



The rock of my strength,
and my refuge, is in God.

—Psalms 62:7



Christian Science Sentinel
Bible Lens

Truth

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from the Responsive Reading

Psalms 98:7–9

Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein. Let the floods clap their hands: let the hills be joyful together before the Lord; for he cometh to judge the earth: with righteousness shall he judge the world, and the people with equity.

Open water often represents disorder and chaos in ancient Near Eastern writings. Here the invitation to praise God, extended to the sea and floods, indicates divine power over everything that might threaten human existence.

The Hebrew concept of judgment is proactive. More than simply evaluating human good or evil to determine rewards or punishment, it actively orders things according to justice and law. In the same way, divine justice brings everything into line with divine law.

from Section 2

5 | Matthew 9:35

Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.

At the beginning of this chapter, Jesus has returned from the Gentile territory of Gadara to “his own city” (v. 1). Though he was raised in Nazareth, by this time his center of work is Capernaum. From there he travels to “all the cities and villages”—to many of the small towns scattered

throughout Galilee. The only large cities in this mostly rural area—Sepphoris and Tiberias—aren’t mentioned in Scripture as places Jesus visited, though he may have passed through them.

7 | Matthew 16:13

When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?

Caesarea Philippi had been a Greek settlement, called Paneas because of nearby shrines dedicated to the Greek god Pan. It was established close to the source of the Jordan River sometime before 200 BC, on a site that had probably been used by Canaanites for Baal-worship.

Emperor Augustus of Rome later gave control of the city and its surroundings to Judean king Herod the Great. On Herod’s death in 4 BC, his son Philip made the city his capital and renamed it Caesarea in honor of the emperor. Because that name was shared by several cities, this one became known as Caesarea Philippi.

One Bible authority sees this location, with its resplendent Roman temple and relics of pagan worship, as a remarkable setting for the little-known, itinerant Galilean to pose his question. He writes, “It is as if Jesus deliberately set himself against the background of the world’s religions in all their history and their splendour, and demanded to be compared with them and to have the verdict given in his favour.”

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

7 | Matthew 16:14

Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets.

When the disciples answer Jesus’ question, they aren’t simply listing names from Jewish history. A commentary notes that the men Jesus was likened to “were men of fearless courage, singular devotion, unflinching loyalty to high ideals, ... great simplicity and stern self-discipline.”

All three names suggest a revival of prophetic leadership. John the Baptist’s career had been cut short by Herod Antipas, who believed Jesus to be the Baptist returned from the dead (see 14:1–10). Elias (Elijah) was recognized as the greatest of all prophets, whose return is promised by God (see Malachi 4:5). Jeremias (Jeremiah) was said to have hidden the ark of the covenant, and was identified by some as the prophet predicted in Deuteronomy 18:15: “The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee.”

7 | Matthew 16:16–18

Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, ... 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.

Today we think of *Peter* simply as a name. However, there is no evidence that either the Greek word *petros* or its Aramaic equivalent, *kêpâ*, had ever been used that way. But it became another name for Simon from that time on, though sometimes com-

bined with his original name—especially in the Gospel of John.

Peter may not always have lived up to his nickname—he was rebuked by Jesus for his lack of dedication to the divine mission, and then denied knowing the Master (see 16:21–23; 26:69–75). Yet it can be argued that his profession of Jesus’ role as the Messiah (see 16:16) represents the rock-solid foundation of Christianity.

from Section 5

18 | Acts 10:34, 35

Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.

Accepted is translated from the Greek word *dektos*—a term used in the Septuagint (the Greek version of the Old Testament) to describe sacrifices to God (see examples in Leviticus 1:4; 22:20). Only offerings without blemish were respected and welcome in sacrificial rites. A Proverbs passage from the Septuagint conveys this wider application: “He that deals faithfully is accepted with him” (12:22).

Peter’s words portray the breadth of God’s acceptance of believers, an acceptance he sees for the first time reaching beyond those of the Jewish faith.

Resources quoted in this issue

Cit. 7: Barclay, William. *The Daily Study Bible: The Gospel of Matthew*, Vol. 1. Edinburgh: Saint Andrew, 1955. Revised and updated by Saint Andrew, 2001. Reprinted as *The New Daily Study Bible: The Gospel of Matthew*, Vol. 1. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2001–04; Eiselen, Frederick Carl, Edwin Lewis, and David G. Downey, eds.; *The Abingdon Bible Commentary: New Testament*. New York: Abingdon Press, 1929.

Cit. 18: Brenton, Lancelot Charles Lee. *The Septuagint Version of the Old Testament and Apocrypha: with an English Translation and with Various Readings and Critical Notes*. Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Pub, 2010.

Peter stands firm



By Rosemary C. Cobham

From the July 23, 1955, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*

Peter attends the Christian Science Sunday School, where he learns of the love and omnipotence of God, who made him as His perfect child and keeps him that way.

One day when Peter was at boarding school, he did not feel a bit well; and so a Christian Science practitioner was asked to come to see him.

When she came, she asked him, "What is your name?"

He said, "I'm Peter, and my throat hurts."

"Do you remember another Peter, the one we read about in the Bible?" asked the practitioner.

Peter was feeling rather sorry for himself, but he did his best to think, and soon he said, "Yes, there was Peter, the disciple of Jesus."

"Do you know who called him Peter?" asked the practitioner.

"His mother, I expect," said Peter.

"No," said the practitioner, "his mother called him Simon. It was Jesus who gave him the name of Peter."

Together they found this story in the sixteenth chapter of Matthew. There they read that Peter got his new name, which means rock, because he had understood firmly that what Jesus lived and taught was the Christ, Truth, which heals. They spoke of the truth that there is only perfect God and perfect man, and that error of any sort is only a false belief. If we do not believe error, it can have no power over us.

"So you see," said the practitioner, "you must stand like a rock for the truth; then you will really be a Peter, as Simon was."

So Peter said with a big grin, "I'm Peter, and I stand like a rock for the truth!" And because he understood what he said, and really meant it, he felt better already;

because he had stopped believing the lie which said God's child could be ill and feel sorry for himself. In a day or two Peter was quite all right again.

A rock is so firm that even if storms come, it does not move. To help his disciples to stand firm in difficulties, Jesus told them a parable. He said (Matthew 7:24, 25): "Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock."

It is like that with the truths we learn in Sunday School. Perhaps it is easy in Sunday School to see that God is Love, and that therefore everything He created is lovely and loving and perfect. But if during our weekday school someone appears angry, or hurtful, or we seem to feel sick, then is the time to stand like a rock for this truth.

The Peter in our story got his healing from knowing what Peter, the disciple, knew, namely: that divine Love heals, and that nothing can change the harmony of Love's creation. His healing came through standing firm for this truth, just as Simon Peter did.

Whatever our names may be, whether we are boys or girls or men or women, we can all be like Peter and stand like a rock for the truth.

To read the entire article, which has been shortened to fit this page, go to

jsh.christianscience.com/peter-stands-firm.