



BIBLE LENS

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God the Only Cause and Creator

May 30–June 5, 2022

from the **Golden Text**

[Psalms 86:10](#)

Thou art great, and doest wondrous things: thou art God alone.

Hebrew Scripture refers repeatedly to God's wonders, especially the demonstrations of divine might performed during the Exodus from Egypt. "The biblical religion was not evolved from some theory concerning God's power," explains a scholar, "but arose through an actual historical manifestation of that power."

from the **Responsive Reading**

[Psalms 111:1, 4, 7, 8](#)

Praise ye the Lord. I will praise the Lord with my whole heart, in the assembly of the upright, and in the congregation. . . . He hath made his wonderful works to be remembered. . . . The works of his hands are verity and judgment; all his commandments are sure. They stand fast for ever and ever, and are done in truth and uprightness.

[Psalm 111](#) is a hymn of praise in acrostic form (each line beginning with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet). One source characterizes praise as "the thoughtful response of the redeemed." He continues: "It springs, not from our good feelings, but from God's good acts. We praise God, not when we feel good, but when we realize that God is good."

Charges to remember God are found numerous times in early Jewish writings. The Chronicler instructs, "Remember his marvellous works that he hath done, his wonders, and the judgments of his mouth" ([1 Chronicles 16:12](#)), and the Psalmist admonishes the Israelites to remember His name, His holiness, and His works (see, for example, [Psalms 20:7](#); [30:4](#); [77:11](#)). Jonah prays from the belly of the great fish, "When my soul fainted within me I remembered the Lord: and my prayer came in unto thee, into thine holy temple" ([Jonah 2:7](#)).

[Job 9:4, 8, 9](#)

He is wise in heart, and mighty in strength: . . . Which alone spreadeth out the heavens, and treadeth upon the waves of the sea. Which maketh Arcturus, Orion, and Pleiades, and the chambers of the south.

Arcturus (understood to mean Ursa Major), Orion, and Pleiades were well-known sights in the night sky, mentioned here to portray God's omnipotence. God later challenges Job: "Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion? . . . or canst thou guide Arcturus with his sons?" (38:31, 32). A commentator suggests that combining these sights with the unfamiliar southern sky—"the chambers of the south"—credits God with creating the unknown as well as the known.

from **Section 1**

2 | [Isaiah 45:5, 6, 8](#)

I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me: that they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside me. I am the Lord, and there is none else. . . . Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness: let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together; I the Lord have created it.

The declaration "I am the Lord, and there is none else" recurs in this chapter, emphatically identifying Yahweh as the one God (see also [vv. 6, 18, 22](#)). Part of a prophecy addressed to the Persian king Cyrus, it was viewed by Israelites as God's directive to the pagan monarch to deliver them from exile.

"Though thou hast not known me" indicates that Cyrus did not recognize the God of Israel. Yet, in about 538 BC, Cyrus indeed liberated the Jews from their sixty-year captivity in Babylon, reinstated freedom to worship Yahweh, and ordered the rebuilding of the Temple at Jerusalem.

from **Section 2**

6 | [Ezekiel 36:22, 27, 28](#)

Thus saith the Lord God; . . . I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.

A Bible authority remarks: "There always attaches to 'spirit' the idea of power in operation, . . . The spirit of God will appear both as an inward impulse to fulfil God's will, and as a power to do it."

In this passage, the promise that obedience to God will allow the people to "dwell in the land" would have had sweet meaning to those who had experienced forced migration and exile.

from **Section 3**

12 | [Luke 2:52](#)

Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.

Stature (Greek, *hēlikia*) signifies maturity and can be applied to physical as well as mental growth. The author of Ephesians pinpoints this quality in his phrase “the measure of the stature [*hēlikia*] of the fulness of Christ” as a characteristic of those who are “no more children” (4:13, 14).

Favour (Greek, *kharis*) also means grace. One of its Hebrew equivalents (*hēn*) is repeated in the Old Testament to portray the standing of celebrated Israelites—including Abraham, Noah, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Ruth, David, and Esther—in the eyes of God and the people.

13 | [Luke 5:18–25](#)

Behold, men brought in a bed a man which was taken with a palsy: and they sought means to bring him in, and to lay him before him. And when they could not find by what way they might bring him in because of the multitude, they went upon the housetop, and let him down through the tiling with his couch into the midst before Jesus. And when he saw their faith, he said unto him, Man, thy sins are forgiven thee. And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, Who is this which speaketh blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone? But when Jesus perceived their thoughts, he answering said unto them, What reason ye in your hearts? Whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Rise up and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power upon earth to forgive sins, (he said unto the sick of the palsy,) I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy couch, and go into thine house. And immediately he rose up before them, and took up that whereon he lay, and departed to his own house, glorifying God.

Luke’s record depicts an urban or middle-class home having a flat, tiled roof, with stairs on the outside. In Mark’s account (see [Mark 2:4](#)), the house is a rural or peasant dwelling with a roof of wooden beams covered with mud and straw. Although the details vary, the faith of the man’s friends is evident in the lengths to which they go to reach Christ Jesus. (The couch mentioned here is probably a pallet or mat filled with straw, like the beds carried by others healed by Jesus; see instances in [Luke 5:25](#); [John 5:9](#).)

Blasphemy usually indicates words or actions that slander or disparage God. In this case, the Pharisees interpret the Master’s forgiveness of sin, considered the sole prerogative of God, as making himself equal with God. Jesus reads their thoughts and defends his statement. In the ensuing years, his followers embrace and preach forgiveness of sin as central to Christian doctrine (see examples in [Acts 26:18](#); [Ephesians 1:7](#); [Colossians 1:14](#); [James 5:15](#); I [John 1:9](#); [2:12](#)).

from **Section 4**

17 | [Matthew 9:20–22](#)

Behold, a woman, which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind him, and touched the hem of his garment: for she said within herself, If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole. But Jesus turned him about, and when he saw her, he said, Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour.

According to Jewish law, the flow of bodily fluids renders this woman unclean (see Leviticus 15:19). And because one’s state of holiness was deemed compromised by contact with the impure, her touching of Jesus’ garment risks a sharp rebuke. But the woman’s faith and receptivity to Christ supersede her failure to observe Hebrew law.

from Section 5

18 | [Romans 16:16](#)

The churches of Christ salute you.

Paul is clearly referring to communities of believers, not buildings or meeting places, in this greeting. The Greek term translated *church* (*ekklēsia*) meant any assembly or congregation, including both secular and religious gatherings.

A scholar confirms, “ ‘Church’ is one picture among others used by Paul for God’s people.”

19 | [Matthew 16:13, 14](#)

When Jesus came into the coasts of Cæsarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets.

When the disciples answer Jesus’ query, they aren’t simply listing well-known characters from Jewish narratives. All three names suggest a revival of prophetic leadership.

John the Baptist’s career had been cut short by Herod Antipas, who thought Jesus was the Baptist returned from the dead (see [14:1–10](#); [Mark 6:16](#)). Elias (Elijah) was recognized as the greatest of all prophets, whose return was promised by God (see [Malachi 4:5](#)). Jeremias (Jeremiah) was said to have hidden the ark of the covenant, and was seen by some as the subject of [Deuteronomy 18:15](#): “The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee.”

19 | [Matthew 16:15–18](#)

He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Why does Jesus bring his disciples to Caesarea Philippi, about 25 miles (forty kilometers) north of the Sea of Galilee—requiring a walk of over 12 hours? Scriptural experts point out several possible reasons. This city and its surroundings represented substantial political power and multiple religious traditions. Its magnificent temple honored Tiberius Caesar and exhibited the might of Rome. The Jordan River, sacred to Jews from ancient history, had its source nearby. And worship of Canaanite and Greek gods took place in the area.

Several sources identify a specific site in this symbol-laden environment for Jesus’ momentous question—a huge cave thought by pagan worshipers to be the gateway to Hades. The setting is a compelling backdrop for the Master’s announcement that “the gates of hell shall not prevail” against his church.

John’s Gospel records Jesus’ first meeting with Simon, at which the Savior declares, “Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone” (see [1:41, 42](#)). *Petra*, the Greek noun rendered *rock*, indicates a firmer, more substantial element than an unstable, movable stone—and depicts the permanence of the church’s

foundation.

20 | Ephesians 2:19–22

Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

“In many cities,” one commentary notes, “foreigners who settled could remain ‘resident aliens’ for generations, lacking voting rights and other privileges that belonged to citizens.” For the writer of Ephesians, the Christian community is an extended family, with common rights and equal access to God for every member. Similarly, in his letter to the Galatian church Paul designates believers as “the household of faith” ([Galatians 6:10](#)).

Read a related poem, “[The pause](#)” by Lois Carlson, at jsh.christianscience.com/the-pause.

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