hand and were asked to estimate Adam's age, he would calculate according to the usual time it takes for a man to come to full growth and would probably have put Adam's age at about thirty years. But if Adam himself were asked he would have correctly said that he was but one day old. Thus we see that unless sinners keep to the testimony of Scripture they are sure to go wrong.'

**Science.** 'Creation' is to make something out of nothing — an act outside of our experience. Science can only deal with something which can be observed or measured; the original act of creation is therefore outwith its sphere of investigation. There is no historical evidence of the existence of man nor any record of written language previous to about 4000 BC. There is nothing in the Bible contrary to true science. Genuine scientists



**The greater light to rule the day . . .**

accept that they do not know everything but are continually seeking explanations. Moreover, scientists themselves are imperfect, biased creatures of limited capacity, prone to error and prejudices like other men.

**The Big Bang ‘Theory’** is generally accepted and taught in schools today but these so-called teachers of science cannot explain where the things which ‘banged’ (usually called energy) came from! Such is the prejudice to the doctrine of creation that the sinner would rather believe that the universe had no cause than believe that God caused it. It is either, ‘In the beginning, God...’ OR ‘In the beginning, Bang...’ — you cannot believe in both (and be a Christian).

**Evolution remains a ‘theory’.** It has never been proven. Indeed, many atheistic scientists reject it as a deeply flawed theory to explain reality. Evolution believes in ‘spontaneous slime’ and ‘walking fish’ etc., etc. To believe that the universe came into being spontaneously by random chance is to suspend sanity. All scientists believe in the law of cause and effect...except (for many of them) when it comes to the universe having a first cause! Many scientists are making assertions whose ‘certainty’ exceeds the evidence. It was a surprise to find that the structure of a so-called prehistoric twenty-foot tall animal (constructed in wood and plastic) in the Edinburgh museum was actually based on the finding of *one* [real] bone. It is this kind of conjecture which finds its way into textbooks and wall charts. Moreover, fossil-dating is based on unverifiable (and mistaken) assumptions concerning the rate of radioactive decay. Furthermore, to accept a theory of ‘creation by evolution’ is neither Christian nor common sense. The choice is Christianity *or* Evolution. The world is not getting better, not evolving towards perfection but is getting worse. The ‘scientific’ *second law of thermal dynamics* supports this moral principle of continuing decay since the Fall in Genesis 3. Many reject the historicity of Adam (and thus reject the testimony of the Lord) in order to maintain their evolutionary prejudice that the world was not once perfect; there can be no evolution from perfection! Evolution is attractive to the natural man because it rules out God. If evolution is true, man was not made in God’s image but is simply an advanced animal; death would not be the punishment for sin but ‘natural’; sin (if they ever use that word!) is part of the growing natural process and therefore there is no need of a Saviour to deliver us from danger!

### Some uses of the doctrine of creation.

**Worship:** The contemplation of God’s works raises the mind to God (as it ought to, Rom. 1:19-21). This is seen in many of the Psalms (e.g. 8, 19, 29, 33, 36, 104) and creation is mentioned by the Lord Jesus in prayer, Matt. 11:25. ‘If the creation is so beautiful, what must be the beauty of the Creator?’ (Augustine). Creation demonstrates the wisdom of God. For example, the earth is ninety-three million miles from the sun; closer or further away would drastically affect heat, oxygen and other life-supporting factors.

**Humility:** The contemplation of the vastness of the universe should remind us of our insignificant knowledge and power (Job 38-42). Despite man’s increase of knowledge he still lacks the wisdom to use it properly if he continues on the presuppositions of unbelief. Our knowledge is but ‘beginnings of knowledge’...but is it a true knowledge? — that is the question (John 17:3).

**Trust:** There is nothing too hard or beyond the power of the God who made all this (Ps.121; 124). He who made the world can take care of me (1 Peter 4:19 ‘...a faithful Creator’). Creation does not control God, nor is it out of control. God can ‘still the waves’ and can make a way to escape from a Red Sea impasse. There is more to the world than that which can be seen only.



**He made the stars also . . .**

**Accountability:** There is seed-time and harvest-time, ‘Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.’ (Gal. 6:7,8). Faith and unbelief have eternal consequences. The enemies of God forget that they are breathing his air and taking his food etc. Christians themselves often lack thankfulness. The Creator, Christ, would one day walk upon his creation in order to save his people and bring them to himself, out of the old and into a ‘new creation’. The same Word of power heard in Genesis 1 is necessary for the ‘new creation’; the same Spirit must ‘shine in the heart’ (2 Cor. 4:6) for us to see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Also, it is the same voice that shall raise the dead at the last day (John 5:28,29). Are you ready for that?

### QUESTIONS

1. What is the purpose of God’s creation?
2. Where can we see ‘the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ’? (2 Corinth. 4)
3. If the universe is finite (and it is), where is heaven?
4. Why does knowing God as Creator not save anyone?

**FURTHER READING:** *The Facts of Life* by R. Milton and any of the books by John C. Whitcomb and/or Henry M. Morris are helpful.





# THE PROMISES OF GOD

**J**acob was old and tired. Why did he have to move at this stage in his life, when all he wanted was some peace? He had come through many troubles in his life. His beloved wife, Rachel, had died, giving birth to Benjamin. For many years, he thought that his son, Joseph, whom he loved above all the others, had been killed by a wild beast. Well at least that was what his other sons had told him. They were a wild lot, he realized that.

Jacob could look back in shame at the lies he had told his father Isaac and how he had deceived his older twin brother Esau, in order to take away the birthright which belonged to the first born. But, despite all his sin God had been good to him and had given him the promises that he had first made to Abraham his grandfather and then to Isaac his father. And now, God said to him, *“fear not”*.

What a shock it was to hear that Joseph was not dead as he thought! After he recovered from his astonishment, he was overjoyed that Joseph was still alive and he was prepared to go and see him before he died. The brothers had sold Joseph, meaning to show evil towards him, but God meant it for good and had preserved Joseph through many difficulties. God looked after Joseph so that the whole of Jacob's family could be provided for during the hard famine. That was another thing that Jacob would have to get used to. Joseph was now the most important man in Egypt. He walked in the courts of Pharaoh. How was he, a rough old shepherd, going to cope with that? God said, *“fear not”*.

Jacob knew that the Egyptians worshipped many gods, and certainly did not worship the true God. Was it really such a good idea to take his growing family into Egypt where they would get used to heathen ways? God had the answer, *“I will go down with thee”*.

Another confusing thing was that at that time, he was living in the land that God had promised to Abraham and his descendants. Did God really mean him to move away from the Promised Land? God's word said, *“I will also surely*

*bring thee up again”!*

God had promised Abraham that his descendants would be as the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore. Jacob wondered about this promise too but God reassured him by saying to him, *“I will there make of thee a great nation”*. Jacob could go confidently to Egypt knowing that this was God's will for him. God would go with him and take care of him.

God does not forget any of his promises. Those given to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are still coming true even today, as people throughout the world come to love and obey Jesus. All who are God's people have many promises in the Bible that they can believe for themselves. The New Testament tells us that the promises are certain for all who have come to the Saviour for forgiveness and cleansing from our sin. We can trust our Great God. He is the Creator.

Before he made the important journey to go and see Joseph in Egypt, Jacob worshipped God through offering a sacrifice, to commit his way to the Lord and to seek assurance from God. We should also commit our way to God from day to day.

He is in control of what happens in the world, and will bring all his people to be with him in that wonderful Promised Land — not Canaan, but somewhere very beautiful, where there are no more tears or no more pain. And we will be with Jesus forever.

I am God, the God of thy father:  
fear not to go down into Egypt;  
for I will there make of thee a great nation;  
I will go down with thee into Egypt;  
and I will also surely bring thee up again...

Genesis 46:3,4

# Maps



**D**o you enjoy looking at maps? In my school days on each classroom wall there would be a map of the world. Large areas were coloured bright red meaning that that particular area was part of the British Empire. Well those days have long gone, but we still have maps — world maps, political maps and even street maps. How useful they are too.

Probably the most useful to us are the two hundred and three *Ordnance Survey Landranger* maps. On these, every two-centimetre square represents one kilometre. Wherever you may live in Great Britain there is a *Landranger* map for your area. They extend from the Shetland Islands (map 1) in the north to the Isles of Scilly (map 203) in the south.

Quite recently I read of some walkers who needed help — perhaps they had an accident while out on the hills. They had a mobile phone and dialled 999. The operator asked where they were and they were able to give the grid reference. But the operator did not understand grid references and asked for the postcode. I am not sure what the outcome was, but this I know — the grid references are more precise than postcodes! And how one might know the post code while at the top of a Munro is a mystery to me.

Now about the value of the grid references my daughter tells me ‘...we [that is my daughter and her family] once wanted to book a camp at a certain campsite but did not know its postal address, only where it was on the map. We put the grid reference on the envelope and it got there!’ Full marks to the post office!

So it is worthwhile learning how to use these maps and their symbols. The maps have a large array of symbols which might, for instance, indicate a lighthouse, or a windmill, or a quarry; indeed all sorts of things. If you are

able to read the map you can even tell how far above sea level you are.

Each map is divided into two-centimetre squares. Along the sides, top and bottom there are numbers. This is so you can pinpoint any place on the map. There are instructions on the righthand side of the map telling the reader just how to use these numbers.

One year when my wife and I were on holiday in the Scottish Highlands both on the Sabbath and during the week we attended the local church. Since we were there three weeks we became friendly with the minister. One day I asked him where I might catch a trout. His reply was, ‘Go to the wee loch with the big trout.’ Then he said, ‘Do you have a map?’ I duly showed him my map and he showed me where the fish were. I marked the spot; I could also have taken note of the grid reference.

This grid reference is simply a series of numbers by which it is possible to find any spot on any *Ordnance Survey Landranger* map. So if I gave you these numbers you would know exactly where I caught fish. Sadly I do not have a good memory so cannot remember the reference though I could take you to it on the map.

I thought how like the Bible this is. We can find our way round the Bible by using the references. How many can you remember? Perhaps Psalm 23, or John 3:16, or John 14:6, or Genesis 1:1 is easy, or Psalm 40:1&2. We should all know these verses. Bible verses are like friends and if you know their references you can, like friends, visit them. Try to commit Bible verses to memory and if you learn the references then you will know where your Bible friends live.

[On the map above you can see the grid-lines; each of which is numbered to enable grid referencing.]