

Timescope . . . what's done is here

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Timescope.

Joe Harding (2008).

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Brother Harding's website is <http://joeharding.co.uk>

THIS IS AN unusual book, and read with great interest by the reviewer. It is a work of fiction, written with teenagers in mind. The following is a synopsis, based on a précis by the author, and on the reviewer's reading of the book.

Professor Avery has developed a technology with awesome power, able to view past events, private lives and murky secrets. By collecting stones from the Holy Land, Timescope enables the user to go back and participate in Biblical incidents. Jon Heath breaks into the Professor's house and stumbles on Timescope. Jon also discovers that Avery's granddaughter Naomi is a schoolfriend, and, unknown to Jon at this time, she loves him. Jon tries to bait Terrence Prentice, who is his mother's ministerial secretary (Jon's mother is a Member of Parliament) with demonstrations of Timescope's power.

Jon is exposed to Bible incidents such as Ishmael taunting Isaac and, very movingly, the offering of Isaac by Abraham. He also 'sees' the story of Gideon and his faith, and Elijah's solitary confrontation with the prophets of Baal. Jon also encounters Hannah, the fictional daughter of Obadiah, Elijah's servant. She is strangely

like Naomi, and Jon develops a great love for her. But, to his sorrow, Hannah dies, and Jon's conscience becomes touched as he hears the still small voice of God on Horeb; the same event causes the professor to have a massive stroke and to remain in a coma.

The mind of the professor is locked into the Timescope; as Jon and Naomi enter the Timescope again in the time of the plagues on Egypt, they find that the professor has become an elderly Jewish slave. He knows a series of destruction codes which could terminate the Timescope, but their use would kill him too. In the meantime, Prentice has tracked the files back to Avery, but an assassin named Jackman has been trailing them . . .

The story continues in similar dramatic fashion through some surprising twists and turns to a happy ending. Although all this may appear somewhat far-fetched, young people today are used to having such speculative stories to read. The reviewer remembers as a boy in the 1950s the *Eagle* magazine, which featured Dan Dare as a spaceman saving the planet from the wicked and deadly Mekon!—of course, space travel is now a reality. Brother Joe Harding has produced a story which contains action of a modern kind—romance, personalities, good narrative—but above all he tells again the exciting Bible incidents.

This is a gripping book to read; the author writes in a racy style and the book should be appreciated by teenage children. Those among us who are a bit older might enjoy it too as light reading! If you are wondering what present to give a teenager in your family which will contain exciting and wholesome reading and a Biblical background, then this novel may be the answer.