



BIBLE LENS

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

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from the **Golden Text**

Isaiah 40:1

Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God.

Some scholars believe that God is speaking to His prophet and a group of angelic messengers in a heavenly council. The repeating of *comfort* provides strong reassurance of restoration and salvation.

One source outlines the circumstances calling for comfort at this time: “. . . society in Judah had utterly disintegrated following the fall of Jerusalem in 586 BC. The deaths caused by the Babylonian invasion, the exile of the aristocracy, and the destruction of the temple gutted Judah of all institutions that had held the society together. . . . What the exiles needed—hope, comfort, tender words, a future—could be found only in the faithfulness of Yahweh, their God.”

from the **Responsive Reading**

Isaiah 40:3

The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

All four Gospels cite the voice “that crieth in the wilderness” as a reference to John the Baptist (see [Matthew 3:1–3](#); [Mark 1:2–4](#); [Luke 3:2–4](#); [John 1:19–23](#)). Christ Jesus testifies of John, “This is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee” ([Matthew 11:10](#)).

from **Section 1**

1 | **Lamentations 2:17**

The Lord hath done that which he had devised; he hath fulfilled his word that he had commanded in the days of old.

Translation

*The LORD has done what he planned;
he has kept his word
that he commanded long ago.*

—New Century Version

Lamentations is the response, in five poems, to extensive national tragedy—most likely the fall of Jerusalem and the loss of Solomon’s Temple during the Babylonian invasion of 586 BC. A scriptural authority explains, “Lamentation is a form of prayer that . . . springs from the hope that nothing about human life is inappropriate for divine attention—no chaos, no atrocity, no sinfulness cuts us off from God.”

2 | **Deuteronomy 7:6, 9, 13**

Thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God: . . . Know therefore that the Lord thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations; . . . And he will love thee, and bless thee, and multiply thee.

Translation

You are holy people. You belong to the Lord your God. . . . So know that the Lord your God is God. He is the faithful God. He will keep his agreement of love for a thousand lifetimes. He does this for people who love him and obey his commands. . . . He will love and bless you. He will make the number of your people grow.

—International Children’s Bible

Israel's status as special to God is a distinct theme in the Hebrew Bible. The Psalmist writes, for instance, "The Lord hath chosen Jacob unto himself, and Israel for his peculiar treasure" ([Psalms 135:4](#)). And [Isaiah 43:10](#) conveys God's declaration "Ye are my witnesses . . . and my servant whom I have chosen."

Christian teachings powerfully expand the designation *chosen* beyond the Jewish nation, as the author of Ephesians announces: "He hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, . . . Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God" ([1:4](#); [2:19](#)).

Covenants are mentioned over two hundred fifty times from Genesis to Malachi. While some texts describe agreements between individuals, the great majority pertain to covenants between God and His people. Usually a divine covenant was announced to a specific person—for example, to Noah (see [Genesis 9:8–17](#)), Abram (see [Genesis 15:18](#); [17:1–13](#)), Moses (see Exodus, [chaps. 20–23](#)), and David (see [II Samuel 7:8–17](#)). As verse 13 indicates, obedience to God's covenants was tied inextricably to spiritual blessings.

3 | [Psalms 71:17, 21](#)

O God, thou hast taught me from my youth: and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works. . . . Thou shalt increase my greatness, and comfort me on every side.

Translation

*O God, you have taught me from my earliest childhood,
and I constantly tell others about the wonderful things you do. . . .
You will restore me to even greater honor
and comfort me once again.*

—New Living Translation

4 | [Luke 4:14, 15, 17–19](#)

Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee: and there went out a fame of him through all the region round about. And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all. . . . And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.

The passage Jesus reads in the synagogue ([Isaiah 61:1, 2](#)) is well known and deeply meaningful to his Jewish listeners. But the Savior is about to proclaim a dramatically different view of its import. A commentator points out: “The people of Jesus’ hometown read the Scriptures as promises of God’s exclusive covenant with them, a covenant that involved promises of deliverance from their oppressors. Jesus came announcing deliverance, but it was not a national deliverance but God’s promise of liberation for all the poor and oppressed regardless of nationality, gender, or race.”

from **Section 2**

5 | [Isaiah 51:3](#)

The Lord shall comfort Zion: he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody.

Translation

The LORD will comfort Israel again

and have pity on her ruins.

Her desert will blossom like Eden,

her barren wilderness like the garden of the LORD.

Joy and gladness will be found there.

Songs of thanksgiving will fill the air.

—New Living Translation

Zion was originally the name for the highest point in the city of Jerusalem. After David captured this stronghold from the Jebusites (see [II Samuel 5:7](#)), it was often called the City of David. Over time, Zion became synonymous with Jerusalem and even the entire nation of Judah. Centuries later, the writer of Hebrews identifies Zion as “the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem” ([12:22](#)).

Comfort and renewal were enduring spiritual promises to beleaguered Judahites. Here these qualities are represented by blossoming plants and glad songs, illustrating God’s abundant care in every wilderness experience.

7 | [John 12:44, 46](#)

Jesus cried and said, He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me. . . . I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness.

Translation

Then Jesus cried out, “Whoever believes in me is really believing in the One who sent me. . . . I have come as light into the world so that whoever believes in me would not stay in darkness.”

—New Century Version

8 | John 14:16, 17, 25–27

I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. . . . These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

Jesus references what he has already told his disciples several times (see also [16:1](#), [4](#), [6](#), [25](#), [33](#)). Alluding to his imminent departure, he now assures his friends that his teachings will not be lost, but will be found through the Holy Spirit. This Comforter, like the Master, is to be sent from God—but is to remain with them permanently.

The peace Jesus pledges, notes a scholar, “is not a peace to be measured by outward circumstances but a peace within the disciples themselves, not the kind that depends on freedom from conflict, but the kind that remains constant when trouble comes.” The Savior’s tender charge to be fearless echoes the words of Hebrew prophets and military leaders over the centuries (see examples in [Deuteronomy 1:21](#); [Joshua 8:1](#); [I Chronicles 28:20](#); [Isaiah 41:10](#)).

from Section 3

9 | Psalms 46:1, 4, 5

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. . . . There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High. God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early.

Translation

God is our place of safety. He gives us strength.

He is always there to help us in times of trouble. . . .

God's blessings are like a river. They fill the city of God with joy.

That city is the holy place where the Most High God lives.

Because God is there, the city will not fall.

God will help it at the beginning of the day.

—New International Reader's Version

Mah^a se, the Hebrew term rendered *refuge*, can signify hope as well. [Joel 3:16](#) promises, “The Lord will be the hope [*mah^a se*] of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel.”

As there is no river in Jerusalem, the river mentioned here is symbolic. A Bible authority calls it “a metaphor for the continual outpouring of the sustaining and refreshing blessings of God.”

Martin Luther, 16th-century German theologian and reformer, is known to have turned to Psalm 46 in periods of trouble, and he used it as the inspiration for his well-loved hymn “Ein' feste Burg ist unser Gott” (“A Mighty Fortress Is Our God”).

11 | [John 13:31](#)

Jesus said, Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him.

Jesus speaks these words immediately after Judas departs to betray him (see [vv. 21–27](#)). The Master is already aware of his impending passion (see [v. 1](#)). “Now” signals his acknowledgment that the final events leading to his crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension are set in motion—and that God's glorification of His Son is confirmed.

12 | [John 15:26](#)

When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me.

Translation

“I will send you the Helper from the Father. He is the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father. When he comes, he will tell about me.”

—International Children’s Bible

from **Section 4**

13 | [Matthew 10:1](#)

When he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease.

Jesus’ closest followers are variously referred to in Scripture as disciples, apostles, or simply “the twelve.” The role of disciple (Greek, *mathētēs*) is one of learner or student. An apostle (*apostolos*) is a messenger or ambassador. In this verse, Matthew calls the twelve “disciples.” In the following verse, prior to recording their commission to preach and heal publicly, he designates them for the first and only time “apostles.”

Many early Christians were known as disciples, and a few besides the twelve were termed apostles. Paul, for instance, introduces himself as “an apostle of Jesus Christ” (see example in [I Corinthians 1:1](#)).

from **Section 6**

15 | [Matthew 5:14, 16](#)

Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. . . . Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

One source suggests: “The light of revelation from God that accompanies Jesus’ announcement of the kingdom is not just carried by his disciples; they are that light. . . . Their good works are produced by the light and life that come from God.”

16 | [II Corinthians 1:3, 4](#)

Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.

Translation

Praise the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! He is the Father who is compassionate and the God who gives comfort. He comforts us whenever we suffer. That is why whenever other people suffer, we are able to comfort them by using the same comfort we have received from God.

—GOD’S WORD Translation

Parakaleō, the Greek verb translated *comfort*, encompasses instruction, consolation, encouragement, and entreaty. In the Gospel of John, a related word—*paraklētos*, rendered *Comforter*—describes the Holy Spirit (see 14:16, 26, citation 8). *Tribulation* and *trouble* are translated from the term *thlipsis*, meaning pressure. It includes afflictions of all kinds as well as the distress and anguish that accompany them.

Expressing gratitude for God’s comfort in the great tribulation he has undergone (see vv. 8–10), Paul offers reassurance to the Christians in Corinth. And he makes clear that the Christly encouragement and comfort they have been given are intended to be shared with others.

Read a related article, “[Mrs. Eddy’s inseparable relationship to Christian Science](http://jsh.christianscience.com/inseparable-relationship)” by Joanne Shriver Leedom, at jsh.christianscience.com/inseparable-relationship.

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