

# God Called to David

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## Chapter 1

Long ago, the Romans were in old England."All roads lead to Rome." And interspersed throughout the small island country, wound the Roman roads. It had been in 55 B.C. that British charioteers gathered upon the downs above the white cliffs of Dover to throw off this threatened invasion from the Romans. Off a gentle open beach, the Roman vessels anchored but a gale, so well-known in the North Sea, hammered the ships until forty were destroyed. But, eventually, the heavily armed Roman soldiers leaped into the shallow water and the invasion of Britain had begun. Caesar had long been desirous of capturing Britain for he had seen minted gold coins from there. Fair-haired slaves had been caught and sold on the slave blocks in Rome furthering Caesar's wishes.

This was not the first time Britain had been invaded. The rich lowlands of Eastern and Southern England had been ravaged again and again. Now, the islanders fought as bravely as they could ... but the foe was too strong. Queen Boudicca was publicly whipped about 61 A.D. Cities and villas were built by the Romans with baths and plumbing better than are in some English villages to this day. Baths, forums, pavement, statues, and even Roman coins, have been dug up all over Southern England.

The most famous of the Roman roads, from Exeter in the southwest to Lincoln in the north east, was called Fosse Way, and endures to this very day. It goes through a small town called Holbeach Hurn. It is one of several Holbeaches. They tell us that there is a town of Holbeach itself, which has in it a cathedral dating from the War of the Roses. Then little Holbeaches arose, clustering around it like chicks around a mother hen. There was Holbeach St. Matthew, Holbeach St. Mark, Holbeach St. Luke and Holbeach St. John. I have heard that St. Matthew is now called Gedney and one of them was renamed Holbeach Hurn.

They were like islands in very marshy ground. Windmills, like in Holland, pumped out the surplus moisture so the farmers could plant their crops. They grew tulips for all the world as the Dutch do across the North Sea in the Netherlands. The Wash, a great shallow inlet, ably corresponds to the Zuider Zee across the waters from Lincolnshire.

My father was a great story teller. I longed to see England long before I set foot on that lovely island. I knew just what I wanted to see from the stories he had told me. Of course I wanted to see the place, not far from the great Roman Road, where he was born near Holbeach Hurn. Here King John almost lost his life fleeing from the barons who wanted him to sign the Magna Carta in 1215 A.D. John carried the crown jewels in a sack on horseback about two miles from what used to be called King John's farm. I wanted to see the ancient Inn where he is said to have gotten a mug of ale before he set off for Sutton Bridge on the river Nene.

It used to be very marshy, but now many of the marshes have been reclaimed clear down to the body of water called the Wash. Now there is a small port there, with quays and docks, but back then it was a treacherous marsh. It was in this dangerous marshland about a year after King John signed the Magna Carta with tongue in cheek, for he had no intention of keeping his promise, that he lost the crown jewels and nearly lost his life. He nearly drowned and this coupled with dysentery caused his death in Newark a few days later.

My father often told tales of the olden days in England. Tales that had been handed down from father to son, of even the dread days of the Black Death in his small village.

As a small lad, he was expected to go to catechism class to learn the rudiments of the faith of the Church of England. He had to go along the Roman Bank, as the ancient road was called, from the Hurn to the village of Holbeach several miles away. There was no church in those days in Hurn. People did not mind a bit of walk as badly as they do now, and father thought it was fun to go to Holbeach, for it had more shops and more things of interest to small boys than they had in Hurn.

The village of Holbeach is a bright, little market town midway between Spalding and the Wash. It was important enough to have even been mentioned in the famous Domesday Book executed by William the Conqueror about 1085 A.D.

The catechism class was held in the old, old parish church, dating back for no one knows how many years. It is shaded by magnificent trees and in the spring the yard is carpeted with wild hyacinths.

The interior of the church is bright and spacious. The class of boys sat in a stone seat under bright windows that lent color to the whole scene. It was in this class that my father, Davy Cunnington, got his first inkling that Sunday was not the Sabbath, and that Jesus and His disciples did not keep Sunday.

The day he found it out, he seemed to be the only one in class who took any notice of it. But Davy looked at the old vicar in amazement. "Sir," he stammered, "if Jesus did not keep Sunday, what day did He keep?"

The old vicar smiled what Davy secretly called his proud smile. It was as if he knew something, but did not consider it worth his while to let it be known, though he was a likable man and all the boys in class respected him.

The light shone brightly through the west windows of the ancient church and lighted up the ascension window, till its colors lay across the old man's white hair like a bright veil.

"Our Lord kept Saturday, of course," he said kindly. "That day is the Sabbath day, as everybody knows. We keep Sunday in memory of His glorious resurrection."

"But – but - who changed it? Who told people to stop going to church on - on Saturday, and start going to church on Sunday?" The colors lay on Davy's fair face and blond hair now, as he lifted his troubled blue eyes up to meet the vicar's kindly gaze.

The vicar was patient, but he reasoned that this lad was taking up the valuable time he owed the other boys. The other boys - all of them together - did not ask as many questions as did this one little lad. And they were beginning to get restless and to scuffle their feet impatiently. He'd have to discourage the curiosity of this young sprout.

"My boy," he said heartily, patting Davy on the shoulder, "you're getting all exercised over deep Biblical matters that you must leave to old graybeards like us to settle. You just learn your catechism and leave the rest to us." He smiled down into the lad's face, his old face crinkling into ten thousand wrinkles.

Davy, looking up at him, thought the vicar's forehead looked like what father called a river and its tributaries in the old geography book. He said nothing further, but went on and finished his lesson with the other boys. But he never forgot. He had asked a question, and the vicar hadn't answered it. He didn't take much interest in catechism class after that.

He had always loved to go into the old church, built nearly five hundred years before. He often went and stood by the big tomb of Sir Humphrey Littleby, who was slain in the Wars of the Roses when this old church was still new. But this day he didn't linger to read the epitaphs on the old stones or look in the bookstalls or stand out in front of Chequer's Inn, as the boys often did. He went straight home over the old Roman road his folks called the Roman Bank. He wanted above all

things to ask Mother about this queer thing that the vicar had said. Mother would not put him off. She would tell him if she could.

Davy passed a little shop where Mother often sent him to get candy and soap and soft yellow sugar. He liked the storekeeper, even though he was always teasing him. He would call him an Irish name of some kind as soon as he showed his head in the store.

It was, "Hello there, Jimmy Gufferty." Or he might call him Peter Patrick, or Mike McMannus, even though he was always protesting seriously that his name was David Cunningham.

When he got home, his Mother was bringing in the clothes she had washed that day. Little brother Jonathan was digging dikes and canals in the soft earth by the back door. The kettle was singing over the fire, and the cloth was laid for tea. Grandma had sent over a fresh crisp loaf of bread from next door and Mother got out a sharp bread knife and the dishes of butter and jam.

"And how went catechism class today, little David?" she asked kindly, her eyes resting tenderly on her oldest son.

"All right," he said absently, in a voice that made Mother know that things had not gone right at all.

"What is it, David?" she asked.

The boy looked at her in gratitude. She did understand. She always did. "Mother," he said, "I found out today that Jesus didn't keep Sunday. I thought everyone always kept Sunday. I asked the vicar, and he, well, he thought I was too young to understand. Do you know anything about it, Mother?"

"Jesus was a Jew, Davy, and, of course, kept the Saturday Sabbath. You've heard us talk about old Aaron the Jew. Folks say his house is still standing in Lincoln on Steep Hill. Could be. But, eight hundred years is a long time for a house to stand. Aaron the Jew lent money to build castles, monasteries, and big cathedrals."

"But, Mother!" Davy did not want his Mother to get off on her favorite subject of English history. If he didn't stop her, she'd be launched into tales of the Black Plague, or King John's losing the crown jewels, or the poor little princes in the tower. He wanted to keep her on this Sunday-Saturday business if he could, and find out something. "Mother," he said wistfully, "do you know who started Sunday-keeping? Who gave people the right to change the day? Is it set down in the Bible?"

Elizabeth Cunnington stopped, the gleaming, well-scoured teakettle poised in her slender, busy hand, and she regarded her son proudly. "Why, he is going to be someone great if he only has the chance," she told herself proudly. "He has that quick, eager, inquiring mind."

But aloud she said, "I wish I could tell you more about what you want to know, son, but I don't know, and I don't know where to go to find out. But I wouldn't worry, though. There must be some good reason. It must be the right day to keep. It just has to be." she added with conviction.

"Why, Mother? Why?"

"Well"- Mother Elizabeth sat down and took little Jonathan on her lap, "You see, the Oakleys all keep Sunday up at the Manor House. And for that matter, good Queen Victoria always keeps Sunday holy. And think, Davy, of the Archbishop of Canterbury. I never heard of any one but Jews keeping Saturday. So, don't you worry.

Davy pondered. Then he put this queer unexplained thing back on a shelf in his mind. Twenty-five years later he was to take it down off the shelf and wonder about it again.

But in the meantime, a wonderful yet terrinle thing happened. Grandma cried. Even Grandpa shed some tears. Mother looked serious, and even a little scared. They had decided to leave the village and shire where the Cunningtons had lived since the Norman Invasion in the year 1066, and go to a country far across the sea called America. Aunt Charlotte and Uncle John had gone, and Uncle Richard had a bakery, and were writing and begging them to come. Chests and boxes were packed, and people came crying and telling them good-bye. Even the old store-keeper called Davy "David Cunnington" for a change, and told him to be a good boy over there in America and not get mixed up with George Washington, who, he had heard, was a pretty suspicious character.

There was no Statue of Liberty standing in New York Harbor when the Cunard liner Bothnia nosed her way into her berth in lower Manhattan that spring day in 1875. The immigrants went through Castle Garden, and then were taken to the train and headed toward Delaware County, Indiana. Uncle John and Aunt Charlotte had a farm there, and Uncle Richard had a bakery.

They settled on a farm in Delaware County. They planted an orchard and built a new house. But Mother; dear, lovely, intelligent Mother died at 33 and was buried with a tiny babe in her arms in the old Bethel graveyard.

Davy, standing by that lonely grave on that cold March day, thought he did not want to live any longer. But life goes on, in spite of heart aches and griefs and tearing anguish. David grew up in that neighborhood and married.

He married pretty Elizabeth Catherine Gray, whose ancestry included doctors, lawyers and even a governor. Her own brothers were members of the Bar and one became a County Judge.

David and Elizabeth had four children when he once more heard about the Sabbath being on Saturday, the seventh day of the week. This time his curiosity would not be satisfied until he had searched out all the details.

He learned that men had changed the day of worship some three hundred years after Christ died on the cross. He found there was no Biblical text to support Sunday keeping but that the Bible was full of exhortations to keep the seventh day which God had blessed and set aside as His holy day.

David was surprised to learn that there had been groups of people who kept the Sabbath all down through the ages from the days of the apostles until now.

At last he had answers to all the questions that had bothered him back in Holbeach while studying for confirmation. He realized that the Lord had been preparing the soil of his heart all along, so that he would one day accept the true Sabbath that Jesus kept. God knew that the day would come when he would love the Sabbath and the fourth commandment so much that he would exclaim, "This commandment is mine."