

God is Truly Unique

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[0 : 00] Well, we're going to turn to our Bibles now and to our reading this evening in 1 Samuel, the first book of Samuel in the Old Testament. That is page 228, if you have one of the church Bibles.

Otherwise, get to Deuteronomy, go on a bit past Joshua and Judges, and you'll find your way to 1 Samuel. Last week we read chapter 4, the story of the beginning of Samuel's ministry, Samuel's word at last coming to all Israel after a time of great famine of the word of God.

And God raised up Samuel, and chapter 4 began, and the word of Samuel came to all Israel. It sounded like a very encouraging beginning of a new spiritual renaissance in the darkness of Israel. So surprising then was what we read next about the calamity that immediately befell the armies of Israel, routed by the Philistines, not once but twice.

And the shock of it leading to the untimely death of the high priest Levi. And the chapter ending with the tragic naming of the fatherless grandson of Eli, that priest, by his mother, Ichabod.

[1 : 19] The glory has departed. What a name to be saddled with all your life. But it was a living witness and testimony of just how calamitous the situation was for God's people.

The ark of God, the ark of the covenant, that which signified the presence of God Almighty himself in the midst of his people, gone and stolen away by the enemies.

That's the situation when we begin chapter 5. We're going to read just the first five verses of this chapter this evening, which is the next extraordinary episode in this business of these raiders of the lost ark.

When the Philistines captured the ark of God, they brought it from Ebenezer to Ashdod. Then the Philistines took the ark of God and brought it into the house of Dagon and set it up beside Dagon. And when the people of Ashdod rose early the next day, behold, Dagon had fallen face downward on the ground before the ark of God. So they took Dagon and put him back in his place.

[2 : 27] But when they rose early on the next morning, behold, Dagon had fallen face downward on the ground before the ark of the Lord. And the head of Dagon and both of his hands were lying cut off on the threshold.

Only the trunk of Dagon was left to him. This is why the priests of Dagon and all who enter the house of Dagon do not tread on the threshold of Dagon in Ashdod to this day.

Amen. And may God bless to us his word. Well, let's turn to that little story that we read together in 1 Samuel 5, page 228, if you have a church Bible.

And the second in our little series on Raiders of the Lost Ark on learning what the people in these stories learned in the way of lessons from the great mistake of underestimating the God of the Bible.

I want you to imagine a scene. It's about 950 or so BC in the city of Ashdod, one of the five great cities of the Philistines, rather a little bit up the coast from Gaza, one of the other Philistine cities, a place, of course, still in our news today.

[3 : 51] And a Philistine family is going to the temple to a great celebration, going to the temple of Dagon, their god. Mr. and Mrs. Akish ben Goliath and their little son, Akish Jr.

And there's a great parade of priests approaching the temple with all their burning torches, their incense, their offerings, their flowing robes all the way down to their feet. And all around them are hordes of extremely pretty and very scantily clad girls dancing in very suggestive ways.

Mommy, says Akish Jr. Why are all those women just in their underwear? Won't they catch cold? No, no, butson, Mr. Ben Goliath.

No, no, it's not cold at all. And I'm certainly feeling very warm. Akish, his wife says. That's enough. Stop ogling. You know I hate coming to the temple when all these temple prostitutes are on show.

Priestesses, my dear. Priestesses, please. Very important part of our religion, too. Very important for our prayers for success in life. You do want our family to have success in life, don't you?

[5 : 02] Hmm. Mrs. Ben Goliath is very unimpressed. Mommy, what's a temple prostitute? Says little Aki.

You'll have to ask your father that, she says, glaring at her husband. Well, says Mr. Ben Goliath to his son. That's something we'll talk about when you're a bit older, when you're ready to take more responsibility in our religion alongside me and the other men with our prayers.

But look, Aki. Look at our temple. Look at our priests. Aren't they impressive? They're all going to parade in and worship before our great god Dagon.

Dagon of Ashdod. Look, look, Aki. They've entered the temple. They stand and watch as the procession reaches the temple doorways. And then, well, a very strange thing happens.

One by one, each of the priests hitches up his robes, steps, and then makes a great leap over the threshold. Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha.

[6 : 06] Says little Aki. That's funny. Look, Daddy. They're playing hopscotch. Shh. They're not playing hopscotch. Well, what are they doing then? Says Aki. Well, they're doing what they always do when they go into our temple.

Well, why, Daddy? It looks so silly. They don't look silly. They're going into the temple of our god. It's a very serious thing, Aki. There's nothing silly about it. They do look silly.

Look. Look at that old man trying to jump. He nearly fell over. Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha. Shh. But why do they do that? I want to know.

Shh. It's not something we talk about. Why don't we talk about it? Because we don't. Why not? We don't. Not ever. But why?

Will you be quiet? But I want to know. Mommy, will you tell me? Oh, no. That's your father's job.

[7 : 07] He's the one who knows all about priests and priestesses. Maybe he'll explain to you when you're a little older. When he tells you about the priestesses.

I mean the prostitutes. Mr. Ben Goliath is looking increasingly uncomfortable. And he tries to change the subject. Look, Aki, he says. Can you see into the temple? Can you see?

Look. There's our great god, Dagon. But I want to know about the leaping priests. Will you be quiet? That is enough. Anyway, look. They're all in now.

Look. They're kneeling before our great god, Dagon. They follow into the temple along with all the crowd. Everybody. They're silent before the great statue at the front of the temple.

And then Aki tugs his dad's arm and points. Look. Daddy. Why does Dagon's neck look all squint? And look at his hands.

[8 : 04] They look as if they've been stuck on with glue. Daddy. If Dagon can't look after himself properly, how can he look after us? Will you be quiet?

Not one more word. I'm going to ban you from Facebook for a whole week. So Aki finally shuts up. On the way home, he quietly asks his mother all about it again.

I mean, why can't we talk about it? Well, says his mother, it's because it's very embarrassing for all of us. All of us Philistines. So we never mention it. But if you really, really want to know, there is one book that tells the story.

It's the book that the Hebrews call the Bible. Try looking in there. And Aki's answer, as you know, is right in front of us here in 1st Chameleon chapter 5 and verse 5.

Look. This is why the priests of Dagon and all who enter the house of Dagon do not tread on the threshold of Dagon in Ashdod to this day. As we said, the whole story that we've been looking at last week and this week begins in the rather anarchic times after the judges.

[9 : 23] There was no king to rule God's people. And even worse than that, as we saw, there was no word from the Lord. There was a scarcity of biblical truth in society.

And where God's word is absent and God's rule is absent in any society, well, that can only lead to anarchy, to chaos, moral chaos, and ultimately all kinds of other chaos.

But as we've seen, the book of 1st Samuel opens with glimmerings of new beginnings. Samuel is God's answer to this famine of God's word. And, of course, then the whole story leads on to the answer of God's king at last being placed on the throne.

So there are bright beginnings. And at the end of chapter 3, things are really looking up. God is once again appearing among his people at Shiloh, speaking through Samuel. But then came this total disaster in chapter 4.

Israel's armies are routed. Worse than that, the ark of God is captured. And the shock of that literally killed Eli, the high priest. Why was there such a disaster?

[10:34] Well, it's because God's people had to learn not to underestimate the God of the Bible. That's something that human beings, God's people included, constantly do again and again.

We underestimate the magnitude of what it means for us to be careless of him, for us to be ignorant of him, for us to rebel against him, for us to treat him lightly.

We think, deep down, that we can make God our servant, and that we can use God. We can treat him just as if he was the genie of Aladdin's lamp.

We can ignore him most of the time. We can abuse him. We can forget all about him. But he'll always be there to call on in a crisis, get him out of the cupboard, and rub the lamp. And that's what God's people were doing in those days in 1 Samuel.

That's what many people do today, and many people have done all through history. And chapter 4, as we saw, is a rude shock to that attitude. It says, no, no, you cannot contain God like that.

[11:37] You can't ignore him and scorn any real relationship with him and then think somehow, just because you're keeping all the religious trappings, that's all you need. Now, the Israelites discovered, didn't they?

The ark of God is no use at all if you have no heart for God himself. You can't contain God, nor can you control him like that.

As if you just presume upon the gospel promises, but ignore the gospel commands. Everything will be okay. You can't do that, says Jesus. No, you're saying, Lord, Lord, if you don't do what I tell you. It's doing the will of God that matters. It's real faith and trust in him. So you can't wheel out the ark of God and say, show me your power, O God, when you're living in flagrant disregard of everything that the ark stands for, the covenant faith of holiness and obedience to God.

And so Israel had to learn a hard lesson, what it means that God is truly sovereign. That's a lesson that God's people can't ever ignore.

[12:49] That's why it's in our Bibles. It's recorded for us, says Paul, so that we learn that lesson too. It's a warning in case we forget that God is a truly sovereign God.

He will not be used. So don't presume upon God. Don't ever take God for granted. Don't underestimate the true God. But, you see, when God judges his own people, it is not ever, ever an invitation for the world outside to start scoffing and gloating.

No, no. Because if God was teaching Israel a very tough lesson here, he is most certainly going to teach the Philistines equally tough lessons.

Because not only is the God of the Bible a sovereign God, he is the unique and the only God. And that's a lesson that our very, very confused society and world today still needs to learn very clearly, just as the Philistines did way, way back then.

The God of the Bible is the God. The God who is revealed all through the Scriptures and who is fully and finally revealed at last in the Lord Jesus Christ, God the Son.

[14:03] He is the only true God. He is truly unique. So don't ever think that he will put up with being relativized.

He will not yield his glory to another. And don't think that he can ever be neutralized. Even in apparent defeat, make no mistake, he is working a mighty triumph over all of his foes.

So first thing, let's be clear. This story is telling us very, very pointedly that the God of Scripture, the God of the Bible, our God, will not be relativized.

That's above all what these five verses here that we've read are telling us with such clarity. See, the Philistines thought that because they had won their battle against the Israelites, then either God and the ark were a fraud, in which case he had no power at all, or that God had actually turned to be on their side.

And therefore he was going to be no threat to them as Philistines. Remember back in chapter 4, verse 7, they were very afraid. They were afraid, weren't they, when they heard that the ark was coming into the camp. They said, oh, a God or great gods have come into this camp.

[15:13] Like so many folk today that were a bit muddled up in their theology, they had a sort of vague knowledge of God, they knew something was happening there, and they sort of assumed that the ark of God rather worked like a bit of magic.

If you had it, everything would be okay. So then when it had all come to nothing and they had taken him captive, well, they thought, well, if there's power, it's our power, or else it's powerless.

But boy, oh boy, did they make a colossal mistake. To think that if Israel couldn't use God or control God for their advantage, then somehow they could.

Boy, they had another thing coming. And I'm going to learn a thing or two about the God of Israel in this and the next couple of passages. But these first five verses of chapter five that we read together, they're full, aren't they, of humor, of divine humor.

The Bible is full of God's laughter. I hope you realize that. He's always laughing, and his laughter is aimed at the proud, at the pompous, at the arrogant, at all of those who live in pitiful defiance of their true maker.

[16:22] Remember Psalm chapter two, the rulers and the kings of the earth raging against God and his anointed. It's true, isn't it? Rulers and dictators so often act as though they were godlike, strutting the earth and ruling over all things.

Is God quaking at these great rulers of the earth? No, he who sits in the heavens laughs. The Lord holds them in derision, says the psalmist.

And we laugh as we read these verses, don't we? We're meant to laugh. That's why they're written this way. We're meant to mock. Poor old Dagon, mighty warrior God of the Philistines.

The glory of Ashdod greeting his victorious army as they return in triumph. Less than ten times in these verses, Dagon's name is repeated. Verse two, they brought the ark into the house of Dagon. They set him up before Dagon and Dagon, Dagon, Dagon. But the next morning, oh dear, what's this verse three? Poor old Dagon. Prostrate on his face in homage to the ark of God.

[17:27] How utterly humiliating. Great Dagon of Ashdod. Like an old man falling out of his bed at night. They need their home help to come and get him up and put him back up again. Put poor Dagon back up.

You can hear them going out, can't you? Perhaps we'll have to get him one of those alarms around his neck in case this happens again. We can't have him lying all night, you know. It would be terrible. He'll catch cold. They're mocking.

It's like Elijah on Mount Carmel, isn't it? When Elijah's challenging the priests of Baal to pray and there's no answer coming. Oh, shout a bit louder. Maybe he's deaf. You're God. Oh, shout a bit louder.

Maybe he's indisposed. Maybe he's gone to the toilet and he can't hear you. Perhaps he's constipated and he's got a problem. It's mocking. You're God. And God does mock constantly the sheer folly, the idiocy of false and man-made religion.

God is not politically correct. He calls it for what it is. Listen to some words from the prophet Isaiah speaking about these things.

[18:33] All who fashion idols, he says, are nothing. And the things they delight in do not profit. The carpenter stretches a line. He marks it out with a pencil.

He shapes it with planes and marks it with a compass. He shapes it into the figure of a man with the beauty of a man to dwell in the house. He cuts down cedars or he chooses a cypress tree or an oak.

Let's it grow strong among the trees of the forest. He plants a cedar and the rain nourishes it. Then it becomes fuel for a man. He takes a part of it and warms himself.

He kindles a fire and bakes bread. Also, he makes a god and worships it. Half of it he burns in the fire. Over the half he eats meat.

He roasts it and is satisfied. Also, he warms himself and says, ah, I'm warm. I've seen the fire. And the rest of it he makes into a god. His idol. And falls down to it and worships it.

[19:28] He prays to it and says, deliver me for you are my god. They know not. Nor do they discern for you shut their eyes so they cannot see in their hearts so they cannot understand.

No one considers nor is the knowledge or discernment to say half of it I burnt on the fire. I baked bread on its coals. I roasted meat and have eaten. And I shall make the rest of it into an abomination, an idol.

Shall I fall down before a block of wood? He feeds on the ashes. A deluded heart has led him astray. And he cannot deliver himself or say, is there not a lie in my right hand?

There's God mocking the sheer folly of God's made out of the imagination of the heart of man. But God hardly needs to expose that kind of idolatry.

Because it's when it's faced with the reality of the truth of the living God and the truth of living faith that exposes itself. As Dagon did the next day. Verse 4. Oh great Dagon.

[20 : 36] How are you this morning? Oh mighty God. Well to be honest. He says. If he could speak. I've had a perfectly dreadful night. I'm absolutely shattered. This morning.

And he was. Wasn't he? Paracetamol no good this time. Plastic surgery that he needs. Super glue is what he needs. He needs a total body makeover. The greater mighty Dagon. Not only is he faced down once again before the true God.

But he's lost his head. He's lost his hands. All that's left. Is his trunk. Utterly. Impotent. Is mighty Dagon.

It's comic isn't it? But it is so deeply pathetic. Man made gods. Shown up for what they really are. Just a lump of stone.

The Philistines had thought like this hadn't they? Let's get multicultural. Let's just add the God of Israel. To our God collection. And so we can have the best of both.

[21 : 40] Let's put him there. Right beside Dagon. I've seen that happening actually in India. Where Hindus have added a statue of Jesus Christ.

Along with all the other household gods of the Hindu pantheon. We'll bring Jesus in too. And we'll have the best of all worlds. What a monumental misunderstanding.

What a colossal error. Because the God of the Bible is the unique God. He is the only God. He will not put himself in a queue.

Alongside all these other gods who are man made. As though they were his equal. Never. How ludicrous. Even to think of such a thing. But isn't that exactly what the world all around us thinks today?

It thinks that the God of the Bible has been conquered. It thinks the God of the Bible can't have any special status of his own. And so God has been relegated to join the queue. And share the temple with all the others.

[22 : 39] Hasn't he? With Buddha. With Krishna. With Allah. With all the guiding spirits. With the gurus. With all kinds of mumbo-jumbo. That you'll find all around the world today. Bit of this.

A bit of that. All the same temple together. It's all the same. Multi-faith. It's all being enriched by bits of this culture. And that culture. And the other.

None of us has a claim on the truth totally. All the truth. Do we? That's how our contemporary world speaks. Isn't it? Exactly like the Philistines thought.

It's faith that matters. It's spirituality that matters. It doesn't really matter the variety. Perhaps that's why Prince Charles is reported as saying. When he becomes king.

He wants to be not defender of the faith. The Christian faith. The gospel faith. But defender of faith. Defenders of Dagon. And Hindu.

[23 : 34] And Buddha. And everybody else. Alongside of course. A place. In the temple. With everybody else. For the God of scripture. And so we have.

All of that sort of thing. All around us. A psychic faith. Is just the same. As yoga. Is just the same. As Islam. Is just the same. As Christianity. Is just the same.

As Dagon worship. But the Bible says. So clearly. And constantly. No. No. No. The very opposite. Is the truth. And that's what this chapter is telling us. Shouting it to the world. You're wrong. You're mistaken. You're deluded. If you think that. They're not all.

Holding hands together. And lighting candles. Together. To everybody. In the temple of Dagon. Are they? Look. Dagon is prostrate. Before the ark of God. Because.

[24 : 31] There is only one. True and living God. And when we. Modern human beings today.

In the 21st century. Think like the Philistines did. All those centuries ago. We're just as wrong as they are. And that's what God showed. To these pagan Philistines.

That's what he made perfectly clear to them. Dagon certainly got the message. Did the rest of them. What should their response have been? At least that second time.

They went back in. They should have followed Dagon's example. Shouldn't they? They too should have bowed prostrate. And said we repent of our. Ignorance and foolishness. You. Are the one true God.

And we will worship you. But instead. As we'll see next time. In the rest of the. The story. That's not what they did. They wanted rid of God. They didn't want a God like that. They couldn't stomach.

[25 : 25] A God. Who was truly unique. In that way. Even when confronted with. Irrefutable evidence. Of his unique glory. They had no excuse.

God showed them. So clearly. That he was. The one and only God. And you know friends. God has shown that. Not only.

To those ancient Philistines. In their world. In their world. But he has shown it. To all the world.

Today. And he has shown it. To our world. Far more clearly. Now. Than even he showed it.

To those Philistines. Then. In this story. And that means. People today. Have even less excuse. Than the Philistines. Did then.

Turn over. To the New Testament. Would you with me. To Acts chapter. 17. I think it's page. 927. In our church Bibles. And here's Paul.

[26 : 20] Speaking in Athens. The great world. Center of knowledge. And learning. And culture. In that first century. And yet. Paul says. Unspeakably.

Ignorant. About. The one true God. Look at verse 29. Look at what Paul. Says. To these. Learned philosophers. To the. The columnists. Of the Athenian spectator.

To the writers. Of the Macedonian. Guardian. To the presenters. Of. Radio Athens. Is today program. To the academics. And dons. Of the. The Oxbridge.

Of the day. That's who he's speaking to here. And he says. In verse 29. I'm afraid. All of you. Are quite. Ignorant. And therefore.

You're all. Without excuse. We should not. Think. That the divine being. Is like gold. Or silver. Or stone. An image. Formed by the art. And imagination. Of man.

[27 : 16] In the past. Look at verse 30. He says. God overlooked. So much. Ignorance. But now. Look. He commands. All people.

Everywhere. To. To recognize. And rejoice. In pluralistic religion. To say. Oh that's fine. For you Paul.

But I worship. My God. My way. No. No. He calls. All people. Everywhere. At least. In my Bible. That means. Every country.

Every ethnicity. Every religion. To repent. That means. To say. I'm. Absolutely. Wrong. And to recognize.

The unique. Lordship. And the unique. Authority. Of God. Revealed. In. The risen. Lord. Jesus Christ. And the proof.

[28 : 11] Paul gives us. Is not just. A prostrate. Dagon. But look. At verse 31. A man. Whom he has raised. From the dead. Jesus Christ.

Of this. He has given assurance. To all. By raising him. From the dead. And the consequence. Of ignoring. This irrefutable. Proof of God's.

Unique lordship. Is far. Far worse. Than all the plagues. That we're going to see. Next time. On these Philistines. The consequence. Says Paul is. Eternal judgment. He has fixed.

The day. When he. Will judge the world. In righteousness. So do you see. Friends. The message. Of the whole Bible. Is exactly.

The same. Old Testament. New Testament. Wherever. But much more. Urgent. Now. In these last days. Of the New Testament. When God. Has revealed himself. From heaven. In the person.

[29 : 04] Of the Lord. Jesus himself. God. Will. Not. Be. Relativized. He will not. Share his glory. With another. He is the unique.

And only God. Made known to us. Now. In Jesus Christ. So do not. Ignore. His gracious. Warnings. Don't.

Underestimate. The true. And living God. God. Will not. Be. Relativized. Whether by. Philistines. In the 10th century. B.C. Or Athenians. In the 1st century. Or in our age.

In the 21st century. In these last days. Hebrews 1 says. God has spoken to us. In his son. The exact. Imprint. Of his glory.

That's why Peter. Is so insistent. In Acts 5. There is no. Other name. Under heaven. Given to man. By which we must be saved. He will not. Be.

[29 : 59] Relativized. And. Nor can. Our God. Be. Neutralized. Either. Don't think. Ever. That the God of scripture.

Has been defeated. Even though sometimes. It looks that way. Even though it looks like. His people have been defeated. No. No. No. What this story teaches us. So clearly.

Is. God can look after himself. Isn't that a relief? All the circumstantial evidence. Here. Pointed to the death of God. God. To total disaster.

God had been captured. Defeated. Rendered. Useless. That's the sort of thing. Cynics have been saying. All through the ages. Ever since. Isn't it? So much so.

We can begin to believe it. It's in the culture. All around. Where is the cause of God? Oh. It seems so small. The church is retreating. Numbers are reducing. Etc. Etc. Well.

[30 : 53] That's how it looked here. But. You see. The reality. Was so very different. It seemed. As though God was. Utterly defeated. Israel thought that. The Philistines thought that. He'd been neutralized.

But in fact. The truth was. That even then. That very moment. He was storming. The inner sanctuary. Of the powers of darkness. He was demonstrating. His unquestioned victory. In the very home. Of his enemies. In the very temple. Of Dagon. Things were the very opposite. Of how they seemed.

And that's so often been the case. In the history of the Christian church. Hasn't it? Some of you remember. The great. Anguish. And distress. And pain there was. When all the. Missionaries. The CIM missionaries. Were thrown out of China. After the revolution in 1949. Seventy years later. We discover that God. Was doing extraordinary things.

[31 : 53] All that time. Without missionaries. The Chinese church. Has seen enormous growth. Don't ever think. God has been defeated.

Just because we can't see. Anything that seems. To be. Evidence of his power at work. He cannot be neutralized. He is the unique.

And only God. Of power and might. But you see. He is quite other. Than how we so often think. And he does move. In mysterious ways.

To perform his great wonders. But we must never. Ever think. That God has lost control. I don't know. Maybe some of us here.

This evening. Need to hear that. Again. Very clearly. And specially. Because maybe that's how it seems to you. At the moment. Maybe it. It seems that. That God has lost control. Of some aspect of your life.

[32 : 49] Well it isn't so. The powers of darkness. Will never. Have the last word. With our God.

Not ever. Even though it might be seeming. That way to us. At the present time. Should we be surprised. At that? No. Of course we shouldn't. What is the hallmark.

Of the way. That the unique. And only God works. It is precisely that. Isn't it? When was the darkest hour. That this world has ever seen. Wasn't it? When the son of God.

Was nailed to a cross. And died. At the hands of enemies. Didn't that look like. Ultimate defeat. Of all God's purposes. Of all his kingdom. Didn't that look like.

The ultimate triumph. Of all the enemies. Of God's Christ. His enemies thought so. And his followers thought so too. But no.

[33 : 45] Things were quite. Quite other. Because at that very moment. In Christ. God was reconciling. The whole world. To himself. In that dreadful darkness.

God was. Storming. The very citadels. Of the sanctuary. Of the enemy. And he was. Working a mighty victory. Over all of his foes.

This God. Cannot. Ever. Be. Neutralized. Christ. That's a constant. Refrain. Of the apostles. Preaching in Acts. You crucified.

And killed. This Jesus. By the hands. Of lawless men. But. It was. All. According. To God's. Sovereign. Plan. Because he can.

Never. Be. Neutralized. Even when it seems. He's. Utterly. Defeated. In fact. He is. Working. Mighty. Victories. And God.

[34 : 39] Will never. Be. Relativized. He will. Never. Yield. His. Glory. To another. Because he is. The unique. And only God. And friends. You and I. Have to understand that. We need to understand that.

And we need to understand him. There can be no greater error. In life. Than to misunderstand. In that way. The God of scripture. Father. So let me end with a word of warning.

And a word of encouragement. Because this. This passage gives us both of those things. First an encouragement to all of us tonight. Here. Who call ourselves Christians. Who are followers of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Be encouraged. We serve the unique and only God. He is truly sovereign. And only he. Is truly sovereign.

Our God is unique. And that means that we can be as bold. As the apostles were. In proclaiming him. In this world. And to this whole world. Because his kingdom.

[35 : 39] And his purposes. Can never. Ever. Be stopped. Not by armies of dictators. Not by the advance of Islamism. Not by the apathy of our western culture.

Of materialism. So confused. And so corrupt. By none of these things. God's kingdom. And God's king. Can never. Be. Neutralized. So don't lose heart.

Even when things sometimes look very dark. They will sometimes look very dark. But God is not defeated. Our savior. Is. The triumphant one.

The triumphant one. But second. I must also sign a warning. Because if you are someone. Who is inclined to diminish.

Or even dismiss. God's great and ultimate revelation of himself. In the Lord Jesus Christ. You need to know. He will not be relativized. He won't.

[36 : 40] In the past. As Paul said. God overlooked. In his mercy. Much much ignorance. But no longer. Because. In these last days. God has spoken more clearly. And more fully.

With the ultimate. Explicit. Unique revelation of himself. In the person of his son. The Lord Jesus Christ. Christ. So our whole world. Is without excuse.

And every one of us. Is without. Excuse. So he commands. All people everywhere. To repent.

Because he has. Fixed the day for judgment. And he has given assurance. Of that to all. By raising. Jesus Christ. From the dead. He. Uniquely. And alone. Rules.

On high. Above every power. In earth and heaven. And from thence. He shall come. To judge. The living. And the dead.

[37 : 36] And to trample. Into the dust. Forever. Every false god. Every false power. Every day gone. Every other delusion. Of the mind.

And heart of man. So friends. God's warning. Is gracious. But it is urgent. It is stark. Bow to him.

Acknowledge him. Now. You must do that. And you may do that now. You may do so gladly. With joy. And with gladness. Such is his grace. You may do so now.

Or. You will do so. One day. As Dagon did. Forcibly. Shattered. By the sheer majesty.

Of his presence. But there will be no joy. In buying before him. That day. That way. So this passage says to us.

[38 : 40] Friends. So clearly. Big neon lights. Don't make. The wrong choice. Don't underestimate. The unique. And only God.

Because it is his name alone. That will be exalted forever. Through our Lord Jesus Christ. Let's pray.

Dagon. Dagon. Had fallen face downward. On the ground.

Before the ark of the Lord. Lord our God. We thank you for your grace. For your mercy. For your love.

In revealing to us. Your unique glory. In Christ. so we pray Lord humble our hearts enable all of us by your grace to bow before you now with joy with gladness that on that great day of his coming likewise we shall be filled with joy and not terror and receive at your hand the great gift of life eternal for Jesus sake Amen