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*All articles written by the Editor
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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.

Heroes of the Faith

On January 11th 1956, five days after her husband had been killed, a widow wrote home to her parents, 'I want you to know that your prayers are being answered moment by moment as regards me – I am ever so conscious of the everlasting arms. As yet we know only that two bodies have been sighted from the air but not yet identified. Jim was confident, as was I, of God's leading. There are no regrets. Nothing was more burning in his heart than that Christ should be named among the Aucas. By life or death, oh may God get glory to Himself'. This letter showed how a young woman was experiencing what she had written in a poem many years before.

Perhaps some future day, Lord
Thy strong hand
Will lead me to the place
where I must stand
Utterly alone.

This seeming tragedy was the outcome of an attempt made by Jim Elliott, Ed McCully, Roger Youderian, Pete Fleming and Nate Saint to win the confidence and friendship of the Auca Indians in Ecuador. The Auca's were a stone-age tribe who had had no friendly contact with the world outside their jungle. The five young men, with their wives, had longed for the day when they could tell the tribe of the love of God shown in the death of Christ upon the cross. The story of how the five young men were murdered by the Auca Indians on their first visit to them caught the imagination of the world and was headline news everywhere. No doubt many wondered whether they had been right to trust the small party of Indians with whom they had made initial contact. Many also wondered why God had allowed His servants to be butchered in this way.

Their story has been written from the Christian perspective by Elisabeth Elliott. Her first two books, initially, were *Shadow of the Almighty* and *Through Gates of Splendour*. *Shadow of the Almighty* tells the story of her husband, Jim, who died aged 29, and contains extracts from his letters and journals. *Through Gates of Splendour* tells in dramatic detail the



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experience of all five young men, and then goes on to tell of how their widows handled the tragedy with great dignity and courage. Both of these books are recommended reading to all young believers, and should probably be required reading for all who are serious about discipleship. Would you be prepared to give up everything for Christ? Would you be able to break bread with your husband's killers? A recent website asked the question, 'Was Elisabeth Elliott right to forgive the Aucas?' She did, and she and her daughter went back to Jim's murderers, lived with them, learned their language and preached to them, eventually standing by while some of them were baptized. This part of the story is told in the book *The Savage My Kinsman*.

All this is dramatic stuff beyond the experience of the average believer. Yet Jim Elliott struggled, as we all do, with the problems of the everyday, ordinary issues of the Christian life. Holiness, guidance, courtship, discipline; we all face these issues. Elisabeth Elliott again, and with sometimes brutal honesty, brought Jim's thoughts and struggles in these matters to the fore when she edited *The Journals of Jim Elliott*.

Every age, every person, has their heroes. For many it is a sportsman or woman, a politician, a military genius, a popstar. Is it right for Christians to have heroes? Whether you think we should or not, Jim Elliott, Pete Fleming and the others should, at any rate, be examples to us all, remembering the truth of what Jim once famously wrote, 'He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep in order to gain what he cannot lose.' His early, and seemingly tragic death, has probably resulted in a far greater influence than his long life would have. Just type in 'Auca Indians' or 'Jim Elliott' into the Google search engine, and you will be amazed to see how many

Christians, the world over, have been challenged and changed through reading about him and his fellow martyrs.

Towards the end of that awful week of waiting, the bodies of the five young men had been found and buried under a tree-house in a violent tropical storm. Late on that same evening, the five widows, their young children and a number of older missionaries gathered together in a small living room in Ecuador to read and pray. Some of the older men read various passages about heaven. 'Military officers (involved in the search for the young men) and others in the house sat listening. The women were thankful that their men had been faithful to the Lord. Marilou went to the piano and began to play the last hymn the men had sung the morning they left for Palm Beach. Then Betty's clear soprano took up the words,

We rest on Thee, our Shield and our
Defender,
We go not forth alone against the foe;
Strong in Thy strength, safe in Thy
keeping tender,
We rest on Thee and in Thy name we go.

We go in faith, our own great weakness
feeling,
And needing more each day Thy grace
to know;
Yet from our hearts a song of triumph
pealing,
We rest on Thee and in Thy name we go.

As Betty and Marilou finished, one military man shook his head and muttered with a choke in his voice, 'I've never seen anything like this!' (from *Jungle Pilot*, by R. Hitt).

Do you want a challenge? Then pick up one of these books, and try to be the same again after you have read it. I doubt if you will.



Science Shorts

Red Sky at Night

BY DAVID HUMPHREYS

Signs in the sky have long been used for weather predictions. About 2000 years ago the Gospel of Matthew records an ancient version of the rhyme many of us learned as children, 'Red sky at night, shepherd's delight; red sky in the morning, shepherd's warning'.

A red sunset is often seen when the western sky is especially clear. The colour occurs because the sun is low in the sky and its light passes through the additional atmosphere. The colour is enhanced if a stable high pressure region is present. The reason for this is that high pressure suppresses cloud formation and holds air pollutants near the earth. These pollutants further scatter the colours of sunlight, enhancing the reddening effect in the west.

Since high pressure generally brings good weather, red skies in the evening often indicate that fair weather is approaching from the west. On the other hand, if the red appears in the eastern morning sky then the high pressure system has already passed through. Since lower pressure usually follows a high pressure system, and is often associated with unsettled weather, red sky in the morning can indicate stormy weather.

Evening redness can be caused by sunlight reflecting from a cloud layer retreating in the east and morning redness may be due to reflection from an advancing cloud layer.

So next time you hear the ancient rhyme about the red sky, don't dismiss it altogether, it may well predict tomorrow's weather.

We often use a variety of clues to give us an insight about future events. Like the quote about the red sky, sometimes these are sayings which have been based on years of observations in nature. At other times the clues we use are based on speculation, myth and superstition. So we need to ask what kinds of claims can actually help us know and prepare for the future. Often-times science has been pitted against religion in these matters. Science is based upon observation of events, the association of cause and effect, the discovery of laws which the world and everything in it obeys. Because science is concerned with explaining the universe, it attempts to provide details of the mechanisms by which things come to be. By using experiments, wherever possible, scientists undertake to replicate past results. They are in pursuit of scientific evidence for their claims and on this basis offer predictions of future events.

Yet science is not in the business of answering the 'why?' questions. Nor is science the only sphere for answering questions about the future. Yet in the western world we are fairly dependent on accepting scientific knowledge as the sole arbiter of truth. While science may be able to tell us the truth, it may not be able to tell us the whole truth. Moreover, just because something is not scientific it does not mean it is not true. Science has value but it does have its limits. Do you believe that science can answer all the important questions of life? What kind of questions can science not answer? And where do you turn to find answers to these questions?

From www.scienceshorts.com

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Your God is too small! Essential truths

Who made God?

Everything we see and know around us had a beginning. It was either conceived, germinated or made. Once it was not and now it is, and there will probably come a time when it will not be any longer. Our minds naturally imagine, too, that God had a beginning. Where did He come from? Who created Him? Was there ever a time when there was no God?

The Bible does not help us with the answer until quite late on in its pages, for it assumes the existence of God with its opening words 'In the beginning God ...', Gen. 1. 1. In other words, before the world was made, or anything upon it, God was there. He was there at the beginning. In fact, He began the beginning. The same thought is echoed in John 1 where we read, 'In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God and the word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him'. At some time before He made the world and mankind God had created the angels. But who created Him?

God had no beginning

'Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth, and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God,' said Moses in Psalm 90 verse 2. The original Hebrew in which the Psalm was written says this, 'From the vanishing point to the vanishing point thou art God'. What a fabulous thought! Were we able to climb into a time capsule and go back to the point of infinity, the vanishing point in time past, and even go beyond it, we would still find God. God would still be there. God is 'the high and lofty one who inhabiteth

eternity'; Isa. 57. 15; He is the everlasting Father (the Father of eternity), Isa. 9. 6; 'His goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting'; Mic. 5. 6. We encounter difficulties with our language when we ask whether there was ever a time when God was not. Though we are in time, and subject to time, God is not. God does not sit in time, but time sits in God. God made time and before He made time, He was in existence. He always has been. He has never not existed. And just as we read that God had no beginning, so we read He will never come to an end. 'Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth ... they shall perish but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old ... and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end,' Ps. 102. 25-27. God is 'the everlasting God'; Isa. 40. 28. From the vanishing point (in the past) to the vanishing point (in the future) He is God.

God is self-existent

One of the many thrilling revelations God gave to Moses was of His self-existence. When Moses asked God in whose name he should go to Pharaoh, God told him to say to Pharaoh, 'I AM THAT I AM hath sent me'; Exod. 3. 14. This name, sometimes written Jehovah, or JaHWeH, implies that God is because He is. It means 'I am who I am', or 'I will be what I will be'. You and I cannot say that. We can say, 'By the grace of God I am what I am', but God is who He is by the grace of nobody other than Himself. He simply is. Our Lord said of Himself, 'Before Abraham was, I AM'; John 8. 58. That was not just bad grammar. Our Lord meant to use the name, I AM, and the Jews knew that in doing so He was claiming to be equal with God. He used this same name in the Garden of Gethsemane, John 18. 6. God, then, has never received life from anyone else. God 'giveth to all life, and breath, and all things'; Acts 17. 25, yet 'the Father hath



about the attributes of God

life in himself', John 5. 26. God is the giver of life, but never the receiver. He is the fountain, but never the basin. He is the Creator; He is not a creature.

God is self-sufficient

Not only does God receive life from no one, He needs no one. 'God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needeth any thing,' Acts 17. 24-25. When God wanted to remind His Old Testament people of this He said to them, 'If I were hungry, I would not tell thee, for the world is mine, and the fullness thereof,' Ps. 50. 12. Do we think God needs us? Think again. He can do anything. That He allows us, even asks us, to be involved in His work shows His grace, not His weakness. A. W. Tozer once wrote, 'God has a voluntary relationship to everything He made, but He has no necessary relationship to anything outside Himself'.

God's nature does not change

Time changes things, but time does not change God because God is not in time and is not subject to time. He is not growing older and wiser with each decade. His power is neither increasing nor decreasing. God cannot change for the better because He is already perfect; and being perfect, He cannot change for the worse or He would cease to be God. 'I am the Lord, I change not', says God in magnificent strength, Mal. 3. 6. 'Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same', Ps. 102. 25-27. God 'does not change like

shifting shadows', Jas. 1. 17 NIV, and His Son, is 'the same yesterday, and today, and for ever', Heb. 13. 8. God is the 'Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty', Rev. 1. 8. In His divine nature, then, God is immutable. He does not change.

God's purposes and promises do not change

If God, in His nature, is immutable (does not change) neither do His purposes and promises. 'God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? Or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?', Num. 23. 19. God, in declaring the end from the beginning, says, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure . . . I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it.' Isa. 46. 10-11. 'The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever', Ps. 33. 11. When it comes to God's eternal counsels and purposes, no one can force Him to change His mind or plan. 'He doeth according to his will . . . and none can stay his hand, or say to him, What doest thou?', Dan. 4. 35. Though all the world should, in the end, confederate together against the Lord and against His anointed, 'he that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh', Ps. 2. 4.

Objection 1: The Bible says God does repent or change His mind

Someone will say, but surely we read in Jonah that God 'repented of the evil that he had said he would do to them, and he did it not', Jonah 3. 9-10. Does not this mean God's purposes do change? Do we not read that 'God saw that the wickedness of man was great



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in the earth ... and it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart', Gen. 6.5-6? Bearing in mind that we cannot interpret one verse so that it contradicts another, there are three ways of looking at this problem. One explanation to words saying God 'repented' is to say that *the language used is anthropopathic* – it ascribes to God the feelings we, as humans have. In relation to God's creation of man, the Bible is using language we can understand to describe how grieved God was at the wickedness of mankind. It does not mean, however, that God determined to destroy the whole of mankind. As we know, He judged the wicked in a flood, but preserved Noah's seed so that mankind could continue. Secondly, as far as Nineveh was concerned, it wasn't so much that God's mind changed with regard to the people, but their mind changed with regard to Him. *God's dealings with men change when they change*. The people of Nineveh repented, so God could not judge them as He said He would. He cannot punish the penitent. It is not in His nature to do so. God may be immutable, but He is not impassive. He does respond to mankind. He must always forgive those who repent and seek Him, yet He must also always punish the wicked. The just aspect of His character must punish sin, but the gracious and merciful aspect of His

character must pardon the repentant. Jonah knew this, which is why he refused to go to Nineveh. 'I knew thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness', Jonah 4. 2. God had not changed; the people of Nineveh had. It must be a comfort to know that God is not rigidly inflexible. 'Amid all the changes and uncertainties of life in a nuclear age, God and

His Christ remain the same – almighty to save', J. I. Packer.

One of the great problems early Christians faced was the 'mystery' of the church: that God had apparently rejected His earthly people, the Jews, in favour of a worldwide assembly of Christians from every tongue, tribe, people and nation. 'Other sheep have I that are not of this fold; them also I must bring', John 10. 16, said the Lord. Since the death of Christ on the cross, 'there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him, for whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved', Rom. 10. 12-13; Gal. 3. 28. But what about God's earthly people, the Jews? Hadn't God made promises to Abraham? Has God changed His mind? Has God broken those promises? No, says Paul. *There are stages to God's plan*. He will yet keep His promises to Abraham. There is a glorious future for Israel. 'Have (Israel) stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come to the Gentiles, for to provoke (Israel) to jealousy', Rom. 11. 11. God has put the Jewish nation to one side for the moment, but He will take them up in a future day. He cannot lie. He cannot be fickle and change His mind. 'The gifts and calling of God are without repentance', Rom. 11. 29.

Objection 2: what is the point of praying if God's will will be done?

Does prayer really change things? Will prayer alter the mind of God? God has promised to give us all we ask and pray for, but that is if we ask 'according to His will', or 'in His name,' and with His authority, which is the same thing. The classic example of prayer apparently changing things is that of Abraham





interceding for Lot in Genesis 18. Now God never says there that He is going to destroy the wicked and the righteous together in the city. In fact, this very passage is used in the New Testament to show that God knows how to deliver the godly because He 'knoweth them that are his'; 2 Pet. 2. 9, and He knew that without Abraham's help. Abraham's prayer was not that Lot might be saved, but that the whole city might be spared for the sake of ten righteous people. In the end, the city was not spared because there were not ten righteous people in it. Moses also interceded for God's people in Exodus 32. Yet God had never really intended to destroy the whole nation. He was testing Moses to see what sort of a leader he was. Was he an hireling, whose own the sheep are not? Or was he a true shepherd?

Why, then, does God urge us to pray? Because though God has decreed what He is going to do, and nothing will change that, He has also decreed the end will be accomplished by the means. It is through the foolishness of preaching that God will save some; so we preach. It is through prayer that God will accomplish His will, so let us pray. But let us argue our case with God on the basis of what we know of Him and His will, bearing in mind that if we ask anything 'according to His will' He will give it to us, and if we do not ask 'according to His will' He will not. It is not so much that prayer changes God as that prayer changes us. We are not to try to bend the will of God to our will as to bend ours to His.

God's word does not change

If God does not change, then neither do things associated with Him change. 'For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven'; Ps. 119. 89; 'All flesh is grass . . . the grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for

ever'; Isa. 40. 6-8. Christ could say, 'Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass . . . till all be fulfilled'; Matt. 5. 18. Because God is eternal and immutable, His word is eternal and immutable. So also is His mercy, Ps. 100. 5, His righteousness, Ps. 119. 142, His kindness, Ps. 54. 8, His love, Jer. 31. 3, and His kingdom, Ps. 145. 13.

Truth such as this about the eternal, self-sufficient, self-existent God should remind us of two things. In the first place, we should bow and worship the One who is totally 'other'. He is vast beyond our understanding, eternal and immortal. Secondly, we have to recognise the smallness of our mortality. This should keep us in our place. 'Teach me to number my days'; said David. But let us also pause to think of the implications of all this for Christ. God is eternal. He is immortal. When His Son became man He had an impeccable nature, one that was unable to sin. 'He did no sin'; 'He knew no sin'; 'in Him is no sin'. He was not, therefore, mortal as you and I are. To be mortal is to be subject to death because of sin, and Christ had no sin. Death could not therefore claim Him as a victim unless He willingly went into death. The love of God for us is all the more thrilling, therefore, when we read that the immortal Son of God lay down His life for the sheep. 'No man taketh [my life] from me; but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it again'; John 10. 11, 15, 17-18. He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, Phil 2. 5-8. The immortal Son of God gave His life for us – shall we not give our lives to Him in return?

GOD IS ETERNAL

Perhaps some future day, Lord,
Thy strong hand
Will lead me to the place
where I must stand
Utterly alone.

Alone, O gracious Lover,
but for Thee,
I shall be satisfied
if I can see
Jesus only.

I do not know Thy plan
for years to come.
My spirit finds in Thee
its perfect home,
Sufficiency.

Lord, all my desire
is before Thee now;
Lead on – no matter where,
no matter how.
I trust in Thee.

Elisabeth Elliott

Ancient Wisdom for a Modern World

Wise words from the book of Proverbs



**'Let another man praise thee
and not thine own mouth;
a stranger and not thine own lips', Prov. 27. 2.**

There is surely nothing more insufferable than having to listen to someone who is full of himself. The most unpopular person is not necessarily the one with whom we disagree or have little in common. It is the one who does nothing but talk about himself and tell the whole world how great he is. Humility becomes us: pride and vanity demean.

But it must not be a false humility. That is easily detected and just as unacceptable. And it is possible to praise ourselves in a variety of different ways. Name-dropping is one of them, when we casually but deliberately try to raise our standing by mentioning who we know or where we have been. A sense of self-worth can also be shown by a desire to put ourselves in important positions, or to sit at 'the top table'. It was the Lord who said it is better to take a humble seat at a dinner and to be invited to 'come up higher' than to sit at the top table and be sent down.

An old but wise man once commented, 'Praise is a handsome garment. But though you may wear it, another must put it on you, or else it will never sit well on you ... praise is a rich treasure, but it will never make you rich unless someone else speaks it about you'. When speaking of himself, John the Baptist said he was only a voice, and that he was unworthy even to unloose the latchet of Christ's sandals, a task which was done in those days by the lowliest slave. Yet Christ said of John that he was the greatest of all that had been born of women, Matt. 11. 11.

Self-praise stems from vanity. It is easy for us to look down on others and think how much more superior we are in terms of gift and talent. The proper attitude is for each one of us to esteem others better than ourselves, Phil. 2. 3. It is easy, too, for us to see others' failures and think we will never be like them. Yet it takes a humble and careful man to say, as another once said, 'There, but for the grace of God, go !'. And if the poet was right when he said, 'O that God the gift would gi'e us, to see ourselves as others see us', how much more important it is for us to see ourselves as God sees us. In His presence we cannot but be humbled as we see what we really are. It is good to remember that a person actually only is what they are in quiet before God, not what they appear to be in public before men. The proud Pharisee was full of himself when he said, 'I thank thee I am not as other men ... I fast, I give, I ...'. If, however, we pray as the humble publican, 'God be merciful to me, a sinner', we shall have praise from God, for 'he that humbleth himself shall be exalted, but he that exalteth himself shall be made low', Luke 18. 9-14.