

RELIGION

Scripture of the Week

Colossians 3:15-17

The Power Of The Lord's Right Hand

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The text for the Sunday School lesson (International Series) for next Sunday is Exodus 15:1-10,13. Our churches' Sunday Schools are starting a new series (Dec.-Feb.) on some key songs and prayers of the Bible. This would be a great time to recommit ourselves to studying the Word of God with our families in Sunday School.

How do you picture your God? Is he a vengeful tyrant, looking for an excuse to attack anyone who doesn't obey his whims? A preoccupied celestial manager, without time to really notice or care about our personal predicaments? A doting grandfather who is supposed to give out all kinds of goodies if we only ask nicely?

It is impossible really to see God, to picture him as he really is. That's a tenet of our faith which even many non-Christians can accept. Nevertheless, it is crucially important how we picture God in our minds--what images we use to approximate the character and attributes of our Creator. For these pictures allow us to relate personally to a Person who transcends all space and time, a Person who is vitally important to every one of us. For example, the image of the Lord in Psalm 23 ("The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want") has brought comfort and hope to countless individuals over the centuries.

Hebrew poetry is particularly beautiful because it uses so many emotionally charged images, and allows its pictures to be easily translated into other tongues. In this week's Bible lesson, the "Children of Israel" (the Israelite nation) wrote a song to commemorate the great Exodus from Egypt, and particularly the parting of the Red Sea. [For additional poetry on the Exodus, from a less joyful perspective, read Psalms 105 and 106, especially 106:6-12.] The events of the Exodus serve such a crucial role in the history of that nation, that it was imperative that they preserve its emotional impact in a song. And I'm sure they continued to sing it

for hundreds of years thereafter.

There will always be people who doubt the reality of the great miracles in the Bible--even some who claim to be Christians. The Plaques of Egypt, the parting of the Red Sea, and the miracles in the Wilderness wanderings make easy targets for skeptics and rationalists, but the true disciples of Jesus Christ don't need to be shaken by their scornful attacks. You see, we know the God who created all things, and it's not surprising to us that our God would do such great signs and wonders.

And the LORD is the real Hero of the song the Israelites sang. I'd like to develop a few "word pictures" which describe their mighty God, because he is the same God we Christians worship and serve. With the ancient Children of Israel, we can personalize our relationship with him: "The LORD is my strength and song, and he has become my salvation: he is my God, and ... my father's God, and I will exalt him" (Ex 15:2).

First, my is a warrior! This implies that he is strong and powerful, but it says a lot more. Our God is courageous, ready to come running to our aid, to shield us from the attacking enemy. Like a strong soldier, our God is trained in the arts of war: he has a strong "right hand" and "arm" (15:6, 12,16) which is "glorious in power," that is, skillful in its strength, able to know and do the things which are necessary to win the battle and deliver us.

We need to know that our God will fight our battles, and has the skill in his "right hand" to protect us in our hour of trial. As the gospel chorus teaches us, "What a mighty God we serve!"

Second, my God is the real God! "The Lord is his name" (15:3). "The LORD" is our usual translation of Yahweh, which some have mistakenly transliterated "Jehovah." It is the personal name of God, and it emphasizes two things: that Yahweh is the god who really exists (the name apparently

derived from the Hebrew root "to be"), and that Yahweh keeps his covenant with his own people.

In the Egypt of that day, people worshipped a pantheon of gods, and depicted them using heads and other body parts of animals, attached to a human form. Even those few Egyptians who arose and taught the worship of one god, still identified that god with the sun or some other part of creation. Babylonians, Canaanites, and other civilizations had similar patterns of worship.

The claim of the name Yahweh is that he alone is real, and that all other gods are phony. The plagues in Egypt were especially aimed at the supposed strengths of the Egyptians' gods. Yahweh "defeated" these phony gods by using their "spheres of influence" against their own worshippers. Now Yahweh's victory at the Red Sea conclusively proved his reality to anyone who witnessed it. "Who among the gods is like you, O Yahweh? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, working wonders?" (15:11, based on NIV). In this context, the "Holiness" of Yahweh refers to his transcendence--he is beyond the comprehension of his creation, including you and me.

Third, our God is a saviour! "Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people which thou hast redeemed" (15:13). He doesn't just beat up people, he also rescues his people from danger, and shows compassion on them, and guides them to a place of safety and worship. He brings them to his "holy habitation," probably Mount Sinai, so they can worship him. At its best, our worship of God is not based on fear and anxiety, but on love and intimate fellowship with him. As the sacrifices were introduced later, they often included eating a fellowship meal "before the LORD," in joyful communion with him.

"These pictures of our God might not fit the analytical categories of a systematic theology, but they do speak volumes to the needs of the human heart. Again I say, "What a mighty god we serve!"

Jesus! The Great Physician

We can look to the scriptures for everything in our lives. We have many illnesses and physical infirmities but Jesus, the great healer and physician, has the answer for everything.

Go to these sources:

Matthew
he's a preacher and a teacher

Mark
he's a cleanser and a healer

Luke
he cares for the homeless and the home

John
he works miracles and he calms a raging storm

Matthew 9
he's a hematologist

Mark 5
he's an oncologist

Luke 17
he's a dermatologist

John 8
he's an ophthalmologist

Matthew 9
he's a podiatrist

Mark 13
he's a speech therapist

Luke 7
he's an ENT man

John 14
he's a social worker

We, believers, call him a specialist. No matter what you need -- Jesus is all that you need.

Jesus is indeed everything you need; come rain or shine. He walks and talks to you all the time and when misfortune comes -- to Him we flee to tell Him of our plight, in life.

Jesus has the answer -- because He is the answer.

Behold how good and pleasant it is for Brethren to dwell together in unity
PSALMS: 133

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God's Presence promises Power through Jesus Christ In Good Times and Bad Times
Matthew 11:28

"Come to me all you who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest"

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7:30pm Tuesday Bible Study and Prayer



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10:30 A.M. and 6:30 P.M.

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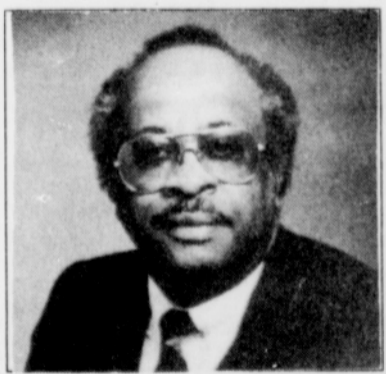
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Theme: Whatever you're going to do for the Lord, do it now

I Peter 4:11

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