

# 1 Timothy 1:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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

## Analysis

**Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.** Paul breaks into spontaneous doxology, overwhelmed by God's mercy demonstrated in his salvation. This ascription of praise uses four magnificent titles for God. "King eternal" (basilei tōn aiōnōn, βασιλεῖ τῶν αἰώνων) literally means "King of the ages"—God rules over all time and history. His kingdom is everlasting, transcending all earthly kingdoms that rise and fall.

"Immortal" (aphthartō, ἀφθάρτω) means incorruptible, imperishable, not subject to decay or death. Unlike human rulers who age and die, God possesses inherent, eternal life. "Invisible" (aoratō, ἀοράτω) emphasizes God's spiritual nature—He cannot be seen with physical eyes or represented by material images (Exodus 20:4). We know Him through His self-revelation in Scripture and supremely in Christ (John 1:18; Colossians 1:15).

"The only wise God" (monō sophō theō, μόνῳ σοφῷ θεῷ) asserts God's unique wisdom. All true wisdom originates in Him (Job 12:13; Romans 11:33-36). The ascription concludes with "honour and glory" (timē kai doxa, τιμὴ καὶ δόξα)—the recognition of God's supreme worth and the radiance of His perfect attributes. "For ever and ever" (eis tous aiōnas tōn aiōnōn, εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων)—literally "unto the ages of the ages"—expresses unending duration. "Amen" confirms the truth and sincerity of this praise.

## Historical Context

---

Jewish doxologies praising God's eternal nature, wisdom, and glory appear throughout the Old Testament (1 Chronicles 29:10-13; Nehemiah 9:5; Psalm 41:13; 72:19). Paul's doxology follows this pattern while incorporating distinctly Christian understanding of God's character revealed in Christ. The contrast between God's eternal, invisible, incorruptible nature and the visible, temporal, corruptible idols worshiped in Ephesus would have been stark.

Ephesus was home to the magnificent temple of Artemis, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. This temple housed a statue believed to have fallen from heaven (Acts 19:35). The cult of Artemis represented typical pagan religion—worship of visible, material representations of deity. Paul's emphasis on God's invisibility and spiritual nature contradicted fundamental pagan assumptions about how deity should be worshiped.

Roman imperial cult was growing during this period, with emperors receiving divine honors and worship. Describing God as the only true King, eternal and immortal while earthly rulers die, carried political implications. Christians affirmed Caesar's legitimate civil authority (Romans 13:1-7) but reserved worship for God alone, refusing to participate in emperor worship—a stance that increasingly brought persecution.

## Related Passages

---

**John 15:13** — Greatest form of love

**1 John 4:8** — God is love

## Study Questions

---

1. How regularly does your study of doctrine lead to spontaneous worship and praise like Paul's doxology?
2. In what ways do you maintain appropriate reverence and awe before God's transcendent majesty?

3. How can you graciously yet firmly maintain God's uniqueness in pluralistic contexts that pressure toward religious relativism?

## Interlinear Text

---

τῷ G3588	δὲ G1161	βασιλεῖ G935	τῶν G3588	αἰώνων G165	ἀφθάρτῳ G862	ἀοράτῳ G517	μόνῳ G3441
	<b>Now</b>	<b>unto the King</b>		<b>and ever</b>	<b>immortal</b>	<b>invisible</b>	<b>the only</b>
σοφῷ G4680	θεῷ G2316	τιμῇ G5092	καὶ G2532	δόξα G1391	εἰς G1519	τοὺς G3588	αἰώνων G3588
	<b>wise</b>	<b>God</b>	<b>be honour</b>	<b>and</b>	<b>glory</b>	<b>for</b>	<b>and ever</b>
αἰώνων G165	ἀμήν G281						
<b>and ever</b>	<b>Amen</b>						

## Additional Cross-References

---

**Jude 1:25** (Glory): To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.

**Revelation 19:1** (Glory): And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God:

**1 Chronicles 29:11** (Kingdom): Thine, O LORD, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O LORD, and thou art exalted as head above all.

**Revelation 17:14** (Kingdom): These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful.

**Colossians 1:15** (References God): Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature:

**Revelation 19:16** (Kingdom): And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.

**Psalms 45:6** (Kingdom): Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre.

**Romans 1:23** (Glory): And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.

**Matthew 6:13** (Kingdom): And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

**Revelation 19:6** (Kingdom): And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.