

1 Timothy 6:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen.

Analysis

Who only hath immortality (ὁ μόνος ἔχων ἀθανασία, ho monos echōn athanasian)—'who alone possesses immortality.' Athanasia means immortality, deathlessness—from a (not) and thanatos (death). God alone is inherently immortal; creatures possess life derivatively, as His gift. **Dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto** (φῶς οἰκῶν ἀπρόσιτον, phōs oikōn aprositon)—'dwelling in unapproachable light.' Aprositōs means unapproachable, inaccessible.

Whom no man hath seen, nor can see (ὃν εἶδεν οὐδεὶς ἀνθρώπων οὐδὲ ἰδεῖν δύναται, hon eiden oudeis anthrōpōn oude idein dynatai)—'whom no one has seen or can see.' God is invisible, transcendent, beyond human perception. **To whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen** (ὣ τιμὴ καὶ κράτος αἰώνιον· ἀμήν, hō timē kai kratos aiōnion· amēn)—'to whom be honor and eternal dominion. Amen.' Timē is honor. Kratos is power, might, dominion.

Paul's doxology celebrates God's transcendence: He alone is immortal, dwells in inaccessible light, is invisible, possesses eternal honor and power. This vision of God's glory motivates faithful stewardship—we serve not for human applause but for the approval of the only Potentate, King of kings, Lord of lords.

Historical Context

In a world where emperors claimed divinity and demanded worship, Paul's doxology asserts the true God's absolute uniqueness. Only He is immortal; only He dwells in inaccessible light; only He is invisible and eternal. Every knee will bow—not to Caesar but to the King of kings. This theology sustained Christians facing imperial persecution—their God reigns supreme, despite earthly powers' pretensions.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. What does God's 'unapproachable light' teach about His holiness and transcendence?
2. How does God's invisibility relate to His revelation in Christ, who is 'the image of the invisible God'?
3. Why does Paul end with doxology—how does worship of God's glory motivate faithful living?

Interlinear Text

ὁ	μόνος	ἔχων	ἀθανασίαν	φῶς	οἰκῶν	ἀπρόσιτον
Who	only	hath	immortality	in the light	dwelling	can approach unto
G3588	G3441	G2192	G110	G5457	G3611	G676
ὃν	ἰδεῖν	οὐδεὶς	ἀνθρώπων	οὐδὲ	ἰδεῖν	δύναται·
to whom	hath seen	no man	no man	nor	hath seen	can
G3739	G1492	G3762	G444	G3761	G1492	G1410
ὃν	τιμῇ	καὶ	κράτος	αἰώνιον	ἀμήν	
to whom	be honour	and	power	everlasting	Amen	
G3739	G5092	G2532	G2904	G166	G281	

Additional Cross-References

1 Timothy 1:17 (Eternal Life): Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

John 1:18 (Parallel theme): No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.

1 John 1:5 (Light): This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

Psalms 90:2 (Eternal Life): Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God.

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

John 6:46 (Parallel theme): Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he which is of God, he hath seen the Father.

Exodus 3:14 (Parallel theme): And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.

Revelation 1:6 (Parallel theme): And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

Revelation 22:5 (Light): And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.

Revelation 4:11 (Parallel theme): Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

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