



## BIBLE LENS

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

## Truth

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### from the **Responsive Reading**

#### John 17:1

*After Jesus had finished speaking to his disciples, he looked up toward heaven and prayed: Father, the time has come for you to bring glory to your Son, in order that he may bring glory to you.*

—Contemporary English Version

Here Christ Jesus has entered Jerusalem for the last time and been honored by throngs of people (see 12:12, 13). Now, in his final prayer recorded by John, he describes his coming spiritual glorification—God’s exalting of His Son, which will be illustrated in the resurrection and ascension.

Glory is a strong theme throughout John’s Gospel, beginning with 1:14: “The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.” The Savior’s commitment to glorifying God is also made clear in the author’s account of the last supper (see 13:31, 32) and elsewhere in the farewell petition (see 17:4, 5, 22, 24).

#### John 18:1, 12, 19, 20, 28–30, 33, 36–38

*When Jesus had finished praying, he and his disciples crossed the Kidron Valley and went into a garden. . . . The Roman officer and his men, together with the temple police, arrested Jesus and tied him up. . . . The high priest questioned Jesus about his followers and his teaching. But Jesus told him, “I have spoken freely in front of everyone. And I have always taught in our synagogues and in the temple, where all of our people come together. I have not said anything in secret.” . . . It was early in the morning when Jesus was taken from Caiaphas to the building where the Roman governor stayed. . . . Pilate came out and asked, “What charges are you bringing against this man?” They answered, “He is a criminal! That’s why we brought him to you.” . . . Pilate then went back inside. He called Jesus over and asked, “Are you the king of the Jews?” Jesus answered, “My kingdom doesn’t belong to this world.” . . . “I was born into this world to tell about the truth. And everyone who belongs to the truth knows my voice.” Pilate asked Jesus, “What is truth?”*

By proclaiming the public nature of his ministry, Jesus affirms that it is not subversive—an accusation levied against false prophets, who often taught in secret. He may be reminding the high priest as well of the many witnesses to Jesus’ words and works, witnesses that should have been present during this interrogation.

Although Pilate’s question about Jesus’ kingship may have sprung simply from curiosity, his soldiers make a crown of thorns and contemptuously hail Jesus “King of the Jews” (19:2, 3). Pilate then insists on placing this title on the cross, an ironic decision considering that Jews had charged Jesus with falsely naming himself king. In fact, the chief priests request that Pilate “write not, The King of the Jews; but that he said, I am King of the Jews”—a demand Pilate denies (see 19:19–22).

Jesus responds to Pilate not by confirming or denying that he is a king but by explaining that his kingdom is in the realm of Truth. Those who recognize the truth will hear and acknowledge him. Pilate’s reply has resounded through the centuries: “What is truth?”

## from Section 1

### 1 | Deuteronomy 32:3, 4

*I will publish the name of the Lord: ascribe ye greatness unto our God. He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.*

#### Translation

*I will proclaim the name of the LORD.*

*Give our God the greatness he deserves!*

*He is a rock.*

*What he does is perfect.*

*All his ways are fair.*

*He is a faithful God, who does no wrong.*

*He is honorable and reliable.*

—GOD’S WORD® Translation

Attributed to Moses, this declaration is made upon the eve of his people’s entry into the Promised Land. A scholar remarks that verse 4 shows “the faithfulness of [God’s] word, the perfection of his works, and the wisdom and equity of all the administrations of his government; . . .”

“His ways are judgment” depicts God’s justice and fairness. *Mišpāt*, the Hebrew noun rendered *judgment* in this passage,

is sometimes translated *right*. Genesis 18:25 poses the query “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right [*mišpāt*]?”

## 2 | Psalms 67:1, 2

*God be merciful unto us, and bless us; . . . that thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations.*

### Translation

*Our God, be kind and bless us!*

. . . . .

*Then everyone on earth  
will learn to follow you,  
and all nations will see  
your power to save us.*

—Contemporary English Version

## 3 | Psalms 15:1, 2

*Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart.*

### Translation

*Who can live in your tent, LORD?*

*Who can dwell on your holy mountain?*

*The person who  
lives free of blame,  
does what is right,  
and speaks the truth sincerely; . . .*

—Common English Bible

## from Section 2

## 4 | Psalms 119:12, 30, 43, 46

*Blessed art thou, O Lord: . . . I have chosen the way of truth: thy judgments have I laid before me. . . . Take not the word of*

*truth utterly out of my mouth; . . . I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings, and will not be ashamed.*

## **Translation**

*I praise you, O LORD;*

. . . . .

*I have chosen to be obedient;*

*I have paid attention to your judgments.*

. . . . .

*Enable me to speak the truth at all times,*

. . . . .

*I will announce your commands to kings  
and I will not be ashamed.*

—Good News Translation

Speaking “before kings” isn’t unprecedented—Hebrew Scripture reports numerous instances of courageous speech in the face of royal power. Joseph and Moses address pharaohs (see [Genesis 41:15–40](#); [Exodus, chaps. 5–12](#)). Nehemiah presents his case for rebuilding Jerusalem to King Artaxerxes (see [Nehemiah 2:1–8](#)). Prophets Nathan and Jeremiah communicate God’s Word to their respective monarchs (see [II Samuel 12:1–12](#); [Jeremiah 34:1–6](#)). And Daniel articulates his knowledge of the one God before Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, and Darius (see [Daniel 2:26–49](#); [5:13–29](#); [6:19–23](#)).

## **5 | I Kings 22:2–9**

*Jehoshaphat the king of Judah came down to the king of Israel. And the king of Israel said unto his servants, Know ye that Ramoth in Gilead is ours, and we be still, and take it not out of the hand of the king of Syria? And he said unto Jehoshaphat, Wilt thou go with me to battle to Ramoth–gilead? And Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, I am as thou art, my people as thy people, my horses as thy horses. And Jehoshaphat said unto the king of Israel, Inquire, I pray thee, at the word of the Lord to-day. Then the king of Israel gathered the prophets together, about four hundred men, and said unto them, Shall I go against Ramoth–gilead to battle, or shall I forbear? And they said, Go up; for the Lord shall deliver it into the hand of the king. And Jehoshaphat said, Is there not here a prophet of the Lord besides, that we might inquire of him? And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, There is yet one man, Micaiah the son of Imlah, by whom we may inquire of the Lord: but I hate him; for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil. And Jehoshaphat said, Let not the king say so. Then the king of Israel called an officer, and said, Hasten hither Micaiah the son of Imlah.*

In this story, King Ahab of Israel resolves to conquer the strategically important city of Ramoth, east of the Jordan River in Gilead. A regular practice of rulers facing major decisions was to seek prophetic counsel—and when Ahab at Jehoshaphat’s request calls for wisdom from his four hundred seers, they subserviently concur with his intention.

Though King Jehoshaphat of Judah agrees to join the war effort, he doesn't trust Ahab's court prophets—men whose loyalty is to their king instead of to God. Just one of God's prophets is to be consulted: Micaiah, unknown beyond this account.

## 6 | II Chronicles 18:12–17, 25–29, 33, 34

*The messenger that went to call Micaiah spake to him, saying, Behold, the words of the prophets declare good to the king with one assent; let thy word therefore, I pray thee, be like one of theirs, and speak thou good. And Micaiah said, As the Lord liveth, even what my God saith, that will I speak. And when he was come to the king, the king said unto him, Micaiah, shall we go to Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall I forbear? And he said, Go ye up, and prosper, and they shall be delivered into your hand. And the king said to him, How many times shall I adjure thee that thou say nothing but the truth to me in the name of the Lord? Then he said, I did see all Israel scattered upon the mountains, as sheep that have no shepherd: and the Lord said, These have no master; let them return therefore every man to his house in peace. And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, Did I not tell thee that he would not prophesy good unto me, but evil? . . . Then the king of Israel said, Take ye Micaiah, and carry him back to Amon the governor of the city, and to Joash the king's son; and say, Thus saith the king, Put this fellow in the prison, and feed him with bread of affliction and with water of affliction, until I return in peace. And Micaiah said, If thou certainly return in peace, then hath not the Lord spoken by me. . . . So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah went up to Ramoth-gilead. And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, I will disguise myself, and will go to the battle; . . . And a certain man drew a bow at a venture, and smote the king of Israel between the joints of the harness: . . . And about the time of the sun going down he died.*

When urged to agree with the court seers, Micaiah at first foretells, perhaps sarcastically, what Ahab wants to hear—that the military venture will be successful. Then he commits to conveying God's message, a prediction of defeat and advice to refrain from war. (The mention of sheep having no master is viewed as alluding to Ahab's death.) Rejecting this oracle, Ahab sends Micaiah to prison. The king's willfulness brings about his demise in battle.

## from Section 3

## 8 | I John 1:3, 6

*Grace be with you, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love. . . . And this is love, that we walk after his commandments.*

In the New Testament, believers shared common greetings in their letters. “Grace and peace” was a salutation frequently used by Paul—adding *grace* (Greek, *kharis*) to the Jewish wish *peace* (Hebrew, *shalôm*) that many of the faithful had grown up with.

References to God as Father, however, represented a new understanding of Him. Where the Hebrew Bible sometimes mentions God as father—especially of Israel and of certain individuals—the New Testament highlights God's fatherhood as His close and intimate relation to all of His children.

“God's command to love other believers,” one commentary explains, “is obeyed not out of obligation to those other members of the covenant community but to God as a covenant keeping act (I John 5:3). In this sense, loving one another

supplies the hard evidence of knowing and believing God. . . .”

## from **Section 4**

### 9 | Psalms 89:1, 14, 18

*I will sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever: with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations. . . . Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne: mercy and truth shall go before thy face. . . . For the Lord is our defence.*

#### **Translation**

*I will sing of the LORD’s unfailing love forever!  
Young and old will hear of your faithfulness.*

. . . . .

*Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne.  
Unfailing love and truth walk before you as attendants.*

. . . . .

*Yes, our protection comes from the LORD. . . .*

—New Living Translation

In Hebrew, the term translated *habitation* is *mākôn*, meaning foundation. The psalmist has just spoken of God’s power: “Thou hast a mighty arm: strong is thy hand” (v. 13). This text asserts that God has not only might but right—that righteousness and justice are the very basis of His government.

### 11 | Matthew 8:14–16

*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. When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick.*

At this time, Peter has apparently moved from his hometown of Bethsaida (see [John 1:44](#)) and lives with his extended family in Capernaum. Here Jesus’ healings take place both privately (in a home) and openly (in a large crowd).

Mark’s Gospel (see [1:21](#)) reports that these events happen on a Sabbath, when no work—including the transportation or cure of the sick—was permitted. But since “even,” or evening, was designated the beginning of a new day in Jewish practice, people were free to bring their sick to the Savior then without breaking the Sabbath ban.

In the ancient Near East, casting out evil spirits was the province of exorcists, who employed lengthy incantations to drive out these spirits. By contrast, Jesus effects healing of demon possession with the divine authority of his word.

## from **Section 5**

### 12 | **Psalms 86:11**

*Teach me thy way, O Lord; I will walk in thy truth.*

#### **Translation**

*Teach me, LORD, what you want me to do,  
and I will obey you faithfully; . . .*

—Good News Translation

### 14 | **II John 1:8**

*Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward.*

#### **Translation**

*Look to yourselves (take care) that you may not lose (throw away or destroy) all that we and you have labored for, but that you may [persevere until you] win and receive back a perfect reward [in full].*

—Amplified® Bible (AMPC)

Having warned of the world’s “many deceivers” (v. 7), this writer now cautions the faithful to guard thought in order to retain the understanding they have gained. One source notes that his message centers on truth: “Throughout the letter, the elder emphasizes the idea of truth: he loves the believers in truth, they know the truth, the truth abides in them, and they walk in the truth.”

“A full reward” echoes scriptural tradition that the upright will reap benefits of God. An early prayer asks, “The Lord recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust” (**Ruth 2:12**), and David sings, “The Lord rewarded me according to my righteousness” (**II Samuel 22:21**). Centuries later, Jesus guarantees a reward for praying in secret and for “every man according to his works” (see **Matthew 6:6; 16:27**). Other assurances appear in **I Corinthians 3:14; Hebrews 10:35–38; 11:6; and Revelation 22:12**.

### 15 | **III John 1:4**

*I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.*

Third John is considered a private epistle rather than a communication to a church. While the declaration in verse 4 might sound like a sentiment about youngsters, *children* was an affectionate term that here may allude to Christians the author has converted. Second John uses similar wording: “I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth” (1:4).

## from Section 6

### 16 | Psalms 40:8, 9, 11

*I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart. I have preached righteousness in the great congregation: ... Let thy lovingkindness and thy truth continually preserve me.*

In this passage, the poet reveals a total surrender of personal goals and desires. When this release happens, one scriptural authority suggests, “God’s claim . . . is accepted as a call to a joyous, active life arising out of the sentiments of a heart that knows itself to be at one with the will (law) of God.”

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Read a related article “[I no longer wonder, What is truth?](https://cssentinel.com/what-is-truth/)” by Edna V. Locke at [cssentinel.com/what-is-truth](https://cssentinel.com/what-is-truth/).

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## Resources cited in this issue

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