

Pastor`s Pen



Dear Friends and Neighbours,

Are you aware of the reason for BONFIRE NIGHT?

Exactly 400 years ago this year the Gunpowder Plot was hatched. In 1605, Guy Fawkes (also known as Guido - yes, really!) and a group of conspirators attempted to blow up the Houses of Parliament.

After Queen Elizabeth I died in 1603, English Catholics who had been persecuted under her rule had hoped that her successor, James 1st, would be more tolerant of their religion. James had, after all, had a Catholic mother. Unfortunately, James did not turn out to be more tolerant than Elizabeth and a number of young men, 13 to be exact, decided that violent action was the answer.

A small group took shape, under the leadership of Robert Catesby. Catesby felt that indeed the thing to do was to blow up the Houses of Parliament. In doing so they would kill the King, maybe even the Prince of Wales and the Members of Parliament who were making life difficult for the Catholics. Today these conspirators would be known as extremists, or terrorists.

To carry out their plan, the conspirators got hold of 36 barrels of gunpowder - and stored them in a cellar just under the House of Lords.



But as the group worked on the plot, it became clear that innocent people would be hurt or killed in the attack, including some people who even fought for more rights for Catholics. Some of the plotters started having second thoughts. One of the group members even sent an anonymous letter warning his friend, Lord Monteaule, to stay away from the Parliament on November 5th. The warning letter reached the King, and the King's forces made plans to stop the conspirators. Guy Fawkes, who was in the

cellar of the parliament with the 36 barrels of gunpowder when the authorities stormed it in the early hours of November 5th, was caught and executed for treason.

Even for the period 400 years ago which was notoriously unstable, the Gunpowder Plot struck a very profound chord for the people of England. In fact, even today, the reigning monarch only enters the Parliament once a year, on what is called "the State Opening of Parliament". Prior to the Opening, and according to custom, the Yeomen of the Guard search the cellars of the Palace of Westminster. Nowadays, the Queen and Parliament still observe this tradition.

On the very night that the Gunpowder Plot was foiled, on November 5th, 1605, bonfires were set alight to celebrate the safety of the King. Since then, November 5th has become known as Bonfire Night. The event is commemorated every year with fireworks and burning effigies of Guy Fawkes on a bonfire.

What are we to make of this 400 years later? It seems to me that we lose sight of some of the freedoms that we have in this country to speak freely about our beliefs and to practice our religion or lack of it. As mentioned above, this was a planned extremist attack against Protestants and Catholics, and the Government of the day. The recent bombings in London struck at people regardless of their religion. We cannot conclude as so many do, that extremism has a religious motive – it is too easy to go down that road. Such acts are done by sinners!

Our freedom to practice our religion in the UK was hard won. The freedom to share with others about our God and Saviour the Lord Jesus Christ; of His kindness and mercy to sinners, of His willingness to pardon and forgive those who repent of their sins, and of His message of peace and love towards us His creatures – this freedom remains – at the moment! Would it not be a tragedy to lose such freedoms?

Let us consider this not only on 5th November, but every time we feel threatened by extremism of every kind. And let us trust in God's mercy and grace in these difficult times.

With every good wish,

David Kay

PS It was King James 1st who authorised the translation and publication of the Bible that we use today in our Worship and work at Whiddon Valley Evangelical Church.

WONDERS OF CREATION

Aspects of the character of God the Master-craftsman can be known by carefully observing His creation. This was appreciated by Robert Boyle (1642-1727), the founder of modern chemistry, who said of the Creator, "From a knowledge of His work, we shall know Him". In this, the sixth article in the series, the focus of our attention will be ...

The wonder of the stars

In the earlier part of the last century the Irishman Sean O'Casey wrote, "An' as it blowed an' blowed I often looked up at the sky an' assed meself the question, what is the stars, what is the stars?".

Who hasn't at some time or other asked this or a similar question about the starry host we observe in the night sky? There are many established facts about the Universe; but much of our knowledge is tentative and subject to constant revision. Astronomers, Mathematicians, Astrophysicists and the like, armed with the latest technology, continue to explore the known and the unknown often with amazing results.

Planet Earth, our home, is a minute part of a gigantic Universe which is, and will surely always remain, a mystery. However, it is known that our galaxy, the Milky Way Galaxy, has upward of two hundred million stars in it. And not counting the uniquely important Sun, our nearest stellar neighbour, Proxima Centauri is 20 trillion miles away! Statistics like these are simply mind-blowing, as is an estimate for the number of stars in the Universe. In 1999 scientists using the Hubble Space Telescope estimated that there were 125 billion galaxies in the Universe; most of them probably containing billions of stars. But many more galaxies are being discovered by means of radio telescopes, infrared and x-ray cameras. So, how many stars are there? Perhaps the renowned physicist Sir James Jeans was getting to the heart of the matter when he went on record as saying, "The total number of stars in the Universe is probably something like the number of grains of sand on all the sea shores of the world".

Now, what is often as important as the observation itself is the way in which it is interpreted, involving certain presuppositions. Basically there are two, namely the atheistic Evolutionary approach and special Creation, which acknowledges an intelligent Being as the Creator of all things. On this model the stars did not originate naturally by chance (cf. the 'Big Bang' theory), but supernaturally as a result of purposeful design and omnipotent power. If then the Universe is purpose-driven, some of the Creator's intentions concerning the arrangement and function of the stars should be detectable.

Earlier we noted that planet Earth appears to be quite insignificant – a mere speck of dust in a vast cosmos. In reality, however, it is of great significance. Indeed it is the reason for the existence of the rest of the Universe! Through the prophet Isaiah (45 : 18) the Creator declared "God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited". Earth then is the theological, if not the spatial centre of the Universe. From this perspective we may ask why Genesis 1 : 16 says that "he made the stars also". Several reasons for their supporting role may be cited.

The stars' most obvious purpose is "to give light upon the earth". (Gen. 1 : 15). For this they (with the Moon) are ideally positioned in the Universe. They are bright enough to light up the night sky, but not so bright as to make our night like day. Distance and intensity of light are both factors here, as is Earth's position in the Milky Way. Earth is about two thirds of the way out from the centre of the



galaxy. If the planet were nearer the galactic centre, too much light would be experienced. On the other hand, a position out on the edge of the galaxy would produce the opposite effect. One writer concludes, "The actual position of the Solar System in the Galaxy is perfect for a beautiful night sky".



Another function of the stars is that they provide stability in the Universe. Long ago the patriarch Job declared that God "hangeth the world upon nothing". It is now known that Earth is suspended in a vacuum, and as it orbits the Sun is held in place by an invisible force of gravity. Recent discoveries have shown that indeed the whole Universe contains amazingly precise and ordered motion in the stars and galaxies. This 'clockwork' motion is clear testimony to a supremely wise and intelligent Creator!

Then there is the sheer beauty of the stars. This is also alluded to by Job when he makes reference to the way God has adorned the heavens. Modern telescopes have revealed that galaxies display a wide range of colours and shapes. Our own Milky Way galaxy has, for example, many beautifully coloured gas clouds; put there partly, by a caring God, for our discovery and appreciation.

The vastness and grandeur of the Universe bears witness to the wonder of the Creator. The amount of material and energy in the Universe is absolutely staggering. Yet the Maker is far more glorious in His wisdom and power than the combined brightness and majesty of the Sun, Moon and 50 billion, billion stars (plus), put together. How right the

Psalmist was (Psalm 19 : 1) when he said "The heavens declare the glory of God". And how encouraging, to learn of the Creator's astronomical mercy and grace – "For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him".

Finally, it seems as though the starry host was intended to awaken in mankind a sense of awe and wonder. A trigger, as it were, to lift us out of our own 'world' in order that we might become more aware of His. Psalm 33 : 6 & 8 agrees – "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made... Let all the earth fear the Lord: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him".

In this age of rapid scientific advancement we have many opportunities to think the thoughts of the Creator after him. Nevertheless, people in all ages have been able to sample the joy of His grace and mercy. People, that is, who 'fear' or reverence Him. Those who have come to love Him and enjoy the benefits of this special creation; themselves being a 'new creation' in Jesus Christ. Through faith and in hope they look forward to a new order, a "new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness"- for this present order is destined to "pass away". How may one become part of that new order? By acknowledging the Creator and one's own sinful state; by repenting of that sin; and by trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ, the only Saviour of sinners. Believe...and the Omnipotent God of Creation will make it happen!
KGJ



"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold all things are become new."
2 Corinthians 5 : 17



**Free Bibles are available!
All you have to do is ask!**

Contact Telephone No. 07005 802 030

CHILDREN'S CORNER

AUTUMN WORDSEARCH PUZZLE



There are 31 Bible names hidden away in this wordsearch. Most of them are still given by parents to boys and girls today.

The 3rd Commandment

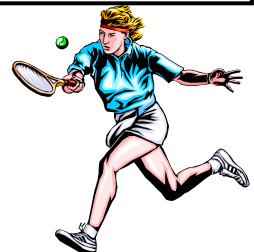
“Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain (that is to misuse or blaspheme it); for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.”

Exodus 20 : 7

M	A	R	Y	B	D	A	N	I	E	L	P
G	M	A	R	K	E	E	M	K	E	J	H
S	I	R	T	H	J	N	B	O	X	U	A
A	E	D	R	W	O	A	J	O	S	L	N
P	E	T	E	R	H	D	H	A	R	I	N
L	E	A	H	O	N	A	A	A	M	A	A
N	A	T	H	A	N	M	R	S	H	I	H
Z	E	A	J	N	I	Z	L	T	A	X	N
J	P	L	A	L	E	X	A	N	D	E	R
M	A	S	M	R	B	N	A	N	P	V	U
L	U	K	E	P	O	I	K	U	N	E	T
S	L	A	S	J	D	N	S	A	R	A	H

“God also hath highly exalted him (Jesus) and given him a name which is above every name :
That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow ... and ... every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

Philippians
2 : 9-11



These names may be found in each of 4 directions. None is spelt backwards. RING as many of them as you can find. Here are a few to get you started.

LUKE EVE JOHN LEAH JETHRO ANNA JONATHAN AARON

Prizes will be awarded to those who find all or most of the names. Please send in your entry as soon as possible.

Entries to : Children's Wordsearch Competition, c/o 18 Stoa Park, Whiddon Valley, Barnstaple, EX32 8PT

Name

Age

Address

Congratulations to :

James Russell, Billie Nikkita Passmore, Laura Ryan and Alfie Baker who all won prizes in the Summer Wordsearch Competition.



WORDSEARCH EXTRA !

A separate prize will be given to those who complete the wordsearch and then answer these questions correctly.

1. In the wordsearch there are 4 titles commonly used to address people. What are they? Example (not in the wordsearch) : Miss - to address a girl or an unmarried woman.

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2. Here are another 6 Bible names. What are they?

RANDWE LIGABIA ESLAMU

ZABELIETH ELHAMIC SICARPILL

3. Names have meanings. What is the meaning of each of the following names?

EVE (Genesis 3 : 20)

SAMUEL (1 Samuel 1 : 20)

CEPHAS (or PETER) (John 1 : 42)

EMMANUEL (Matthew 1 : 23)

4. The Bible records that Abraham “called upon the name of the Lord”. Why do you think people still do call out to God? (Give 2 or 3 reasons.)

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5. Suggest one reason why it is wrong to call people ‘names’.

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Children, are you aged between 4 and 10 years?

Yes!

Then WEDNESDAY CLUB is for YOU!

Ask your parents NOW if you can come along to Whiddon Valley Church in Stroat Park at 6.15pm until 7.30pm (Term time) for Crafts – activities – singing – stories – prizes. Remember – you can only come if you have asked your parents. (Child protection policy in operation)

AND

Don't forget Sunday School from 3.00pm – 4.00pm. (Parents welcome – transport available)

Young People aged between 11 – 14 years.

Have YOU got what it takes?

Come and check us out 7.00pm to 8.15pm THURSDAYS (term time) and 3.00pm to 4.00pm every SUNDAY

