

Broomfield



# PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH MINISTRY OF THE WORD

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## Our God Reigneth, Part 2

### They'll take care of themselves

Most of you know that for the past three years I have enjoyed Bee-keeping with Ben Spriggs — he has been a wonderful teacher.

When we began we placed our hives in what we knew would be a temporary location. The owner was selling the property and so whenever the sale came to pass we would need to move our hives. At the time I expressed concern about finding a place that would be free from — well for lack of a better phrase — juvenile delinquency. I didn't want our hives to be subject to vandalism.

Ben's response made me smile. In essence he said, "Greg, our hives will take care of themselves. If anyone bothers them, the vandal will be the one who finds himself in trouble."

Such is the lesson we learn in this text when it comes to God! It was 1104 BC. God's people found themselves in rebellion against God such that the Lord, in love, deigned to discipline them. Well as part of His correction, God allowed the Philistines not only to conquer Israel, but also to capture the most important religious article in Judaism at that time — the Ark of the Covenant, the symbol of God's love for His people.

Our text is the record of what happened to the Ark after it was taken by the Philistines.

If there is any message in 1 Samuel 5-6, it is this: God can take care of Himself because, brothers and sisters, "OUR GOD REIGNETH!"

### God is Glorious

Now, last time we saw how he manifested Himself as the King of kings and Lord of lords. This time we will learn that God indeed is glorious!

1 Samuel 5:6, "**But the hand of the LORD was heavy upon them of Ashdod**, and he destroyed them, and smote them with emerods, even Ashdod and the coasts thereof."

Ashdod was one of the five capital cities of the Philistines. It was a coastal city three miles off the Mediterranean Sea. And as a Philistine capital it oversaw the region North of Ashkelon and West of

Ekron.<sup>1</sup>

Ashdod was significant in Philistine history on account of the elaborate Dagonic temple that had been erected there. In fact, as you look at a map, you notice that the Philistines bypassed Ekron (another capital city further north and closer to Ebenezer) in order to bring the ark to Ashdod. The Philistines wanted to present the Ark to their victorious warrior god, Dagon, whose northern temple was in Ashdod.

## The Problem

1 Samuel 5:6, “But the hand of the LORD was heavy upon them of Ashdod, **and he destroyed<sup>2</sup> them, and smote<sup>3</sup> them with emerods<sup>4</sup>, even Ashdod and the coasts thereof.**”

It wasn't enough that God humbled Dagon in the false-deity's stronghold,<sup>5</sup> we read here that God ravaged the city and its territories! Notice the key words.

- The term *destroyed* or *ravaged* indicates desolation caused by some great disaster. The force of the word carries with it a sense of horror on the part of the one ravaged.
- The term *smote* means to hit, strike or wound. It is used in a variety of ways in Scripture. When used of God, it means to “bring judgment upon.”
- The term *emerods* or *tumors*<sup>6</sup> references a swelling of the buboes. It is used to describe boils, swellings, bumps, boils, and eruptions of the skin.<sup>7</sup>
- And the Septuagint (LXX) adds that rats appeared in their land. This important addition helps us understand the nature of the plague in this text. While the Majority Text omits this, nevertheless it is supported by the readings of the Majority Text in 1 Samuel 6:4, 11.

Such was the devastation that the Lord brought to Ashdod.

Yet what specifically was the judgment?

Based on the pathology/evidence, most commentators suggest that God sent a strain of the Black Death or Bubonic plague on Ashdod.<sup>8</sup> This was indeed a severe thing. It was carried by the fleas that were on

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Samuel 6:17, 18; 27:5ff indicate that each Philistine capital city was responsible for the oversight of the other towns in its region.

<sup>2</sup> שָׁמַם shamem

<sup>3</sup> נָכַח nakah

<sup>4</sup> תְּחֹרֶה t@chor

<sup>5</sup> Compare 1 Samuel 5:1-5

<sup>6</sup> Compare Deuteronomy 28:27. This was promised by God to those who violated His covenant.

<sup>7</sup> The KJV translates the word *emerods* whereas more modern versions render the word *tumor*. *Emerods* is a variation of the term *hemorrhoids*. According to older dictionaries the term *emerods* specifically describes a swelling of the buboes. The term *bubonocoele* could be substituted for the term *emerods*.

Actually the text here is a Kethib/Qere in which the Massoretes supplied the vowels for another word which meant to “strain at the stool.” Therefore when this passage was read, what was spoken was the word for “straining at the stool,” but what was actually read in the text is our word. Driver suggested that the explanation for this Kethib/Qere was housed in the fact that the original word was thought to be offensive and thus the spoken substitution was in the interests of euphemism.

<sup>8</sup> A suggestion adopted by older commentators, like Josephus, was that the Philistines were afflicted with dysentery (Antiquities vi. 1.1.). Today, this doesn't have many adherents. Dysentery has many of the same grievous symptoms as the bubonic plague.

Clarke's commentary states, “The Vulgate says, Et percussit in secretiori parte natium; "And he smote them in the more secret

rats/mice. Symptoms of the plague include high fever accompanied by a severe headache, vomiting, delirium, and a swelling of the buboes. The disease causes and intense desire to sleep, where if permitted, death comes because the patient drowns in his own blood. The Black Death is so severe that up to seventy-five percent of the population dies<sup>9</sup>.

Now if this was the disease mentioned in this text — and it most likely was — we conclude that the Philistines here were confronted with a brutal plague.

## Their Response

1 Samuel 5:7, “And when the men of Ashdod saw that it was so, they said, The ark of the God of Israel shall not abide with us: for his hand is sore upon us, and upon Dagon our god.”

Brothers and sisters, this is a significant response. It is not just one of multiple responses that could have been recorded. Rather, it is THE response of EVERY individual to the presence of God!<sup>10</sup> Recall Adam and Eve’s initial response to God after they fell.

Genesis 3:10, “And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.”

Truly because of our sin, we naturally run from God. Paul, speaking of the non-Christian wrote these words:

Romans 1:22-23, “Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, 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.”

Indeed, the non-Christian is not seeking God.<sup>11</sup> They are seeking to run from God as fast as they can. And yet the same passion lies in the heart of the believer. Peter had this response when he was confronted with the deity of Christ.

Luke 5:8, “When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus’ knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.”

And thus when God began to manifest His glory in the Ark, the inclination was to flee.

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parts of their posteriors." To this the psalmist is supposed to refer, {Psalm 78:66}, He smote all his enemies in the HINDER PARTS; he put them to a perpetual reproach. Some copies of the Septuagint have ἐξεζέσεν αυτοις εις τας ναυς, "he inflamed them in their ships;" other copies have εις τας εδρας, "in their posteriors." The Syriac is the same. The Arabic enlarges: "He smote them in their posteriors, so that they were affected with a dysentery." I suppose them to have been affected with enlargements of the haemorrhoidal veins, from which there came frequent discharges of blood."

However, for a variety of views see Robert Bergen’s *1, 2 Samuel*, footnote #67, page 98.

<sup>9</sup> The bubonic plague is an infectious fatal epidemic disease, caused by the bacterium *Yersinia pestis* transmitted by fleas that have previously bitten an infected animal or person, and characterized by fever, chills, and the formation of swellings **buboes**. In the 14th century, an extensive epidemic of it occurred, known as the Black Death. In modern times, infection is limited and sporadic and can be treated successfully with antibiotics.

<sup>10</sup> Compare also Mark 5:17

<sup>11</sup> Compare Romans 3:11

Yet you say regarding the Philistines: But they perceived the Ark was responsible for the calamity. Of course they would endeavor to send it away!

While that is true, there was another alternative. They could have repented — like Nineveh! They could have turned to God and sought mercy! And God would have relented. Yet they didn't because mortals can't stand before the Lord!

Indeed, all of mankind has a natural aversion to God! We don't want His holy presence! He makes us uncomfortable!

And thus, when God began manifesting His glory to the Philistines, their heart's desire was to flee from or to cast off God. Matthew Henry put it this way:

“Thus [the Philistines] were constrained to acknowledge his power and dominion, and confess themselves within his jurisdiction, and yet they would not renounce Dagon and submit to Jehovah; but rather, now that he touched their bone and their flesh, and in a tender part, they were ready to curse him to his face, and instead of making their peace with him, and courting the stay of his ark upon better terms, they desired to get clear of it, as the Gadarenes, who, when they had lost their swine, desired Christ to depart out of their coasts. Carnal hearts, when they smart under the judgments of God, would rather, if it were possible, put him far from them than enter into covenant and communion with him, and make him their friend. Thus the men of Ashdod resolve, “The ark of the God of Israel shall not abide with us.”<sup>12</sup>

And so quite predictably, when confronted with God, the Philistines wanted nothing to do with Him. This is always the human response to the divine.

## The Gathering

This brings us to the gathering of the elders of the Philistines.

1 Samuel 5:8, “**They sent therefore and gathered all the lords of the Philistines unto them, and said, What shall we do with the ark of the God of Israel?** And they answered, Let the ark of the God of Israel be carried about unto Gath. And they carried the ark of the God of Israel about thither.”

Whatever else we might say about the Philistines, they were good Presbyterians. When faced with a problem, they called an assembly to pose the question, “What are we going to do with the ark?”

## The Solution

Now behold the arrogance.

1 Samuel 5:8, “They sent therefore and gathered all the lords of the Philistines unto them, and said, What shall we do with the ark of the God of Israel? **And they answered, Let the ark of the God of Israel be carried about unto Gath. And they carried the ark of the God of Israel about thither.**”

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<sup>12</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary in One Volume*, page 289.

This is incredible. Such arrogance on the part of the Gathian lord!

In essence his thinking was, “If you want the job done right, you better do it yourself.”

And so what the Ashdodites could not do, the Gathians surely thought they could. They would keep the Ark of the Covenant. And this brings us to the Gathian leg of the Ark's victory tour.

The Philistine lords said, “Let the ark of the God of Israel be carried unto Gath” (1 Samuel 5:8b). Gath was situated twelve miles inland and slightly south of Ashdod. What made this city stand out was their extremely large (as in physical size) population.

It was from Gath that the Philistine arose.<sup>13</sup> It also was from Gath that other giants arose.<sup>14</sup>

- Ishbi-benob, 2 Samuel 21:16.
- Saph, 2 Samuel 21:18.
- Goliath- different from David's, 2 Samuel 21:19.
- The unnamed monster — “a man of great stature” — who had six fingers on each hand and six toes, 2 Samuel 21:20-22.

In fact, in Joshua 11:22 we read that the Anakim — who were men of great stature — lived in Gath.

Gath was known as a warrior city populated by giants (the city was the “Sparta” of the Philistines). As such, they were self-sufficient, proud, and not the city you would want to fight if you were going to battle against the Philistines. So, indeed, bring the Ark of the Covenant of this weak God to Gath! Though Ashdod can't handle it, we certainly can and will!

Now to their shock, the people of Gath would have the same problems as those in Ashdod.

## The Problem

1 Samuel 5:9, “And it was so, that, after they had carried it about, the hand of the LORD was against the city with a very great destruction<sup>15</sup>: and he smote the men of the city, both small and great, and they had emerods in their secret parts.”

Literally panic broke out in the city of Gath. It doesn't matter the stronghold! When God moves so as to exalt Himself, no man can stand in His way. Give me the greatest, the best, the most powerful army that steroids and technology can make, and God will scatter them like dust. In fact, listen to the description of mankind on the final Day of Judgment.

Zechariah 14, 12-13, “And this shall be the plague wherewith the LORD will smite all the people that have fought against Jerusalem; Their flesh shall consume away while they stand upon their feet, and their eyes shall consume away in their holes, and their tongue shall consume away in their mouth. And it shall come to pass in that day, that a great tumult<sup>16</sup> [the same word as in 1 Samuel 5:9] from the LORD shall be among them; and they shall lay hold every one on the hand of his neighbour, and his hand shall rise up against the hand of his neighbour.”

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<sup>13</sup> Compare 1 Samuel 17:23

<sup>14</sup> Compare also 2 Samuel 21:22 which indicates the following four giants all were from Gath.

<sup>15</sup> מַהֲרֹמָה m@huwmah

<sup>16</sup> מַהֲרֹמָה m@huwmah

Brothers and sisters, I hope you see it! Not only do we have in Scripture typology when it comes to Christ such that we can gaze upon the Ark and see it as a type of Christ,<sup>17</sup> the same is true when it comes to judgment. As we consider God's dealings with Gath, based upon Zechariah 14 we behold a type of judgment that will be meted out on all of mankind some day.

## Man's Response

Such severity! Such brutality! And yet such are the wages of sin. And that brings us to the predictable human solution.

1 Samuel 5:10, **“Therefore they sent the ark of God to Ekron.** And it came to pass, as the ark of God came to Ekron, that the Ekronites cried out, saying, They have brought about the ark of the God of Israel to us, to slay us and our people.”

Literally, the Gathians exodused the Ark to Ekron.

Well, so much for Gath and its self-sufficiency, pride, and ability to do that which Ashdod could not do.

On account of the terror of the Lord, the Gathians also seek to be rid of the presence of God. And so this time without an assembly of the lords they send the Ark to Ekron — another of the capital cities of the Philistines.

Now, the city of Ekron was the farthest North capital city of the Philistines<sup>18</sup> — and in fact the largest. In its heyday, the city itself covered forty acres. Recall, it was this city that was by-passed in order to bring the ark to Ashdod.

Now if Ashdod and Gaza were known for their Dagonic temples, and Gath was known for its strength in warfare, Ekron was known for its association with the worship of Baal-zebul.<sup>19</sup> The New Testament identifies this worship as none other than the worship of Satan.<sup>20</sup>

In the Philistine pantheon, Baal was the son of Dagon. Now of all the centers for worship when it came to Baal amongst the Philistines, Ekron was its hub.

And so as we inquire as to why Ekron was chosen as the next victim of the Ark of the Covenant, it's because the Philistines are now placing the Ark in the hands of Baal. Listen, if Dagon can't control God, then let's try another god of our pantheon, Baal.

## The Elders

1 Samuel 5:10-11, **“ Therefore they sent the ark of God to Ekron. And it came to pass, as the ark of God came to Ekron, that the Ekronites cried out, saying, They have brought about the ark of the God of Israel to us, to slay us and our people. So they sent and gathered together all the lords of the Philistines, and said, Send away the ark of the God of Israel, and let it go again to his own place, that it slay us not, and our people:** for there was a deadly destruction

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<sup>17</sup> Compare John 5:39-40

<sup>18</sup> It was six miles due north of Gath, twelve miles northeast of Ashdod, and nineteen miles inland.

<sup>19</sup> Compare 2 Kings 1:1-6, 16

<sup>20</sup> Compare Matthew 12:26; Mark 3:23, 26; and Luke 11:18

throughout all the city; the hand of God was very heavy there.”

It is interesting that when we come to this point in the Ark's journey, the Ekronites don't wait around for their population to be slaughtered and give their god even a try against Yahweh. Rather, they immediately convene the council of the Philistine lords with accusations, “They have brought the Ark... to kill us and our people.”

And what was the all too familiar solution?

1 Samuel 5:11, “**So they sent and gathered together all the lords of the Philistines, and said, Send away the ark of the God of Israel, and let it go again to his own place, that it slay us not, and our people:** for there was a deadly destruction throughout all the city; the hand of God was very heavy there.”

We might term this the “final solution.” God so humbled the Philistines that the remaining lords of Gaza and Ashkelon don't offer their cities. Instead the perceptively safest answer is provided, “Let's give this ark of terror back to the Jews!”<sup>21</sup>

How the roles have been reversed!

Not only did Dagon bow before the Lord, but now the entire Philistine population is begging for relief. The Philistines who were the victor at the Massacre of Ebenezer are now the vanquished — as untold thousands are left to bury their dead!<sup>22</sup>

Now the text indicates that the Ekronite lord didn't act fast enough. For during the council the devastation had already begun!

1 Samuel 5:11-12, “So they sent and gathered together all the lords of the Philistines, and said, Send away the ark of the God of Israel, and let it go again to his own place, that it slay us not, and our people: **for there was a deadly destruction throughout all the city; the hand of God was very heavy there. And the men that died not were smitten with the emerods: and the cry of the city went up to heaven.**”

The idea in this verse is that the plague is getting worse!<sup>23</sup> And the men who did not die were smitten with tumors and the cry of the city went up to heaven.

This is the climax of the Ark's victory tour. Not only are the Philistines begging for relief. But this pagan people are crying out to the one true God for mercy, “the cry of the city went up to heaven.”

This is reminiscent of the time when the Egyptians are said to have, “cried to God” on account of the plague that had devoured their city.<sup>24</sup> It also is reminiscent of the cry that will occur in the end times

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<sup>21</sup> Again, they could have repented and turned to God relying upon His grace. Yet, their fallen hearts would not allow this.

<sup>22</sup> Victus Victor — the conquered one now the conqueror!

<sup>23</sup> Keil and Delitzsch wrote, “The longer the Philistines resisted and refused to recognize the chastening hand of the living God in the plagues inflicted upon them, the more severely would they necessarily be punished, that they might be brought at last to see that the God of Israel, whose sanctuary they still wanted to keep as a trophy of their victory over that nation, was the omnipotent God, who was able to destroy His foes.” (*Commentary on the Old Testament*, Vol. 2, I & II Samuel, page 61).

<sup>24</sup> Compare Exodus 11:6; 12:30

when people will “cry” for the rocks to crush them.<sup>25</sup> In all of these cases, we must note that the cry is not for salvation, but the cessation of judgment.

And so the Philistines — who no doubt at one time fancied themselves as greater than the Egyptians for they conquered the God of Israel<sup>26</sup> find themselves conquered. Rats, tumors, the plague, and death overrun and invade the land bringing terror and severe suffering in its wake. What a reversal!

In 1 Samuel 4:13, God's people are crying on account of their loss. Now in this text, it is the Philistines who are crying.<sup>27</sup>

## The Message

It should be obvious that the initial message of 1 Samuel 5:1-5 has changed in 1 Samuel 5:6-12. In the opening of this chapter the Philistine god, Dagon, was exalted over God. God was viewed as weak and secondary. Dagon was the true king.

God entered into the lair of Dagon and performed a military execution by cutting off the idol's head and hands. The unavoidable conclusion was and is that God is the King of kings and Lord of lords!

And yet when we come to verses 6-12, the focus has shifted. We learn here that God not only is the King of kings and Lord of lords, but He also is Glorious!

- Verse 6: “Now THE HAND OF THE LORD WAS HEAVY on the Ashdodites...”
- Verse 7: “When the men of Ashdod saw that it was so, they said, 'The ark of the God of Israel must not remain with us, for His hand is severe on us and on Dagon our god.’”
- Verse 9: “And it came about that after they had brought it around, the hand of the Lord was against the city with very great confusion...”
- Verse 11: “They sent therefore and gathered all the lords of the Philistines and said, 'Send away the ark of the God of Israel, and let it return to its own place, that it may not kill us and our people.' For there was a deadly confusion throughout the city; THE HAND OF GOD WAS VERY HEAVY THERE.”

It is clear that this passage is concerned about the Heavy Hand of God.

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<sup>25</sup> Compare Revelation 6:15-17

<sup>26</sup> Compare 1 Samuel 4:8, 10; 5:1-2

<sup>27</sup> Compare 1 Samuel 5:12

Here I want to address the shock that may have arisen in some hearts on account of this passage. For when most think of God today, they think of love. Thus a passage like this no doubt is offensive and shocking. God laid the Philistines to waste here. There is very little mercy. In fact, the more the Philistines resisted, the greater was God's hand upon them.

So how do we respond to this? At the outset we must affirm the Scriptural teaching that indeed God is a God of grace and mercy (cf. Psalm 145:17; Luke 18:19; Acts 14:17; John 3:16; 1 John 3:16-17). And yet we must recognize that this “grace and mercy” is reserved only for His children (Matthew 13:24-30). To the non-Christian who hates the Lord—to the one who is at war with God, who runs from His presence, who gnashes his teeth at His Christ, who would crucify the Lord again if they had the chance (e.g., Matthew. 8:12; 13:42, 50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30; Luke 13:28; cf., Acts 7:54) — we see in our text the frightening and all-to-real response that someday will be meted out to them. Truly in the words of Christ, let the non-Christian reader take note that “...unless you repent, you will all likewise perish,” (Luke 13:3, 5).



- In verse 6, the concept is introduced.
- In verses 7 and 9 we get examples of how God's hand was heavy.
- In verse 11, the passage closes with a repetition and intensification of the concept.
- Verse 11c: "...the hand of God was very heavy there."

And thus we might label this periscope: The "Heavy Hand of God."

And yet, what does this expression mean?

The word for *heavy* is the same word that we have seen oft-repeated throughout the opening chapters of 1 Samuel — **כבד** *kabad*. This word references that which is heavy and has influence. It tells us about that which has weight and is glorious. In fact, this entire section is set up by the twice repeated lament of Phinehas' wife:

1 Samuel 4:21-22, "And she named the child Ichabod, saying, The glory is departed from Israel: because the ark of God was taken, and because of her father in law and her husband. And she said, The glory is departed from Israel: for the ark of God is taken."

Indeed! Far from the glory departing, the truth is God is a God of Glory. Unlike Dagon, Baal, or any other god, our God is a God of substance!

## **Elijah and the prophets of Baal**

For example, when Elijah challenged the 450 prophets of Baal both were to offer a sacrifice. Whichever god answered by devouring the sacrifice with fire from heaven would be recognized as the true God.<sup>28</sup>

This was a significant challenge since Baal was understood to be the "god of lightening." Baal was said to control the lightening which was his specialty. And thus to challenge the prophets of Baal with this contest was to take on Baal head-on at his strongest point!

The prophets of Baal went first and for many hours pleaded and begged and cut themselves and longed for Baal to light the offering. In fact, we read of Elijah mocking them.

1 Kings 18:27, "And it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them, and said, Cry aloud: for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked."

Baal never answered. For Baal, as all idols, is light, impotent, of no substance, a zero with the ring rubbed out, a nothing.

**BUT THEN** Elijah set up his sacrifice and calmly prayed for God to show his heaviness. And this is what we read:

1 Kings 18:38-39, "Then the fire of the LORD fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, The LORD, he is the God; the LORD, he is the God."

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<sup>28</sup> The entire account is found in 1 Kings 18

Our God is a God of substance, of weight, of glory!

## Theme of Scripture

And thus we read an oft-repeated theme in Scripture.

Isaiah 64:4, “For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him.”<sup>29</sup>

\*in contrast\*\*

Psalm 115:4-7, “Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men’s hands. They have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they, but they see not: They have ears, but they hear not: noses have they, but they smell not: They have hands, but they handle not: feet have they, but they walk not: neither speak they through their throat.”

We see it in our own text. The contrast couldn't be more obvious.

What did God just do with the Philistine god in 1 Samuel 5:1-5?

God cut off his hands. He made his hands LIGHT! Such that when the plague arrived, Dagon was unable to stop it.

Yet what do we read here about God (up through chapter 7)? HIS HAND IS HEAVY! He not only entered into the lair of Dagon and crushed the god He also manifested His glory such that the entire nation of the Philistines struggled under the heavy hand of God.

I trust that you understand this point.

Unlike Dagon, Baal, or any other supposed god or demon our God is a God of Glory! He is the King of kings and Lord of lords.<sup>30</sup> He acts on behalf of the one who waits for Him.<sup>31</sup> Truly, OUR GOD REIGNETH!

## Application

Now as the people of God, how do you apply a text like this?

One must recognize and so submit to the God of glory!

You say, “That's obvious!”

But sadly in the church it's not. Many approach God today as if He was a “tree god” or a “grain god. We want a good career, and so we relate to Him as if He were a Career God. We can't have children, so we view Him as a Fertility God. We lack fulfillment, and so we approach Him as the God of Pleasure.

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<sup>29</sup> Compare also Isaiah 50:2; 59:1

<sup>30</sup> Compare 1 Samuel 5:1-5

<sup>31</sup> Compare 1 Samuel 5:6-12

In each of these instances, we begin with the faulty premise that **we** are the starting point. We want our

- Needs.
- Wants.
- Desires.

We believe we are God's focus and purpose. We therefore think that God exists for us. And because of this, much of Christianity highly resembles the pagan religions which surrounded God's people in the Old Testament and the New Testament.

I challenge you to study the Mystery Religions of Paul's day. Compare them to what you see in the church today. You will be shocked at the similarities.

Brothers and sisters let us heed the call of Reformation today. Don't allow your needs, wants, pleasure, and desires move you in your Christian walk. Rather focus upon the the greatness of God — His perfections, beauty, honor, and pleasure.

Accordingly we must recognize that He is not our servant; we are His! He does not exist for our glory; we exist for His glory! Life is not about what we want, but what God wants!

But again this will be hard for us. In the garden, God fashioned us in His own image; and we have been returning the favor ever since. Truly the heart is an idol factory. Because God's greatness traumatizes us, we have sought to bring Him down to our level, and so relate to Him as a peer, buddy, or partner.

Oh family of God. Let us receive Him for who He truly is — The King of kings and Lord of lords; the great, the mighty, the awesome God; a God who acts on behalf of the one who waits for Him.

Thus in the words of Christ, let us take up our cross — let us go on a spiritual death march to self.

**\*\*and\*\***

Let us endeavor in and through all things to follow God whatsoever way He leads!

You say, "But I fall so short! I have been so self-centered in my walk."

Yes you have!

And you can spend the rest of your life giving weight to your sin and short comings as a result worrying, fretting, being burdened, and giving up. Or you can today, give weight, and glory to the cross of Christ by which you are forgiven. And so live the rest of your life as a drink offering which is being poured out at His feet.

I hope and pray that you will opt for being the drink offering, for listen, "Our God Reigneth!"

## **Subscription Information**

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## **About the Preacher**

Greg Thurston preached this sermon on November 27, 2005. Greg is the Preacher at Broomfield Presbyterian Church.