

Psalms 18:31

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For who is God save the LORD? or who is a rock save our God?

Analysis

For who is God save the LORD? or who is a rock save our God? This rhetorical question forms David's powerful declaration of Yahweh's absolute uniqueness. The Hebrew *mi-Eloah* (מִי־אֱלֹהִים, "who is God") uses *Eloah*, the singular form of *Elohim*, emphasizing deity in general. "Save the LORD" (*mibalad Yahweh*, מִבַּלְעָדִי יְהוָה) means "except Yahweh," asserting exclusive claim—no other being deserves the title "God."

The second question "who is a rock save our God?" (*mi-tsur zulati Eloheinu*, מִי־צוּר זולָתִי אֱלֹהֵינוּ) employs *tsur* (צוּר), meaning rock, cliff, boulder—symbolizing stability, permanence, protection, and refuge. Ancient Near Eastern peoples often built fortresses on rocky outcroppings; the metaphor conveys security and immovability. Pagan cultures worshiped various gods and carved idols from stone, but David proclaims that only Yahweh truly provides rock-solid stability.

This psalm (duplicated in 2 Samuel 22) celebrates God's deliverance from enemies, particularly Saul. The rhetorical questions demand the answer "No one!"—affirming monotheism against surrounding polytheism. Paul later applies this exclusive claim to Christ (1 Corinthians 10:4, "that Rock was Christ"), revealing Jesus as Yahweh incarnate. The passage establishes foundational theology: God alone deserves worship, trust, and allegiance—all competing claims to deity are fraudulent.

Historical Context

Psalm 18's superscription attributes it to David "when the LORD delivered him from all his enemies and from Saul." This likely dates to David's consolidation of power after becoming king (circa 1000 BC) or possibly later when reflecting on God's faithfulness throughout his life. David experienced constant danger from Saul's jealous pursuit, Philistine threats, internal rebellions (Absalom), and warfare establishing Israel's kingdom.

Ancient Near Eastern polytheism surrounded Israel. Canaanites worshiped Baal, Asherah, and Molech. Egyptians had elaborate pantheons. Mesopotamian cultures served numerous deities. Each people group claimed their gods were supreme. Against this backdrop, Israel's radical monotheism—one God, Yahweh, creator and sustainer of all—was revolutionary and socially isolating.

The "rock" metaphor appears throughout Old Testament (Deuteronomy 32:4, 15, 18, 31; 1 Samuel 2:2; Psalm 19:14, 28:1, 62:2). Moses called God "the Rock, his work is perfect" (Deuteronomy 32:4). This imagery resonated in Palestine's rocky terrain where limestone cliffs provided natural fortresses (Masada, Petra). Early Christians saw these Old Testament "rock" passages as messianic prophecy fulfilled in Christ, the cornerstone rejected by builders (Matthew 21:42, 1 Peter 2:4-8).

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How does exclusive monotheism (only Yahweh is God) challenge modern religious pluralism?
2. What competing "rocks" or sources of security tempt us to trust instead of God?

3. Why is God's uniqueness essential to Christian faith rather than peripheral?
4. How does recognizing Jesus as "the Rock" deepen our understanding of Old Testament theology?
5. What practical implications flow from confessing God alone as our rock and refuge?

Interlinear Text

כִּי	מִי	אֵל לֹאֵה	מַבְלֵעַד	יְהוָה	וּמִי	צֹר
H3588	H4310	For who is God	save	the LORD	H4310	or who is a rock
		H433	H1107	H3068		H6697

יִצְלֵת	אֱלֹהֵינוּ
save	our God
H2108	H430

Additional Cross-References

Deuteronomy 32:31 (Parallel theme): For their rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges.

Psalms 86:8 (References God): Among the gods there is none like unto thee, O Lord; neither are there any works like unto thy works.

Isaiah 45:5 (References God): I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me:

Deuteronomy 32:39 (References God): See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god with me: I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand.

2 Samuel 22:32 (Salvation): For who is God, save the LORD? and who is a rock, save our God?

1 Samuel 2:2 (References God): There is none holy as the LORD: for there is none beside thee: neither is there any rock like our God.

