

“God Alone Is Great.”  
 Pastor Sam Richards  
 29 December 2024  
 Texts: Psalm 96:1-8

—Jean Baptiste Massillon (June 1663-September 1742)  
**A Call to Worship the Lord the Righteous Judge.**

**96:1 Sing to the Lord a new song;  
 Sing to the Lord, all the earth.  
 2 Sing to the Lord, bless His name;  
 Proclaim good tidings of His salvation from day to day.  
 3 Tell of His glory among the nations,  
 His wonderful deeds among all the peoples.  
 4 For great is the Lord and greatly to be praised;  
 He is to be feared above all gods.  
 5 For all the gods of the peoples are [a]idols,  
 But the Lord made the heavens.  
 6 Splendor and majesty are before Him,  
 Strength and beauty are in His sanctuary.  
 7 [b]Ascribe to the Lord, O families of the peoples,  
 [c]Ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.  
 8 [d]Ascribe to the Lord the glory of His name;  
 Bring an [e]offering and come into His courts<sup>1</sup>.**

A great French preacher, Fr. Massillon (17th-18th century) famously declared “God alone is great.” And centuries prior, Jesus had declared, **None is good but God alone.** (Mark 10:18) I thought it fitting to close out the old year (2024) with a call to worship God in His greatness and His goodness. And to do so with the gusto of gladness, or on the wings of joy—in keeping with the new joys, and glad tidings announced by the angels at the birth of Christ! **I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.** (Luke 2:10 Good news proclaimed to the hearts of all mankind—even that the time is fulfilled, and the Savior of all has been birthed into this present world order. The most entire, total disruption of all time, all recorded and prerecorded history has occurred in real time, in real space. At that point in time, God ceased to be just a philosophical, or theological consideration—leaving the realm of abstract thought, or ideas about God as critically, a seismically as a giant meteor, or asteroid colliding with the face of the earth—reshaping everything through violent upheaval, mountains tossed aside like a wind-borne handkerchief. With a roar, and fire and plumes of dust and debris! That site. That location would never be the same again—not ever. Such was the entrance of the Savior into this world, abrupt, physical, undeniably forceful and real. It was great. Enormous even.

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<sup>1</sup> Footnotes

- a. Psalm 96:5 Or *non-existent things*
- b. Psalm 96:7 Lit *Give*
- c. Psalm 96:7 Lit *Give*
- d. Psalm 96:8 Lit *Give*
- e. Psalm 96:8 Or *meal offering*

So, the event wasn't just a matter of words captured in a song, a poem, a sermon even. It was *Dabar* (Heb. or 'amar' when God is speaking to man) the active, powerful instrument for executing God's will:

***Dabar* means "to speak into being," the Word of God has everything in it to bring it to pass. Not only does it have everything in it to bring it to pass, the Word of God once spoken, goes out, and executes what has been spoken. That is why God says His Word will not return to Him void but it will fulfill [word and deed]. Further, God creates the world by His word (Genesis 1:1; Isaiah 48:13; Psalms 33:9)<sup>2</sup>**

I am not sure everyone can follow me on likening the nativity to the crashing of an asteroid but that is irrelevant to my point which is this: the glad tidings, of great joy to all mankind sent to earth from the Creator of all the families on the face of the earth was world altering! And the new songs birthed by the birth of the Christ child ushered in a new dispensation. This new age was connected to

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<sup>2</sup> The word ***dabar*** (Hebrew: דָּבָר) means "word", "talk" or "thing" in Hebrew.<sup>[1][2]</sup> *Dabar* occurs in various contexts in the [Hebrew Bible](#).

The [Septuagint](#), the oldest translation of the Hebrew Bible into Greek, uses the terms *rhema* and *logos* as equivalents and uses both for *dabar*.<sup>[3][4]</sup>

In [Christianity](#), the [Old Testament](#) concept of "word event" represented by *dabar* carries over to the [New Testament](#) where revelation can be seen as events explained by words.<sup>[5][clarification needed]</sup> See Craig M. Nelson, Teleology and Structural Directedness, *Heythrop Journal* 2019 [ISSN 0018-1196](#) page79-94.

[References\[edit\]](#)

- <sup>1</sup> ^ Osborne, William L. "The Meaning of Words". In *Ancient World* by [Ralph D. Winter](#) 2006 [ISBN 0-87808-557-2](#) page 185 [\[1\]](#)
- <sup>2</sup> ^ *The etymology and syntax: (in continuation of the elements) of the Hebrew Language* by Hyman Hurwitz 1841 ASIN B0008AHQPO page 13 [\[2\]](#)
- <sup>3</sup> ^ *Theological dictionary of the New Testament, Volume 1* by Gerhard Kittel, Gerhard Friedrich, Geoffrey William Bromiley 1985 [ISBN 0-8028-2404-8](#) page 508 [\[3\]](#)
- <sup>4</sup> ^ *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia: Q-Z* by Geoffrey W. Bromiley 1995 [ISBN 0-8028-3784-0](#) page 1102 [\[4\]](#)
- <sup>5</sup> ^ *Christian tradition today* by Jeffrey C. K. Goh 2004 [ISBN 90-429-0937-4](#) page 303 [\[5\]](#)

[Wikipedia](#)

**Word Origin:** From the root verb דָּבַר (*dabar*), meaning "to speak" or "to declare."

**Corresponding Greek / Hebrew Entries:** - **λόγος (logos)** - **Strong's Greek**

**3056:** Often used in the New Testament to refer to the "word" of God or Jesus as the "Word" made flesh.- **ῥῆμα (rhema)** - **Strong's Greek 4487:** Refers to the spoken word or utterance, often used in the context of God's spoken word. **Usage:** The Hebrew word "dabar" is a versatile term that primarily means "word" or "speech." It can refer to a spoken word, a command, a matter, or a thing. In the context of the Bible, "dabar" often signifies the word of God, His commands, or His promises. It is used to convey the idea of communication, whether divine or human, and can also refer to events or actions as "things."

**Cultural and Historical Background:** In ancient Hebrew culture, words were considered powerful and significant. The spoken word was seen as an extension of one's character and authority. This is especially true for the word of God, which was believed to have creative and transformative power. The concept of "dabar" reflects the importance of communication and the belief that words can shape reality. In the biblical narrative, God's "dabar" is often associated with His covenantal promises and His guidance for His people.

[Strong's Concordance #1695](#)

the former dispensation, but was a fulfillment of the same—it was great news and it was good news.

Perhaps you know the little table grace: “God is great and God is good. Let us thank Him for our food. Amen.” Short, sweet, simple and sublime. If you don’t use a table grace, this is a great and good one to use!

**Sing unto the Lord a new song! All the earth!** . . . exclusively sung for Jehovah God, or Yahweh, or Father God as you like but they are not songs for Vishnu, Shiva, Jupiter, Neptune. Songs for the one true God and not ten thousand substitutes. **He is to be feared above all gods. 5 For all the gods of the peoples are [a]idols.** He stands alone in greatness and goodness—**there is none beside Him.** (Isaiah 45:5) *None besides, none compares, none is equal to, or superior to our God.* And this God has done something unprecedented, unrepeatable, impossible to duplicate—unique in consequences of goodness, mercy, love and greatness—he has given us a Son. There is nothing depraved, lascivious, wanton, dismal, or degrading in this gift at all—it is pure goodness. And supremely awesome, or great. No more mourning, searing, banding, cutting or slicing—or bloodletting or dying entailed. Self-torture, flagellants, scrounging and bruising are gone with the songs of Balaam! Over, finished, canceled to be supplanted and forgotten. And on the cutting floor of cultural deletion we find the national songs of viral gods . . . so many foolish songs (war songs, heroic songs) cut out so that the pure, holy, heavenly and pleasant remain.

But that is not all, for this replacement signals the end of the Babel-scattering—all the families everywhere united in songs of glad adoration—the curse of discordance is being ended in this good proclamation. The Savior of all has arrived! Various tongues blend on their way back to Zion! People abandoned the vanity of their former ways. They are emerging out from under the sad necessities of sin and coming into the light! Glory. The bondage to corruption is ending on the fires of resurrection life. Forgiveness sears away their sin. All are entering into the glorious liberty secured for us by the Son, by his atonement and his salvation. Families from every territory and terrain known to mankind are on this pilgrimage. And that is just verse one.

Singing thrice, thrice is enjoined upon us! The strand of the sacred trinity seems embedded here in our liberation. Unitarianism is plainly about units and is too cold to reach this high, too abstracted and cerebral to warm the heart, put fire in the soul. Father, Son and Holy Spirit is more beloved, more relatable, more engage able, met in his names, offices, functions and His three persons as revealed in Scripture.

Salvation outshines creation, provision and protection, too. Salvation is a great light as Jesus is the light of the world! And that light shines brighter day by day right up until the day of His coming. We are saved. Not merely sustained. Our praises should follow that light! There is a sense in which it is always new, always suitable, sure, perfect and pure and that is what we must constantly declares by songs, sermons and singing, by Sabbath services and weekday services, by our ever-deepening experience of grace, truth and love—for that is the essence of our soul’s salvation and triumph. Salvation to the uttermost! Sing

out glorious, free grace until the surrounds resonate with it—along with all the attending armies of the sky. And so, verse two.

This is before all else, **declaring His glory among the heathens and his wonders among all people.** (v. 3) His salvation is His glory; it is the gospel which glorifies Him most and, of course, that is what we have to publish far and wide. **Things that angels longed to look into! [It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things.** 1 Peter 1:12 NJKV] The miracles, signs and wonders are so attention-grabbing that it is healthy to be reminded that they are not the main events. Jesus wasn't sent from heaven to perform miracles etc; no, he was sent to seek, save and rescue a lost human race—**bringing many sons to glory!** (Hebrews 2:10) How lightly do those hold this high commission when they carry on as the worldly, indistinguishable from heathens, or worldlings! We do dishonor our Savior, and denigrate His great gift of salvation when we do so! The vices and cruelties of Christians in name only are wickedly harmful. Putting it plainly, the gospel should be a means of honor and our entire history should be honorable given the great goodness of our Lord and Savior. And if that should suggest that He be respected in all we do, that would be a point well-taken. It would be marvelous indeed.

In the Son, wonders of love, wisdom, mercy, grace and power sere openly displayed and these things are what the lost need to witness in us, and hear from us in all sincerity and without hypocrisy. These are the works that last, the marvels. And no one is too degraded, or too cultured, too refined, or too savage to be transformed by the wonders. They display the greatness of God excellently. Alteration of character, the exchange of nature, **leopards may not be able to change their spots**, but lost sinners can; they can become saints, holy ones, worthy of applause. Greatness and goodness together, in union, in evidence is us—that's the gig! Let our praise be proportionate and pointed. Not diluted, too cautious, too puny, hesitant, careful—but warm, exuberant, full and joyful! Not our Lazarus sleeping, but, to the glory of God, raised, alive forever.

Such a God with such power is to be revered, feared, honored and respected. The dread of lesser gods is superstition; but a flush on the holy face of a saint enhances one's beauty. **For all the gods of the peoples are idols—non-existent things, But the Lord made the heavens.** v. 5. Mere images fashioned of wood, straw, metal, or stone! They see nothing, know nothing, say nothing because they are vanities—fervent, zealous and passionate worship doesn't move them. IN constant, **God made the heavens! His works are real and they testify to His name. The heavens declare the glory of God!** From His masterful arch fall rain, snow and dews. His voice is in the thunder, earthquake and fire. He is the author of all existences—no one exists apart from His being. He is without rival, or equal even . . . or superior; singular in splendor, magnificent.

Therefore **splendor and majesty are before Him, Strength and beauty are in His sanctuary,** v. 6. Though our best pageants on earth can barely mimic the

grandeur of His heavenly court, real majesty and genuine sovereignty are abiding attendants on His throne! **Strength and beauty** and not raw, brute power—nor fragile beauty, are the walls of his house. It is all a matter of sublime beauty and He is seated in the midst! In His presence beauty is a joy forever—no mere outward show, nor costly robes do display His grandeur. Rather in holiness, wisdom, justice, mercy and grace are attributes of His court's grandeur . . . with description denying dignity . . . and His news and jewels are of a like quality and essence. For everything is essential around Him, the best of the very best.

**Give to the Lord, you kindreds of mankind, of all the people. Give to Him glory and strength—as due His Name, or befitting His character!** Give this as your offering or praise when you come into His presence. Be all worship. Repeat yourself. Write thereof flaming sonnets in praise of Him! High praise, high poetry ages well; not penetrates the heart and enlivens the soul with invocational worship: **Glory to God in the Highest.** We can all be authentic, even if original is a stretch. The family of God at worship—this is calling, destiny and vocation all in one. Recognize God as God. **Amen.**