



**Ye shall serve the Lord your
God, and he shall bless
thy bread, and thy water.**

—Exodus 23:25



Christian Science Sentinel
Bible Lens

Substance

**September 9–15,
2019**

Substance

from the Golden Text

Zephaniah 3:17

The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty.

Zephaniah was a contemporary of the prophets Nahum and Jeremiah. His brief genealogy (see 1:1) indicates that he may have been a descendant of King Hezekiah and lived during the reign of King Josiah (640–609 BC, about fifty years prior to the Babylonian exile).

Most of Zephaniah’s message is a condemnation of Judah’s corruption and idolatry, yet it ends with the assurance of hope and joy. God “in the midst of thee” will bring deliverance and salvation—a recurring promise in the Hebrew Bible (see examples in Ezekiel 37:26, citation 17, and Psalms 46:5, citation 24).

from the Responsive Reading

Acts 1:2

... until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen.

The term *Holy Ghost*, elsewhere called *Holy Spirit*, appears over forty times in the book of Acts. This empowering divine force was tangible to the early followers of Christ—especially on the Day of Pentecost and following Peter and John’s release from detention in Jerusalem (see 2:1–18; 4:31). Christ Jesus identified the Holy Ghost as the promised Comforter (see John 14:26).

“Taken up,” a repeated phrase in Acts, refers to the Master’s ascension.

Acts 2:44

All that believed were together, and had all things common.

Throughout the book of Acts, Luke highlights the strong sense of community among early Christians. These believers shared everything from food to belongings “as every man had need” (v. 45).

A scholar writes, “Some have remarked that the real miracle of Pentecost is to be found here—that from so diverse assemblage of people ... a unified body of believers is formed.” This communal bond (Greek, *koinōnia*) is more than human affection, he notes. “It is a fellowship which produces astounding ‘wonders and signs’ (2:43).”

from Section 1

4 | Isaiah 6:3

Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.

Isaiah’s vision begins with a theophany, or manifestation of God’s presence. God is seated upon a throne while angelic beings identified as seraphim emphatically proclaim His holiness and glory.

Similar imagery appears in the book of Revelation. In his description of a heavenly throne room, the Revelator echoes Isaiah’s words: “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come” (4:8).

An exploration of Bible citations from the *Christian Science Quarterly*® Bible Lessons

“... a lesson on which the prosperity of Christian Science largely depends.” —Mary Baker Eddy

6 | Hebrews 11:1

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

Substance is translated from the Greek noun *hypostasis*. This word means “setting under”—a reference to that which is real and foundational.

from Section 3

12 | Exodus 23:25

Ye shall serve the Lord your God, and he shall bless thy bread, and thy water; and I will take sickness away from the midst of thee.

God’s covenant promises, first made to Noah and Abraham, were renewed over the centuries. Each renewal is a critical point in Hebrew history, representing God’s continuing commitment to protect and save His people. According to one commentary, these covenant agreements show the people that “their identity and lives hadn’t come into being haphazardly but were God’s purpose for them since the beginning.”

The covenant promise in Exodus, known as the Sinai covenant, differs from some of the others. Where the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants (see Genesis 15 and II Samuel 7) are freely given grants, for example, the Sinai covenant comes with requirements. It demands obedience to God’s law—and God pledges His power and care, as described in this verse, when the people honor this demand.

Resources quoted in this issue

RR: Mays, James Luther, et al., eds. *Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*. Vol. 31, Acts. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1982–

Cit. 12: Green, Joel B., et al., eds. *The CEB Study Bible*. Nashville, TN: Common English Bible, 2013.

13 | Matthew 8:14, 15

When Jesus was come into Peter’s house, he saw his wife’s mother laid, and sick of a fever. And he touched her hand, and the fever left her: and she arose, and ministered unto them.

Households in Bible times typically included extended family. Peter’s support of his mother-in-law indicates his obedience to the commandment to honor one’s parents (see Exodus 20:12). Jesus clearly cared deeply about this commandment, later citing it to the Pharisees: “God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother” (Matthew 15:4). And his final charge, recorded in the Gospel of John, was for his mother’s care (see 19:26, 27).

The healing of Peter’s mother-in-law is the third in a sequence of three in the first half of this chapter (see also 8:1–13). All three of the individuals Jesus cured—the leper, the Gentile, and the woman—would likely have been denied full acceptance in Jewish society. Their healings represented complete approval in the sight of God.

from Section 5

24 | Psalms 46:4

There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High.

In ancient Judea and Samaria, water was hard to come by. Because of this scarcity, rivers became a metaphor for God’s life-giving blessings. Isaiah 66:12 affirms, for instance, “I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream.”

God—in the midst of you!

By Judith Hardy Olson

From the August 15, 1994, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*

The Bible is full of God's precious promises to us all. Here's one: God is "*in the midst of thee.*"

You can get to know and feel this presence of God's power, and the power of His presence, so tangibly, surely, that whatever in your experience denies it—fear, hate, anxiety, envy, depression, stress, immorality, illness—must fall away.

All Christ Jesus' healing works proved God is in our midst and is mighty—God who is Love, supreme over hate; God who is Life, supreme over death; God who is Spirit, supreme over every material condition.

Once I was in an automobile accident. Our two children were with me. I remember feeling God's love right there in the midst of us at the moment of impact. My head broke the windshield, but I didn't have a scratch. However, our daughter's leg was broken. A policeman came quickly. "Amazing you weren't hurt more," he said. He was kind, helpful, and took us to a hospital emergency room for a cast for her leg.

When we got there, an X-ray was taken. The doctor told me her leg was broken twice and badly twisted. She'd need to be anesthetized to set it.

That next hour and a half the kids and I were put in a little room all by ourselves to wait for a surgeon to set the leg. We were so close to God—feeling and trusting His love, which we knew was there in the midst of us. You might be thinking it was too late for that prayer; the damage was done. But I knew it's never too late to pray.

When the surgeon arrived, he told me her leg had set itself better than he could have. He put a cast on it, and we went home. As we left, he said later she'd be in great pain, and offered me a prescription

for a pain-killing drug. I thanked him, but said it wasn't necessary. (I knew pain wasn't necessary either.)

All was well until, in the middle of the night, she did wake in pain. I went in to her, and we prayed together silently for a few minutes. I just remember turning my thought the best I could to God, and I caught a glimpse of her unbroken unity with her loving, sustaining Father-Mother God. A few minutes later she said her leg didn't hurt anymore. Next morning she went to school and performed her part as the blue fairy in the school play.

A few days later school was out, and she flew to visit her grandparents for a couple of weeks. While she was away, I continued to pray each day—to see even more clearly God's perfect government of all His children. When she returned, I felt so certain the healing was complete I took her back to the surgeon to have the cast removed, even though it was at least two weeks before he'd said it could come off. When he saw us, *he* said, "Let's saw it off." And he did. She didn't need crutches, but walked and ran freely.

God is *with you*—not far off—and *you're His*, responsive to Him. Cherish this bond, and you will demonstrate His almighty, gentle presence. Go ahead. See for yourself. And remember, you're not doing it alone. God in the midst of you is showing you every minute just how powerful His love for you is.

To read the entire article, which has been shortened to fit this page, go to **jsh.christianscience.com/god-in-the-midst-of-you**.