

Inside this Issue

EDITED BY IAN REES

Rebel without a Cause

Page 1

Science Shorts

Page 3

Where does God live?

Page 4

Ancient wisdom for a modern world

Page 8

All articles written by the Editor
unless otherwise specified

YPS

(Young Precious Seed) is a supplement of *Precious Seed* designed for young believers. Its purpose is to restate timeless truths from the word of God for a new generation of Christians and to kindle a biblical approach to current issues in the world in which we live.

Rebel without a Cause

To be a prophet in Old Testament times was a hazardous occupation. You only had one chance to get it right. 'The prophet which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak . . . even that prophet shall die'. There were so many that claimed to be God's prophets that God gave the nation a way of evaluating their claims. 'When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken,' Deut 18. 20-22.

On-line

What a thrill it must have been, then, to find a true prophet. Jonah had a good track record. In 2 Kings 14. 24 we read that something happened 'according to the word of the Lord God of Israel which he spake by the hand of his servant Jonah, the son of Amittai, the prophet, which was of Gath-hepher'. Jonah, then, was a prophet who was 'on-line' with God. He was in touch with God and God was in touch with him. This proved to be so again when 'the word of the Lord came to Jonah the son of Amittai saying, Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come before me', Jonah 1. 1-2.



Out of line

'But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord', Jonah 1. 3. Had God said, 'Go to Nineveh?' Then Jonah would go to Tarshish. Had God said, 'Cry against it?' Jonah would not. The rebellious prophet went down to the harbour at Joppa to escape from God.

Jonah disobeyed God's word

Now to disobey God is never right. This is where Jonah went out of line. No doubt Jonah was a spiritual man for the word of God to come to him. He was not a charlatan, a dreamer who made up his own messages, a false prophet. He was the real McCoy. Why then is he going to Tarshish, not Nineveh?



Rebel without a Cause

Jonah disagreed with God's plan

Jonah explains his reasons in Chapter 4. 'O Lord, was not this my saying when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew thou art a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness and repentest thee of the evil', 4. 2. It wasn't the greatness of God that bothered Jonah: it was the goodness of God. Jonah did not want these Ninevites to be forgiven by a God who, on principle, forgives repentant sinners. In fact, Jonah was so determined that his preaching would not be the means of their forgiveness that he resolved not to go at all. This was his first mistake – judging for himself the rightness or wrongness of God's will.

Jonah disappeared from God's presence

Jonah 'rose up to flee from the presence of the Lord', 1. 3. Now Jonah surely knew that God is everywhere, and that he could not hide from Him. 'To go out from the presence of the Lord' does not mean to go where God could not find him. It means to refuse to be in touch with God any more, to refuse to be His prophet, to be a rebel, to leave the conscious presence of the Lord. In other words, Jonah chose to turn his back on God, as Cain had done many years before when he, too, went out from the presence of the Lord, Gen. 3. Jonah is a rebel prophet.

In the firing line

Yet God is not going to let His prophet go. Jonah is His man for the moment. So God sets in train a series of events to bring His prophet back into line. First of

all, *God targets the ship*. The force of the Hebrew word in verse 4 is lost in the Authorized Version. What God actually did was to 'hurl' a great wind into the sea, so that the ship was in danger of breaking up. Like a mighty javelin-thrower in the sky, God targets the ship itself and it is caught in the maelstrom of the storm. The sailors try to establish which one of them has offended his god. Finding Jonah asleep in the hold, the captain rouses him. Now *God targets the man*. He will make plain to all that Jonah is the one He is after. 'The lot fell upon Jonah,' v. 7. Of course it did. God saw to that, Prov. 16. 33. Jonah knows now that, though he is in flight, God is in pursuit.

It is always a dangerous thing to sit in judgement on God. If God's will for us, expressed as principles for all believers or as matters of personal guidance for individuals, is clear, we would do well not to disobey. 'Whatever he says to you, do it' is a very good principle in the Christian life. Let us be careful never to go from the presence of the Lord in open disobedience, as many have. Have you already done so? God may yet be in pursuit of you, by conscience or circumstance. He does not let His own go. Be sensitive to Him.

And how this generation needs men of God who are 'on-line'. So much of our preaching is so general, so vague, so stale, so powerless. There cannot be anything more important for any generation than to hear the voice of God for its day. Are you willing to be that – a messenger with the mind of God? Seek His face. And have you found a preacher who speaks from God and is obedient to God? Cherish him, listen to him and pray for him. He is a rare find!



Science Shorts

In Search of the Perfect Timepiece

BY DAVID HUMPHREYS

Today's scientific research requires super-accurate clocks. The best mechanical clocks are inadequate because they might gain or lose at least four seconds a year.

Modern quartz watches are more reliable. They depend on the unvarying frequency of vibration of a quartz crystal when an electric current is applied. But there is still a mechanical element to quartz crystal clocks. The frequency of vibration depends on the crystal's size and shape, so no two crystals are precisely alike. Quartz clocks are accurate to about one second in ten years.

The most accurate clocks these days are atomic clocks, which have an accuracy exceeding one second in a thousand years. Atomic clocks keep time by counting the vibrations of atoms. This property is unaffected by outside conditions because every chemical element has a distinct and inherently stable characteristic frequency of vibration.

The cesium atomic clock, for example, has over nine billion vibrations a second. Even more precise are atomic clocks which use hydrogen. These are accurate to about one second in nearly two billion years. But still scientists are not satisfied! They are working on a mercury clock which they hope will be accurate to one second in two billion years.

So next time you check your watch,



remember it only tells you the approximate time!

Time is enormously important to humans because we are so confined by it. Some of us can become frantic in the face of what we want to do and the limited time we have.

It is a point of interest that in the Bible we never read of God being rushed or in a hurry. He doesn't just have 'all the time in the world,' He is beyond the bounds of time as we know them. Time does not restrict Him.

Though God is eternal and timeless, He also works within time. All of God's interactions with humanity have a time component because, though God exists outside of time, we do not. Thus we understand that when God intervenes in human history it is not randomly but purposefully. What we need to think about is our response to God's purposeful interventions in history. If the Eternal One is so interested in us as to initiate a relationship, we would do well to respond.

From www.scienceshorts.com

Dr. David Humphreys is Emeritus Professor of Chemistry at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, and is in fellowship in Bethany Gospel Chapel in that city.



Your God is too small! Essential truth

What does God look like?

How often have we heard people describe a church building as the 'house of God'? Most people would consider a church to be so. But does God really live in church buildings?

God is not confined to a place

Preaching to Greek philosophers on Mars Hill, the apostle Paul said, 'God that made the world . . . dwelleth not in temples made with hands', Acts 17. 24. The Samaritans believed that the worship of God was confined to one place, 'Our fathers worshipped in this mountain, and ye (the Jews) say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship', John 4. 20. The Lord, however, taught that God, being spirit, can be worshipped anywhere and everywhere. Solomon, who built the first temple dedicated to the worship of the one true God, admitted this to God. 'Will God indeed dwell upon the earth? behold, the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded?', 1 Kgs. 8. 27. The Bible quite clearly teaches, therefore, that God does not dwell in temples or churches. They may be places for divine worship, but they are not places of divine residence.

Objection 1: The Temple was called the House of God

But surely the tabernacle and the temple were known as the house of God? God told Moses to 'make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among' the people. When at last the tabernacle was finished a cloud, the shekinah glory, covered it

symbolizing God's presence in the midst of His people. That same shekinah cloud filled Solomon's temple, God showing His acceptance of it, too, as the place where He was to put His name forever – the place where His people were to worship Him and that would be identified with Him. The cloud 'filled the house of the Lord, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud; for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of the Lord'. Yet that did not mean God's presence was confined there. But didn't God say, 'Mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all peoples', Isa. 56. 7? Yes, it was His house. Yet Ezekiel the prophet saw the shekinah glory lift from Solomon's temple and disappear into heaven. God had withdrawn the symbol of His presence from His sinful people. The temple was no longer the house of God. The Lord referred to it in Matthew 23. 38 as 'your house' (the Jews'). Today the 'house of God' is 'the church of the living God', but that church is not the building; it is the assembly of His people, 1 Tim. 3. 15.

God is not confined to a territory

One of the pagan ideas is that gods are territorial. The gods of the Egyptians had power in Egypt, the gods of the Philistines were believed to hold sway in Philistia and so on. Naaman had this belief, which is why he asked for two measures of Israelite earth to take back to Assyria so that he could worship the God of the Israelites on His soil, 2 Kgs. 5. 17-19. Yet God set out to prove to His people and the heathen that He had power anywhere and everywhere. Were His people in slavery in Egypt, a foreign land whose people worshipped heathen gods? God would take on



about the attributes of God

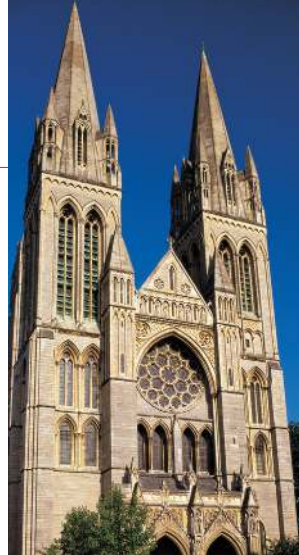
those heathen gods in their very own territory and prove their power was imaginary. Did the Egyptians worship Ra, the god of the sun? Then God would bring darkness over the whole land. Did they worship the Nile god? Then He would turn the waters of the Nile into blood. One by one as the plagues advanced upon the Egyptians they began to realize that the God of these Hebrews was more powerful than their own gods in their own land. When the people of God came out of Egypt and wandered in the wilderness for forty years, was God able to look after them in a land that belonged to no one? Yes. He gave them manna to eat every day, quails for meat and water gushing out from a rock. In fact, during the forty years of wandering in the wilderness as a punishment for their disbelief, God still ensured that their shoes did not wear out and their clothes did not get old. Would the Philistines capture the symbol of God's presence with His people, and place it before a statue of their god Dagon, as a trophy of his victory over the God of the Hebrews? Then He would ensure that they would find the statue of their god Dagon flat on the floor before the ark in an act of worship to God. Eventually, many years later, when they were punished again for constant disobedience to His word and rejection of His prophets, He sent many of His people into captivity in Babylon. Was He able to look after them there, in the land of the all-powerful Babylonians and their gods? Of course He was. He would shut the lions' mouths when His servants were thrown into the lions' den, and then He would open those mouths so that His people's enemies were eaten before they even touched the bottom of the pit. He would make sure that three young men who were thrown into a furnace so that

they would be burned alive would come out unsinged and without even the smell of smoke on them. He is the Most High, who rules in the kingdom of men, Dan. 4. 25. He is the God of the whole earth, dwelling nowhere in particular, yet being everywhere at all times. 'The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein,' Psalm 24. 1.

God is everywhere

So God is neither confined to a temple nor to a territory. God rebuked His Old Testament people through his prophet Jeremiah. They seemed to think He did not see them. 'Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the Lord. Do not I fill heaven and earth?' Jer. 23. 23. God is spirit, and being spirit He is everywhere. David wrote, 'whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell (the place of the dead), behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me,' Ps. 139. 7.

God, then, is **omnipresent** (present everywhere). He fills heaven and earth. Being omnipresent, God is immanent, or near to us all. He is 'not far from any one of us,' Acts 17. 17. He has not, as someone once said, made a watch, wound it up, left it ticking and walked away from it. God is in His creation. Yet, although He is in His creation (**immanent**) He is not part of His creation. He is, in other words,



Where does God live?

transcendent, or separate from His creation. Although He is everywhere He is not anywhere in particular. He is in His world but He is separate from His world. He is in His creation but He is not His creation. God is not a tree, neither is He in a tree. He is not a stone nor is He in a stone. The Bible does not teach animism. God is in His world but He is not His world. He is separate from it. The Bible would also teach us that the whole of God is present everywhere at the same time. In other words, it is *not* true to say that God is everywhere, filling heaven and earth, but only part of Him is here and another part of Him is there. The whole of God is present everywhere at the same time. Our Lord said to us, 'Go ye therefore and teach all nations . . . and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the earth'. He says, 'I will never leave thee nor forsake thee'. To a local assembly, the Lord says, 'where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them'. The Lord is with all His people and with every assembly gathered in His name. He does not say that only a part of Him is there, but He Himself is present.

Objection 2: People left God's presence

But some will say, This is all very well. Yet didn't Cain 'go out from the presence of the Lord'? Gen. 4. 16. And surely we read of Jonah that 'he rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord', Jonah 1. 3. How then can it be said that God is everywhere if it is possible to go out from His presence? The phrase, 'the

presence of the Lord' used in such a way as this can mean the place where He was being worshipped or where He was speaking to someone. It could have been that God sought Cain out to speak to him and Cain then left that place in a state of rebellion and defiance of God. Jonah may well have been meditating when the command of God came to him and he left the place of communion with the Lord, refusing in his heart to obey. Yet the phrase also implies that both Cain and Jonah turned their backs on God, and went out from the felt presence of the Lord. They were not going to do what God had expected or commanded them to do. There is a difference between the actual presence of the Lord and the felt presence of the Lord. Listen to Jacob, 'Surely the Lord is in this place and, I knew it not', Gen. 28. 16. It is possible so to be taken up with one thing and another, or so to be occupied with sin, that though God is present we are not aware of it. It happened to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus whose eyes were 'holden' so that they did not know the Lord was with them.

In another sense as we can withdraw ourselves from the consciousness of God's presence, He also can withdraw the consciousness of His presence from us. When God withdraws or withholds the consciousness of His presence it is usually in discipline because of our sin. Eternal punishment, for instance, is 'everlasting destruction [away] from the presence of the Lord', 2 Thess. 1. 9. Conversely, the conscious presence of the Lord brings blessing. Moses longed to know God was with the people to bless them, which is why he pleaded with God, 'If Thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence', Exod. 33. 15. God's word had been, 'My presence



shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest', Gen. 33.14. Surely God was already there where they were going? Yes, but it is His felt presence Moses longed for, His presence to bless. It is the consciousness of His presence that we long for in our everyday living and as assemblies of God's people when we meet together. We should not, therefore, pray, 'Lord be with so and so'. He is with them. We ought rather to pray, 'Lord, make Thy presence real to them'.

God's glory and holiness is concentrated in heaven

Yet surely the Lord Himself taught that God's home is in heaven? Yes, He did. He taught His disciples to pray, 'Our Father which art in heaven', Matt. 6. 9. He himself referred to God as 'my Father which is in heaven', Matt. 10. 32. God Himself says, 'The heaven is my throne and the earth is my footstool', Isa. 66. 1. Psalm 8 says He has 'set [his] glory above the heavens'. Solomon asked God to 'hear in heaven thy dwelling place and forgive', 1 Kgs. 8. 30. This implies that God dwells in heaven. It is there that His glory shines in all its undimmed brightness. However, the truth that God's dwelling place is in heaven should not be held to mean God is not also in the earth. He is omnipresent.

God lives in the hearts of His children

Yet there is another residence that God has that is not in heaven but down here on earth. He said, 'I dwell in the high and holy place with him that is of a contrite and a humble spirit', Isa. 57. 15. Our Lord said He and His Father would make their abode with the one who loves and is obedient to God, John 14. 23. Now that's grace! To think that God will dwell



with us. But there is even more. In Colossians 1 we read of 'Christ in you, the hope of glory'. In Ephesians 3. 17 it is Paul's prayer 'that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith'. Christ in us, not just with us? Even so. 1 Corinthians 6. 19 tells us 'your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit'. 'Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world', 1 John 4. 4.

Will God condescend to live in the hearts of repentant, believing, regenerated sinners? He will, and does. So what should that lead us to do? Be proud? No. Live holy lives. 'Your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own. For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's', 1 Cor. 6. 19. Do the things that please God, and do not live according to the lusts and pleasures of the body. 'They that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you ... and if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin', Rom 8. 9-11. In other words, God dwelling in us is such a precious truth that we ought to do with our bodies what will please Him rather than what will please us and grieve Him.

Where does God live? He is everywhere, filling heaven and earth. His throne is in heaven, His home, where no sin can dim the brightness of His glory. Yet He condescends to dwell not just with, but in the hearts of all who love, serve and seek to please Him. What great grace!

GOD IS EVERYWHERE

... what kind of love is this?

Ancient Wisdom for a Modern World

Wise words from the book of Proverbs



'If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty give him water to drink. For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the Lord shall reward thee', Prov. 25. 21-22.

'Heaping coals of fire' upon an opponent's head has become a proverbial expression in English and remains in common use even today. The thought behind the proverb is that if we repay evil with good we shall awaken the conscience of our enemy and make him feel uncomfortable. The 'coals of fire' are the pangs of conscience that are ignited when someone feels bad about what they have done to us.

The natural tendency is for us to 'give as good as we get.' Yet this instinctive response does little to defuse the situation and invariably brings more trouble. It also reveals a vindictive, spiteful side to our character. Showing kindness to those who oppose us, on the other hand, is a fundamental principle of the Christian faith.

Two results stem from such generous behaviour to our enemies. In the first place, we will do our enemy good, for we will bring him/her to see the unworthiness of his/her behaviour and to feel embarrassed about it. Kindness at our hands, so unexpected in response to the unkindness we had been shown, teaches a lesson neither violence nor vituperation ever could. The second result is that God will reward us. He sees our generous behaviour and will reward us for it, even if others will not.

When we show kindness to our enemies we imitate God Himself, for when we were at enmity with God, and perhaps still are, when we opposed Him, disregarded Him and disobeyed Him, yet still He sent His Son to die upon the cross, 'the just for the unjust to bring us to God'. He responded in love to us, despite our enmity to Him. 'When we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son', Rom 5. 10. Christ set us an example for, 'when he was reviled, [he] reviled not again; when he suffered he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously', 1 Pet. 2. 23. He will never ask us to do what He was not willing to do Himself. Kindness and grace shown in response to unkindness is 'the noblest of all actions as it succeeds in saving the enemy while it destroys his enmity'. Have you responded to God's love? Have you mirrored it in your actions to others?

It is easy for us to 'bite and devour one another'. Gal. 5. 15. Everyone does it. But the apostle Paul, in quoting this proverb in Romans 12. 20, adds, 'Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good'. Are you big enough to do that?

What kind of love is this,
that gave itself for me?

I am the guilty one,
yet I go free!

What kind of love is this,
a love I'd never known?

I didn't even know His name,
What kind of love is this?

What kind of man is this,
that died in agony?

He who had done no wrong,
was crucified for me;

What kind of man is this
who laid aside His throne

That I may know the love of God,
What kind of man is this?

By grace I have been saved,
it is the gift of God.

He destined me to be His son,
such is His love;

No eye has ever seen,
no ear has ever heard,

Nor has the heart of man
conceived

what kind of love is this!