



BIBLE LENS

MARCH 6, 2023

Shining a light on the weekly Bible Lessons published in the *Christian Science Quarterly*®

Substance

March 6–12, 2023



from the **Golden Text**

[Ecclesiastes 7:13](#)

Consider the work of God.

Consider is translated from the Hebrew term *rā'ā*, usually rendered *see*. In the Genesis 1 creation account, *rā'ā* appears in a repeated refrain summing up God's view of each day's work: "God saw [*rā'ā*] that it was good" (vv. 4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31).

from the **Responsive Reading**

[Acts 17:24, 25, 28](#)

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 needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; . . . For in him we live, and move, and have our being.

Paul is speaking to a group of Athenians after seeing their altar to "the unknown God." Some of his listeners are Epicureans, materialists who believe that worship of gods (and temples for this purpose) is unnecessary to the pursuit of moral virtue or sensual pleasure. Among the others in the audience are Stoics, rationalists who recognize a distant deity that has limited authority and is governed by fate. The apostle introduces them to the one God, knowable as the supreme and benevolent power over all creation.

Worshipped (Greek, *therapeuō*) is rendered *served* in most translations of this verse, referring to the common practices of sacrificing animals and making costly donations in pagan temples. Besides this instance, *therapeuō* represents healing or cure in Scripture (see examples in [Matthew 4:23](#); [Luke 9:1](#)). It is the origin of the English word *therapy*.

Exodus 3:1–5

Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father in law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the backside of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb. And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed. And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt. And when the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I. And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.

Part of a series of unmistakable proofs of divine guidance of the Israelites—including liberation from enslavement and relocation to a new homeland—the burning bush experience signals Moses’ closeness to God. Elsewhere in Exodus this closeness is described in terms of friendship: “The Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend” ([33:11](#)). Moses’ encounter with God here inaugurates his leadership role in the Exodus.

Throughout history, reverence for sacred sites has been expressed by removing one’s shoes. Circa 500 BC, the Greek philosopher Pythagoras instructed his students to worship with their shoes off. To Jews, going barefoot showed respect and veneration, since dust from shoes or sandals was considered profane in holy places.

from **Section 1**

2 | [Psalms 104:24, 30](#)

O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches. . . . Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created: and thou renewest the face of the earth.

Noting the affinity between this psalm and the record of spiritual creation in the first chapter of Genesis, a commentator writes: “Creation is not just an event that occurred in the beginning but is God’s continuing activity of sustaining creatures and holding everything in being. The cosmos is not a self-existent whole, perpetuated through its own internally operating dynamic. On the contrary, the whole order of being is radically dependent on God, the Creator.”

Qinyān, the Hebrew noun rendered *riches*, means possessions or creatures. Many modern translations have, “The earth is full of your creatures.”

3 | [Ecclesiastes 3:14](#)

I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it.

Translation

Everything God has done will last forever; nothing he does can ever be changed.

—Contemporary English Version

Chapter 3 of Ecclesiastes begins with an eight-verse poem—perhaps the most well-known section of Ecclesiastes—that presents the idea of specific times for human activity. Verse 14, part of the prose following the poem, depicts God’s kingdom as permanent, complete, and secure.

This text echoes another biblical declaration: “Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish aught from it” ([Deuteronomy 4:2](#)).

from **Section 2**

5 | [Psalms 46:10](#)

Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.

Translation

Let go of your concerns!

Then you will know that I am God.

I rule the nations.

I rule the earth.

—GOD’S WORD® Translation

Some scriptural authorities think this psalm alludes to Assyrian king Sennacherib’s siege of Jerusalem in 701 BC. Although Assyria had conquered Babylon and several cities in Palestine, Jerusalem under King Hezekiah was spared, as God had promised (see [II Kings 19:32–36](#); [II Chronicles 32:21, 22](#)). In this context, scholars explain, “Be still” is more than a demand for quietness. It is a call to throw down weapons—to end conflict—with an understanding of God as the real source of protection and peace.

6 | [Matthew 7:15, 16](#)

Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits.

Translation

“Be on your guard against false prophets; they come to you looking like sheep on the outside, but on the inside they are really like wild wolves. You will know them by what they do.”

—Good News Translation

Warnings against false prophets occur throughout Scripture, from Hebrew oracles to New Testament writers (see examples in [Deuteronomy 13:1–5](#); [Jeremiah 14:14](#); [23:16](#); [Matthew 24:24](#); [Colossians 2:8](#)). Many self-proclaimed prophets—such as practitioners of magic and sorcery—were easy to detect. But others appeared genuine, mimicking true teachers in word and manner. Here the faithful are counseled to judge these speakers by the way they live and the works they do.

7 | Ephesians 5:9

The fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth

Translation

... the fruit (the effect, the product) of the Light or the Spirit [consists] in every form of kindly goodness, uprightness of heart, and trueness of life.

—Amplified® Bible Classic

8 | Proverbs 8:1–3, 6, 20–23, 25, 30

Doth not wisdom cry? and understanding put forth her voice? She standeth in the top of high places, by the way in the places of the paths. She crieth at the gates, at the entry of the city, at the coming in at the doors. . . . Hear; for I will speak of excellent things; and the opening of my lips shall be right things. . . . I lead in the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of judgment: that I may cause those that love me to inherit substance; and I will fill their treasures. The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. . . . Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth: . . . Then I was by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him.

Translation

Like a person, wisdom calls out to you.

Understanding raises her voice.

On the hilltops along the road

and at the crossroads, she stands calling.

She stands beside the city gates.

At the entrances into the city, she calls out:

.

“Listen. I have important things to say.

What I tell you is right.

.

I do what is right.

I do what is fair.

I give wealth to those who love me.

I fill them with treasures.

“I, wisdom, was with God when he began his work.

This was before he made anything else long ago.

I was appointed in the very beginning,

even before the world began.

.

I began before the hills were there.

The mountains had not even been put in place.

.

I was like a child by his side.

I was happy every day

and enjoyed being in his presence.”

—International Children’s Bible®

In this passage, personified wisdom announces her place in daily life and her status in divine creation. A commentary describes verses 1–21 as “a celebration by Wisdom of her powers—her gift of plain and accessible discourse, the preciousness of her words, her indispensability as a guide to all who govern, the material benefits she conveys to her followers.”

9 | Psalms 139:1, 14, 17

O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me. . . . I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well. . . . How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them!

Translation

Lord, you have examined me.

You know all about me.

.

I praise you because you made me in an amazing and wonderful way.

What you have done is wonderful.

I know this very well.

.

God, your thoughts are precious to me.

They are so many!

—International Children’s Bible®

In this psalm the poet marvels over the infinite perfection of God’s kingdom. One source suggests, “Like Job, the author firmly claims his loyalty to the Lord,” adding that nowhere else is found “such profound awareness of how awesome it is to ask God to examine not only one’s life but also his soul—God, who knows every thought, word, and deed.”

Another remarks, “What lies beyond human capacity or human reckoning is not simply part of some undefined wasteland: it is all actively part of a coherent space controlled by, defined by, God.”

from Section 3

10 | Hebrews 11:1, 3, 8–10

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. . . . Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear. . . . By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

Translation

Faith shows the reality of what we hope for; it is the evidence of things we cannot see. . . . By faith we understand that the entire universe was formed at God’s command, that what we now see did not come from anything that can be seen. . . . It was by faith that Abraham obeyed when God called him to leave home and go to another land that God would give him as his inheritance. He went without knowing where he was going. And even when he reached the land God promised

him, he lived there by faith—for he was like a foreigner, living in tents. And so did Isaac and Jacob, who inherited the same promise. Abraham was confidently looking forward to a city with eternal foundations, a city designed and built by God.

—New Living Translation

11 | Ecclesiastes 9:14, 15

There was a little city, and few men within it; and there came a great king against it, and besieged it, and built great bulwarks against it: now there was found in it a poor wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city.

Most scholars view this story as a parable or fable, not a historical account. Like other wisdom texts, it is valued as instruction about the need for wisdom in human affairs.

In ancient times, bulwarks were ramparts or embankments that gave enemies commanding positions from which to launch weapons. After underscoring the contrast between great bulwarks and the poor wise man, the sage concludes, “Wisdom is better than weapons of war” (v. 18).

12 | Proverbs 12:27, 28

The substance of a diligent man is precious. In the way of righteousness is life.

Translation

. . . the diligent man gets precious possessions. Life is in the way of righteousness (moral and spiritual rectitude in every area and relation), . . .

—Amplified® Bible Classic

from **Section 4**

13 | Hebrews 4:12

The word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

Translation

. . . the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires.

—New Living Translation

15 | Luke 8:1–3

It came to pass afterward, that he went throughout every city and village, preaching and shewing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God: and the twelve were with him, and certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils, and Joanna the wife of Chuza Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto him of their substance.

Luke's list of female believers indicates women's noteworthy roles in Christ Jesus' work. The women listed here are apparently wealthy, providing support from their own resources. And while *ministering* (translated from the Greek verb *diakoneō*) may denote traditional duties of cooking or serving at table, these are nevertheless activities of discipleship.

Of the three named women, Mary Magdalene is the most frequently mentioned in the Gospels—an emphasis that implies a respected status among early Christians. Her identification with her town of origin rather than a husband or son suggests that she had no close male relatives and controlled her own property.

Joanna's marriage to a steward of Herod Antipas shows her to be a woman of privilege. (A few Bible authorities surmise Chuza to be the nobleman whose dying son is healed by the Master; see [John 4:46–53](#).) Both of these women later appear at Jesus' tomb and notify the disciples of his resurrection (see [Luke 24:10](#)). Nothing is known about Susanna.

from Section 5

16 | Philippians 4:8

Brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.

Translation

. . . my friends, keep your minds on whatever is true, pure, right, holy, friendly, and proper. Don't ever stop thinking about what is truly worthwhile and worthy of praise.

—Contemporary English Version

from **Section 6**

20 | [Zechariah 9:12, 16, 17](#)

Turn you to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope: . . . And the Lord their God shall save them in that day as the flock of his people: for they shall be as the stones of a crown, lifted up as an ensign upon his land. For how great is his goodness, and how great is his beauty!

Translation

Return, you exiles who now have hope; . . .

.

*When that day comes, the LORD will save his people,
as a shepherd saves his flock from danger.*

*They will shine in his land
like the jewels of a crown.*

How good and beautiful the land will be!

—Good News Translation

22 | [Revelation 21:9–11](#)

There came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God.

Many sources find parallels between this account and that of the Revelator's vision of Babylon (see [chap. 17](#)). Both record the angelic invitation "Come hither, and I will shew thee . . ." and the writer being "carried away in the spirit." In the first vision he is taken to the wilderness to view extreme corruption and depravity; in the second, to a mountain to witness spiritual glory, exemplified by the new Jerusalem. For readers of this passage, the second occurrence would have likely recalled Isaiah, [chapter 60](#), and Ezekiel's detailed portrayal of a holy city (see Ezekiel, [chaps. 40–48](#)).

23 | [Isaiah 61:10, 11](#)

I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels. For as the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth; so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations.

Translation

*“We take great delight in the LORD.
We are joyful because we belong to our God.
He has dressed us with salvation as if it were our clothes.
He has put robes of godliness on us.
We are like a groom who is dressed up for his wedding.
We are like a bride who decorates herself with her jewels.
The soil makes the young plant come up.
A garden causes seeds to grow.
In the same way, the LORD and King will make godliness grow.
And all the nations will praise him.”*

—New International Reader’s Version™

Read a related article, “[Healing through enlightened faith](https://jsh.christianscience.com/healing-through-enlightened-faith)” by John J. Selover, at jsh.christianscience.com/healing-through-enlightened-faith.

Resources cited in this issue

Cit. 2: Anderson, Bernhard W. *Out of the Depths: The Psalms Speak for Us Today*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1983.

Cit. 8: Alter, Robert. *The Hebrew Bible, Vol. 3, The Writings: A Translation with Commentary*. New York and London. W.W. Norton & Company, 2019.

Cit. 9: Kugel, James L. *The Great Poems of the Bible: A Reader’s Companion with New Translations*. New York: Free Press, 1999; Hindson, Edward E., and Dan Mitchell. *Zondervan King James Version Commentary: New Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010.

COPYRIGHT

Scriptural quotations marked Contemporary English Version are taken from the Contemporary English Version, copyright © 1991, 1992, 1995 by American Bible Society. Used by permission.

Scriptural quotations marked GOD’S WORD Translation are taken from GOD’S WORD®. © 1995, 2003, 2013, 2014, 2019, 2020 by God’s Word to the Nations Mission Society. Used by permission.

Scriptural quotations marked Good News Translation are taken from the Good News Translation in Today’s English Version—Second Edition, copyright © 1992 by American Bible Society. Used by permission.

Scriptural quotations marked Amplified® Bible Classic are taken from the Amplified® Bible Classic, copyright © 1954, 1958, 1962, 1964, 1965, 1987 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. www.Lockman.org.

Scriptural quotations marked International Children’s Bible are taken from the International Children’s Bible®. Copyright © 1986, 1988, 1999 by Thomas Nelson. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scriptural quotations marked New Living Translation are taken from the Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

Scriptural quotations marked New International Reader’s Version are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Reader’s Version™, Nlrv™. Copyright © 1995, 1996, 1998, 2014 by Biblica, Inc. Used with permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

© 2023 The Christian Science Publishing Society. The design of the Cross and Crown is a trademark owned by the Christian Science Board of Directors and is used by permission. Bible Lens and Christian Science Quarterly are trademarks owned by The Christian Science Publishing Society. Unless otherwise indicated, all scriptural quotations are taken from the King James Version of the Holy Bible.