



## **Bible Lens**

# Bible Lens—December 7–13, 2020

Subject: **God the Preserver of Man**

From the *Christian Science Sentinel* - December 7, 2020

**The Lord is my rock, my fortress, and my savior.**

—II Samuel 22:2

## Exploring Bible Verses

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

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### ***from the Golden Text***

#### **II Samuel 22:2, 3**

*The Lord is my rock, my fortress, and my savior; ... the one who saves me from violence.*

—New Living Translation

*Violence* here, as in Psalms 55:9 (Citation 6), is translated from the Hebrew *ḥāmās*—elsewhere in Scripture rendered *cruelty*, *wrong*, or *injustice* (see examples in Psalms 27:12; Genesis 16:5; Job 16:17).

### ***from the Responsive Reading***

#### **Psalms 18:4**

*The sorrows of death compassed me, and the floods of ungodly men made me afraid.*

**sorrows:** feelings of deep sadness

**compassed:** encircled; enclosed on all sides

**ungodly:** sinful; wicked; disrespectful of or disobedient to God

#### **Psalms 18:18**

*They prevented me in the day of my calamity: but the Lord was my stay.*

**prevented:** obstructed

**calamity:** disaster; event that causes great suffering

## **from Section 1**

### **1 | Jeremiah 31:3**

*The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.*

**of old:** long ago

**drawn:** brought; moved forward; attracted

### **Translation**

#### **2 | Psalms 121:7, 8**

*The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul. The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore.*

...

*The LORD will keep you from all harm—  
he will watch over your life;  
the LORD will watch over your coming and going  
both now and forevermore.*

—New International Version

### **Translation**

#### **4 | Psalms 18:28–30**

*Thou wilt light my candle: the Lord my God will enlighten my darkness. For by thee I have run through a troop; and by my God have I leaped over a wall. As for God, his way is perfect: the word of the Lord is tried: he is a buckler to all those that trust in him.*

...

*... you light my lamp.  
My God turns my darkness into light.  
With you I can attack a line of soldiers.  
With my God I can break through barricades.  
God's way is perfect!  
The promise of the LORD has proven to be true.  
He is a shield to all those who take refuge in him.*

—GOD'S WORD Translation

#### **4 | Psalms 18:29, 30**

*By thee I have run through a troop; and by my God have I leaped over a wall. As for God, his way is perfect: the word of the Lord is tried: he is a buckler to all those that trust in him.*

Scholars identify these verses with David's defeat of marauding Amalekites at Ziklag and his capture of Zion from the Jebusites (see I Samuel 30:1–20 and II Samuel 5:6–9).

*Troop* describes an enemy army or band of robbers. A buckler is a small, circular shield worn on the forearm, employed to deflect projectiles, or blows in hand-to-hand combat. Both words are used here as images of God as the source of strength and protection.

#### **5 | Joshua 1:9**

*Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.*

God is preparing Joshua to lead the Hebrew people after Moses' death. The demand to be strong and courageous had been voiced by Moses (see Deuteronomy 31:23), and is now repeated three times in God's message (see also Joshua 1:6, 7). As successor to Moses, Joshua oversees the crossing of the Jordan River, the fall of Jericho, and the conquest of Canaan.

"There must be no hesitation on the part of a leader," notes a commentary. "The fundamental requirement is that he shall be a man of faith who will dare to venture even in the face of the impossible. . . . He is emancipated from fear and frustration. He faces his task with the assurance, 'All things are possible to him that believeth' (Mark 9:23)."

### ***from Section 2***

#### **6 | Psalms 55:9**

*I have seen violence and strife in the city.*

Some scriptural authorities believe this psalm was written at the time of Absalom's plot to seize the throne from his father, King David (see II Samuel, chap. 15). Jerusalem was the seat of this rebellion. According to one source, the city was blighted by "social violence and injustice."

### **Translation**

#### **7 | Psalms 91:2, 5, 9–11**

*I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust. . . . Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day; . . . Because thou hast made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation; there shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.*

...

*This I declare about the LORD:  
He alone is my refuge, my place of safety;  
he is my God, and I trust him. . . .  
Do not be afraid of the terrors of the night,  
nor the arrow that flies in the day. . . .  
If you make the LORD your refuge,  
if you make the Most High your shelter,  
no evil will conquer you;  
no plague will come near your home.  
For he will order his angels  
to protect you wherever you go.*

—New Living Translation

### **8 | Isaiah 54:17**

*No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn.*

#### **Translation**

*“ . . . no weapon that is used against you will defeat you.  
You will show that those who speak against you are wrong.  
These are the good things my servants receive.  
Their victory comes from me,” says the LORD.*

—New Century Version

Battlefield and courtroom metaphors express the comprehensive range of God’s saving power. *Tongue* is translated from the Hebrew term *lāšōn*, which—aside from its literal meaning—is sometimes rendered *babbler*, *evil speaker*, or *talker*. In other Bible verses it is paired with the words *lying* and *deceitful* (see examples in [Proverbs 6:17](#); [Zephaniah 3:13](#)), and in [Ecclesiastes 10:11](#) it is associated with a serpent.

*Condemn* (Hebrew, *rāšaʿ*) can refer not only to finding someone guilty in a court of law but also to seeing them as morally wrong or godless.

### **from Section 3**

#### **Translation**

### **9 | Psalms 118:6, 14, 27**

*The Lord is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me?... The Lord is my strength and song, and is become my salvation. . . . God is the Lord, which hath shewed us light.*

...

*I will not be afraid because the Lord is with me.*

*People can't do anything to me. . . .*

*The Lord gives me strength and makes me sing.*

*He has saved me. . . .*

*The Lord is God.*

*And he has shown kindness to us.*

—International Children's Bible

### **11 | Luke 4:16, 22**

*[Jesus] came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read. . . . And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. And they said, Is not this Joseph's son?*

At first the Master's teaching is welcomed and his status as a native son acknowledged, though in Matthew's account the phrase "the carpenter's son" is spoken with disbelief or even scorn (see [Matthew 13:54–57](#)). But when Jesus openly identifies himself with the prophecy in [Isaiah 61:1, 2](#)—and compares himself to revered prophets Elijah and Elisha—the townspeople's acceptance turns to rage (see [Luke 4:21, 24–30](#)).

A commentary suggests that Jesus' visit to his hometown happened about a year into his public ministry, and that the events of John 1:19–4:42 may have occurred before his return to Galilee.

**custom:** habit; usual practice

**bare witness:** showed or stated to be true

### **11 | Luke 4:28, 29**

*All they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, and rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong.*

**brow:** summit; highest point

**headlong:** head first

### **11 | Luke 4:33, 34**

*In the synagogue there was a man, which had a spirit of an unclean devil, and cried out with a loud voice, saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art; the Holy One of God.*

In ancient belief, naming a spirit gave one control of it. Scholars surmise that in calling Jesus by the Messianic title “the Holy One of God,” the unclean spirit or demon may have been attempting to dominate him. One source points out, “Jesus’ authority and power are demonstrated, but not on the devil’s terms.”

Jesus’ dominion over demons is a hallmark of his healing career. He tells his detractors, “If I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you” ([Matthew 12:28](#)). When he sends his disciples out to heal, one of his charges is “Cast out devils” ([Matthew 10:8](#)). And the seventy disciples report, “Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name” ([Luke 10:17](#)).

## ***from Section 4***

### **13 | [Joel 3:3](#)**

*They have cast lots for my people; and have given a boy for an harlot, and sold a girl for wine, that they might drink.*

During the Babylonian captivity starting circa 586 BC, Hebrew boys and girls were sometimes treated as chattel—traded by their captors for the services of a prostitute or a bottle of wine. Joel presents divine denunciation of this practice, including this promise: “Behold, I will raise them out of the place whither ye have sold them, and will return your recompense upon your own head” ([v. 7](#)). The Babylonian Empire was conquered circa 539 BC by the Persians, who allowed the Jews to return to their homeland.

### **Translation**

#### **14 | [Isaiah 49:25](#)**

*Thus saith the Lord, Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered: for I will contend with him that contendeth with thee, and I will save thy children.*

...

*This is what the LORD says:*

*Prisoners will be freed from mighty men.*

*Loot will be taken away from tyrants.*

*I will fight your enemies,*

*and I will save your children.*

—GOD’S WORD Translation

#### **15 | [Ezekiel 34:27](#)**

*They shall be safe in their land, and shall know that I am the Lord, when I have broken the bands of their yoke, and delivered them out of the hand of those that served themselves of them.*

Animals’ yokes had wooden pegs fastened on each side of the head with leather thongs called bands. These restrictive devices provided vivid symbols of oppression. [Leviticus 26:13](#) recounts Yahweh’s affirmation “I have broken the bands of your yoke, and made you go upright.” [Jeremiah 2:20](#) declares, “Of old time I have broken thy yoke, and burst thy bands.” And [Isaiah 58:6](#) asks,

“Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?”

## Translation

### 15 | Ezekiel 34:27, 28

*They shall be safe in their land, and shall know that I am the Lord, when I have broken the bands of their yoke, and delivered them out of the hand of those that served themselves of them. . . . and none shall make them afraid.*

...

*. . . my flock will be secure in their land. They will know that I am the LORD when I break the bars of their yoke and rescue them from the power of those who enslave them. . . . and no one will frighten them.*

—Christian Standard Bible

## from Section 5

### 17 | Psalms 5:8

*Lead me, O Lord, in thy righteousness because of mine enemies; make thy way straight before my face.*

In this verse, *righteousness* alludes to Yahweh’s faithfulness to His covenant promise to guide and guard His people. The Psalmist prays that God’s way be clear—not only apparent but also free of temptations or stumbling blocks. “Because of mine enemies” is seen as a reference to mockery and malice from those who oppose God.

## Translation

### 17 | Psalms 5:8, 11, 12

*Lead me, O Lord, in thy righteousness because of mine enemies; make thy way straight before my face. . . . let all those that put their trust in thee rejoice: let them ever shout for joy, because thou defendest them: let them also that love thy name be joyful in thee. For thou, Lord, wilt bless the righteous; with favour wilt thou compass him as with a shield.*

...

*LORD, because of many enemies,  
please lead me in your righteousness.*

*Make your way clear,  
right in front of me. . . .*

*let all who take refuge in you celebrate.*

*Let them sing out loud forever!*

*Protect them*

*so that all who love your name*

*can rejoice in you.*

*Because you, LORD, bless the righteous.*

*You cover them with favor like a shield.*

—Common English Bible

### **17 | Psalms 5:12**

*Thou, Lord, wilt bless the righteous; with favour wilt thou compass him as with a shield.*

**favour (favor):** kindness; approval

### **18 | Acts 9:20, 23, 25**

*Straightway [Saul] preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God. . . . And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him: . . . Then the disciples took him by night, and let him down by the wall in a basket.*

Saul acts immediately on his new understanding of God, acquainting himself with disciples in Damascus and preaching at Jewish worship services. Amazement and disbelief characterize the response to his remarkable turnaround—Jewish officials expect him to kill followers of Christ, and many disciples cannot accept his change of heart (see vv. 21, 26).

Galatians 1:17 mentions the lapse of a period of time—and a sojourn in Arabia—before Saul’s dramatic nighttime rescue in Damascus. Now, just as Saul had pursued Christians with murderous intent, Jews target him. And a sufficient number of believers support Saul to effect his escape over the city wall, away from the watchers at the city gates.

Later, in a letter to the Corinthian church, Saul (by this time called Paul) concludes a moving catalog of his sufferings on behalf of Christ with mention of this escape (see II Corinthians 11:24–33).

### **Translation**

#### **19 | II Timothy 4:18**

*The Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever.*

...

*The Lord will save me when anyone tries to hurt me. The Lord will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. Glory forever and ever be the Lord’s.*

—International Children’s Bible

**from Section 6**

## Translation

### 21 | Psalms 37:28, 29, 31

*The Lord loveth judgment, and forsaketh not his saints; they are preserved for ever: . . . The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein for ever. . . . The law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide.*

. . .

*The LORD loves justice.*

*He will never leave his faithful all alone.*

*They are guarded forever, . . .*

*The righteous will possess the land;*

*they will live on it forever. . . .*

*The Instruction of their God is in their hearts;*

*they don't miss a step.*

—Common English Bible

### 22 | Isaiah 60:18

*Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise.*

## Translation

*Violence will disappear from your land;*

*the desolation and destruction of war will end.*

*Salvation will surround you like city walls,*

*and praise will be on the lips of all who enter there.*

—New Living Translation

Theories about “last times” or “end times” predict that violence and war will cease—as outlined earlier in the book of Isaiah: “They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more” (2:4). Christian teachings emphasize peace as a present fact (see examples in [John 14:27](#); [1 Corinthians 14:33](#); [Philippians 4:7](#)).

Naming of city gates was customary in the ancient Near East. *Salvation* and *Praise* show the entrance to the holy city to be defended by God’s redemptive activity and His people’s response of grateful homage.

To learn more about the *Christian Science Quarterly* Bible Lessons, go to <https://quarterly.christianscience.com>.

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**Cit. 6:** Attridge, Harold W., ed. *The HarperCollins Study Bible.* Rev. ed. New York: HarperCollins, 2006.

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## Related healing ideas

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### Kids' article

## Your secret place

By Alice Swain Bailey

From the August 9, 1982, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*

Do you have a secret place in your house or out in your garden or down the road? A place no one knows about except you? You feel special and safe there. You might go there when you don't want to play with your friends and you just want to be quiet.

Everyone can have another kind of secret place. This place doesn't need to be in the garden or in the house. It is a "place" of thinking called prayer.

Christ Jesus talked a lot about prayer in his Sermon on the Mount—both about how to pray and how not to pray. He pointed out how wrong it was to make a big show out of prayer, to use words or attend church to impress people. Then he said, "When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly" ([Matthew 6:6](#)).

In Jesus' time a house often had a room for storing things, and this room is what the Bible calls a closet. But we learn from the Bible that Jesus prayed in many places—on a mountain, in the Garden of Gethsemane, or in a friend's house with his disciples around him. It's plain that Jesus didn't think it necessary to go to an actual storeroom to pray, and he didn't have to be alone to pray. He was talking about a quiet place of thought.

Christian Science teaches that God is Mind and is everywhere. So when we go to this "closet" of thought, God is there already, seeing His own perfect creation. We reflect God, the only Mind, and as we pray we, too, see ourselves and others as His children, happy and free. This prayer is quiet, full of lovely ideas from God. It leaves out thoughts of fear, hurt, or unimportant things.

Do you remember this verse from a poem by Mary Baker Eddy? It's in the *Christian Science Hymnal*:

Beneath the shadow of His mighty wing;  
In that sweet secret of the narrow way,  
Seeking and finding, with the angels sing:  
"Lo, I am with you always,"—watch and pray.  
([No. 207](#))

This place of prayer, where we seek and find God, is always where we are. God's angels, spiritual thoughts, are with us always. We can be in this secret place any time we want.

## Prayer of assurance

You give us the power to trust in  
Your Word,

To perceive the truth out of all  
that we've heard;

To feel it's enough that Your  
presence is here,

To step firmly forward  
right out of fear.

By Celeste Oakland

From the November 20, 1995, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*

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