

# Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise

274

Author Walter Chalmers Smith

Composer Welsh hymn tune, Caniadau y Cyssegr, 1839

1 Corinthians 2: 6-16

Isaiah 6: 1-8

1 Timothy 1: 12-17

James 1: 17-27

## Thoughts on the Text

Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

We 21st Century Christians tend to translate these words incorrectly, and the result can be that our worship is hindered. We know that we do not see God, and we can quickly feel that we are not relating to Him, that He is a superhero who has no use for us. We cannot hear His voice. And perhaps—sometimes—we give up. Instead of having the Revised Version, we have the reversed vision.

Immortal does not mean that God is Hercules, walking around looking to kill our Medusas and scour the Augean stables we have made of our lives. Do not misunderstand—God certainly does, at times, choose to slay our monsters and clean up our messes, but He is immortal not because He is a hero. He is immortal because He is forever.

Invisible does not mean that God is transparent, just as silent as light does not mean that God avoids the creaky stairs. We read scripture about the unseen God, and our minds flash to Halloween and bad movies as we think of mysterious creatures that creep about in our world, desperately seeking to avoid detection. The truth is that God does not sneak up on us; just the opposite is true. He is always here. Our humanity cannot comprehend His brilliance – it is rather like trying to watch a DVD on a VCR. There is a lot to see and hear on the disk, but if you do not have the right equipment, the movie is invisible and silent. Too, our stumbles in faith block our view, for without faith, the substance of things not seen, it is impossible to see Him. And let's be honest, a lot of the time God is invisible because we do not look for Him.

Naught changeth Thee does not mean that God is stubborn. God responds to prayer and to the needs of His children. He parts seas and stops His planned journey in order to eat at the home of a short tax collector. But His nature and His strength do not change. We do not naturally recognize that constancy, because we cannot relate to it—while we flourish today, we will wither tomorrow.

His being the only wise one does not mean that we are stupid. Instead it shows that the source of wisdom, the only fount from which wisdom flows, is God. That is why a proper definition of wisdom is the ability to see things as God sees them.

If the angels around the throne cannot look at Him, then why should we worry about our reversed vision? Worship anyway. Our puny, sinful, human eyes cannot see Him, but that is because He is hidden by His own splendor.

The saints of this world, whom you see and whom you feel that you cannot imitate, are not serving and worshiping because they see God better than you do or because they have heard a great audible voice that has spelled out the Master's direction for their life. They serve because they believe. Christ's church walks by faith, not by sight. And we worship in faith. God is greater than our hearts, and our eyes, and our ears. But He has given us life, and He longs for us to live with Him forever.

Now unto the king eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory and power and dominion now and forever more. Amen. ©2009 Lyn Robbins