

God Omnipotent

Genesis 17:1–8, Revelation 1:1–8

Near the end of the Bible, in Revelation 19, there is a picture of heaven. In context it appears to be a picture of the end of time, when all the saints throughout all of history are gathered in the presence of God to worship the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world; but arguably it is a pulling back of the curtain—that’s the meaning of the word “Revelation¹”: apocalypse, *unveiling*. The book of Revelation pulls back the curtain between the seen and the unseen world—between time and eternity—to give a picture of what is happening *now*, every moment of every day, in the courts of heaven above. The apostle John writes: “After these things I heard a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, ‘Alleluia! Salvation and glory and honor and power belong to the Lord our God!’” He continues: “And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, ‘Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!’”

The title of the message today is “God Omnipotent.” This is the seventh in a series of messages on Westminster Shorter Catechism Q&A 4, “What is God? God is a spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth.”

The word “omnipotent” comes from the Latin meaning *all-powerful*. To have *all* power is to lack *no* power! It is the ability possessed by God alone to do all his holy will. The Christian can say, “Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and honor and power belong to the Lord our God! Hallelujah! For the Lord God *Omnipotent* reigns!” Yes, he reigns! The Christian can sing: “Blessing and honor and glory and *power*, wisdom and riches and strength evermore give ye to him who our battle hath won, whose are the kingdom, the crown, and the throne.”²

Notice with me this teaching in our Old Testament reading today. I have three points: first,

1. God’s omnipotence

We read, “When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, ‘I am Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless.’”

Notice that God took the initiative: “the LORD appeared to Abram.” Here is the God of heaven, the God who *is*. He appeared to Abram. Abram did not ask for this. This is not the first time God has communicated to Abram. The first time was back in Genesis 12, when God called him out of Ur of the Chaldees. There, the text says, “Now the LORD had said to Abram.” The second time was in Genesis 15; there, it says, “the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying . . .” Here, it

¹ Αποκάλυψις *apokalypsis* (Rev. 1:1)

² <https://www.trinitypsalterhymnal.org/hymns/blessing-and-honor-and-glory-and-power/> accessed 9-15-23

says, “the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him” The first time, the Lord *spoke* to him; the second time, Abram saw the Lord in a *vision*; the third time, the Lord *appeared*. Each time, the experience was more intense. God had already told him back in chapter 15 that “one who will come from your own body shall be your heir.” God had told him, “Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them . . . So shall your descendants be.” Abram responded in faith: “he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness”—a verse that is used in the New Testament to establish the biblical doctrine of justification by faith alone. In the intervening chapter, in a desperate attempt to provide a male heir for her husband, Abram’s wife Sarai gave her Egyptian maid Hagar to Abram as his concubine, and Abram fathered Ishmael by her. It had now been thirteen years since Ishmael’s birth. Abram loved his son and wished that he might be the son of the promise. Later, Abraham would pray, “Oh, that Ishmael might live before you” (17:18)—but God had other plans. We are taught in Galatians 4 that Ishmael represents the law given at Mount Sinai, and corresponds to “Jerusalem which now is”—unbelieving Judaism that rejected God’s Messiah and came under judgment—while Isaac, the son of the promise, represents the Jerusalem which is above, the church of Jesus Christ. We who belong to Christ “have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the *heavenly* Jerusalem” (Heb. 12:22).

Ishmael would not be the son of the promise; Abram, now 99 years old, would yet father a child by his wife Sarai. It is possible that Abram, enjoying fatherhood late in life, had stopped praying that God would fulfill the promise he had earlier made to him. So in our Old Testament text this morning the LORD appears to Abram and reveals himself to him by a name that had not heretofore appeared in Holy Scripture: “I am Almighty God” (אֱלֹהֵי שַׁדַּי El Shaddai). Abram would long ponder the meaning of this name. It is a compound name, composed of two Hebrew words. The noun אֱלֹהִים means *power*. The second noun, שַׁדַּי, also means *power*. The phrase אֱלֹהֵי שַׁדַּי occurs six times in all—five times in Genesis:

Gen. 17:1 – (God speaking to Abram): “I am God Almighty.”

Gen. 28:3 – (Isaac speaking to Jacob as he sends him away to take a wife from the daughters of his uncle Laban): “May God Almighty bless you.”

Gen. 35:11 – (the Lord, renewing his covenant with Jacob): “I am God almighty. Be fruitful and multiply.”

Gen. 43:14 – (Jacob, enduring a famine, at length consenting to send his youngest son Benjamin along with his brothers to Egypt, to buy grain): “May God Almighty give you mercy before the man” (Pharaoh).

Gen. 48:3 – (Jacob, on his deathbed, blessing his sons): “God Almighty appeared to me at Luz.”

Ex. 6:3 – (God speaking to Moses after he returned to Egypt and had been rebuffed by Pharaoh, who made the Israelites’ labor more difficult): “I am the

LORD. I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty.” This is the last time the phrase God Almighty (יְהוָה לְאֵל) appears in the biblical text. The second element, יְהוָה, occurs 42 more times, including 31 times in the book of Job, where the term “Almighty” is used the most.

But in our text in Genesis 17, and five other times we have this special name, “God Almighty”—two nouns, both meaning *power*. It’s as if God says, “My name is ‘Mighty Almighty.’” This was the special name by which the living God revealed himself to the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Clearly, the two nouns together convey that God is a God of absolute power: he is God omnipotent. He is fully able to fulfill all the promises he has made to his people.

And so it is also to us in our own day. The Lord has promised to build his church. No matter how much the enemy may persecute the church, God’s promise stands firm. He is God Almighty. He will establish his church. “He must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet.”

As our New Testament text puts it, he has “washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen. ‘I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End,’ says the Lord, ‘who is and who was and who is to come, *the Almighty.*’”

God promises that the kingdom of Christ will prevail, that the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea, that the number of the elect will be as the stars of heaven in multitude, that men and women from every kindred, tribe, tongue and nation will confess Christ, that the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever. Yet as we look at the world around us it appears that the kingdom of Satan is on the ascendancy. Do we believe that God has the power to fulfill all the promises he has made to his people? As we meditate on the name by which he has revealed himself, that should give us hope. He is the Lord God Almighty; nothing is too hard for him; he *will* bring it to pass! Secondly, consider

2. God’s holiness

The Lord tells Abram, “I am Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless.” The ability to move around is a great gift. God didn’t make us to stay in one place all our lives. He made us to move. A family is so happy when a child learns to walk. Little babies are wonderful, and we love to hold them. But as they grow, they become heavier. It is harder to carry them around. When they finally begin to take their first steps, the whole family stands in awe. Those first steps are tentative at first. There are frequent falls. A child needs to learn balance and movement. But

eventually he catches on and he is able to walk on his own. God has given us the ability to learn to walk.

God tells Abram to “walk” before him. “Walk” here is a metaphor for daily living. The Christian life is a journey, and we are to walk. We are to make consistent forward progress in our faith. We are to *walk* worthy of the calling with which we were called. We are not to *walk* as the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God. Rather, we are to *walk* as children of light. Psalm 119 promises, “Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who *walk* in the law of the Lord!”

God says to Abram, “I am Almighty God; walk before Me and be *blameless*.” The word for blameless can be translated *perfect*. When used of a sacrificial lamb, it means *free from blemish*: “Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year” (Ex. 12:5). Here is God’s requirement for mankind: walk before me and be *perfect*.

How can anyone be perfect? People say, “To err is human.” Yet that is not quite right. Our Lord Jesus Christ became man, and he never erred. Adam sinned and brought guilt and condemnation upon the whole human race, but the second Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ, is the perfect man. Jesus did not err.

Are you perfect? If you are honest, you have to admit that you are not. Do you fulfill God’s righteous requirement? Clearly you do not. “All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”

Here is God’s standard for the human race: “Walk before me and be perfect.” We are to walk before God—that is, conscious that he constantly observes everything we do, say and think. We cannot hide from God. All things are open and laid bare before him. “The eyes of the LORD are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.”³ To walk before God means to live one’s life intentionally, aiming to be obedient and please him, endeavoring to hear his “well done.”

Our God is a holy God. He cannot allow sin into his holy presence. This is why each of us has an absolute need for our sins to be laid on Christ, and his perfect righteousness credited to our account. His standard is absolute perfection, and we do not measure up. But Christ does! He alone earned the Father’s commendation: “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” If you want the Father to be pleased with you, then you have to come to him by way of Christ. Humble yourself before him. Say, “Lord, I know that I am a sinner. I know that I have fallen short of your perfect standard. But I believe the gospel. I know that whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. Lord, I call upon you. Save me and make me your child. I yield myself to you. Take me—I’m yours.” This is what God

³ Prov. 15:3

required of Abraham, and this is what he requires of every person. Thirdly, consider

3. God's covenant

“I am Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless. And I will make My covenant between Me and you, and will multiply you exceedingly.” The word translated “make” is literally *give*: “I will *give* my covenant between me and you.” This shows that it is a gracious gift from a loving heavenly Father. Abraham didn’t deserve it, and neither do we. God calls it “*my* covenant.” It is his gift to his covenant people. It was not man’s idea; it was God’s. Before the foundation of the world, the triune God entered into a covenant. The Father gave the eternal Son a people to redeem. From the mass of humanity that would descend from Adam God chose a people for himself—the whole number of the elect. He gave them to the Son. The Lord Jesus would refer to “those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours. . . . Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me.” The Son came into the world to save his people from their sins. Before he returned to heaven he poured out his Spirit upon the church. The Spirit would draw men to Christ, regenerate them and give them a new heart that delights to do the Father’s will.

Do you delight to do the Father’s will? Do you delight to worship him? Or is worship a drudgery, something that you endure? If it is, maybe you’ve forgotten the debt you owe to him. You were not a good, exemplary person who deserved his favor. You were lost and on your way to hell. You could not earn his goodwill. You had no hope. But the Spirit drew you to himself. He opened your eyes and gave you life. He made you to realize your need of him. He set before you the perfect Savior, who took upon himself your nature and was made in the likeness of men. He went to the cross and bore your sins in his own body. He gave you his perfect righteousness. He lifted you out of the pit of despair and set you upon a rock. He put a new song in your heart, even praise to our God. If you do not know what I am talking about, then you are still lost in your sins. Talk to one of the elders. We would love to show you how you can have your sins forgiven and be clothed with the righteousness of Christ.

The Almighty God tells Abram, “I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you. Also I give to you and your descendants after you the land in which you are a stranger, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.” Abraham and his seed would inherit the land of Canaan—ultimately fulfilled in the new heaven and earth. But the greatest promise of all was “I will be your God, I will be *God* to you and your descendants after you.” The greatest promise of the covenant is to have God as our God. The promise of the covenant is “I will be your God, and you shall

be my people, and I myself will dwell in the midst of you.” This is fulfilled in the church, the worshipping community. As the church gathers for worship, we gather in the presence of Christ. The church’s worship today is preparation for heaven, when we will gather with the saints of all the ages to sing the praises of the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world.

The invitation “I am Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless. And I will make My covenant with you” is for us, as well as Abraham. As we are told in Galatians, “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And *if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.*” What we are talking about this morning is not ancient history. The promise is real, and it is for us today. The God we worship is God Omnipotent: Almighty God. He is real, and he is powerful.

There’s an old children’s song that says, “God can do anything, anything, anything; God can do anything but fail.” It teaches a valuable lesson. It emphasizes God’s power. But there are actually a few things God cannot do: he cannot lie, break his word, deny himself, or cease to exist. Were he to do any of those things, he would not be the God of Scripture. He would be no better than the fickle Greek and Roman gods of long ago—so-called gods who were narcissistic, vain, self-centered, scheming and immoral.

Man is *not* almighty, but we have a mighty Savior. We are weak, and he is strong.

The US military is in many ways the greatest in world. The US military budget is three times that of Communist China and fifteen times that of Russia. But there are limits. In a recent interview the president let slip that the US is low on artillery ammunition. As it prolongs the war in Ukraine, the US is running out of ammunition. We have overextended ourselves. The realization that the US is *not* omnipotent is dawning on many thoughtful people.

But God *is* omnipotent. He does not lack the resources to fulfill all his promises to his covenant people. As the Psalter puts it, “My Shepherd will supply my needs; Jehovah is his name.” Nothing in all creation can prevent him from fulfilling his promises.

Our New Testament text is in perfect agreement: “I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty [ὁ παντοκράτωρ].”

The church’s God is worthy of worship because he has sufficient power to do all his holy will. Christian, your God is omnipotent—absolutely all-powerful!

Ephesians tells us that in him—that is, in Christ the Lord—“we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works *all things* according to the counsel of His will.”

What does this mean for us? In a nutshell it means that God is *able* to do all his holy will. There can be no doubt about this. Commenting on the words of the Apostles Creed, “I believe in God, the Father *Almighty*, Creator of heaven and earth,” Heidelberg Catechism Lord’s Day 9 says this: “I do not doubt he will . . . turn to my good whatever adversity he sends upon me in this vale of tears. He is *able* to do this because he is almighty God; he *desires* to do this because he is a faithful Father.”

Yes, the God of heaven is “almighty God”—God omnipotent! This is the consistent teaching of holy Scripture; it is wholly unambiguous and irrefutable. There is no getting around it.

Since the Fall, history is a fight to the death between the kingdom of Christ and the kingdom of Satan. Only one will arise the victor, and it is not Satan!

The Bible says, “If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.” To confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus is salvation—being transferred from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God’s dear Son.

The Christian can indeed say, “Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and honor and power belong to the Lord our God! Hallelujah! For the Lord God *Omnipotent* reigns!” Yes, he reigns! Are you on his team? Are you absolutely committed to his being Lord of your life? Does he reign without a rival in your heart? Before him every knee shall bow, for he is almighty. Amen.