

*How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news,  
who publish peace, who bring good tidings of good, who proclaim salvation,  
who say to Zion, "Your God reigns."* Isaiah 52:7

## **Starting with God**

### Jesus People CUMC 2011, Week One

901.483.0248

jasonbrianhood@gmail.com

God graciously allows his poets, songwriters, lawgivers, prophets and storytellers to use language and concepts from the human world so that we will be able to understand him and his word. And no matter where you are in the Bible, when God's Word pulls back the curtain to reveal the Author behind the authors, we get one potent metaphor over and over again.

God is \_\_\_\_\_.

Genesis 1-2

Genesis 12, 15, 17-18, 22, etc. \_\_\_\_\_.

Exodus 15, Deut 33:1-5

Tabernacle and Temple

Job 1-2; Ruth

Isaiah 6:1-3

The prophets as "covenant maintenance"

Daniel 2:44; 4:3, 34-35; ch. 7

Zechariah 14:9

Matthew 6:9-10

Luke 15, Matt 22, and related metaphors

Psalms 24, 47, 95-100, 103:22, 114:1-2

Revelation 4-5; 19-22

**DISCUSSION #1: At your tables, briefly discuss objections and obstacles to this view of God (without looking at examples below!)**

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Feminist theologian Elizabeth Johnson, *The Quest for the Living God*; typical of recent theology in its anti-authoritarian impulse, focusing on attributes of God that are more comforting and acceptable to contemporary people: she's collected twelve honorary doctorates for her work.

Much modern philosophy emphasized self-reliance ("Cogito ergo sum") and self-as-starting point for truth, morality, etc. Many influential contemporary, post-modern philosophers focus on epistemology and hermeneutics (the problem of knowledge and interpretation). Both often reject God both as a source and as a ruler, but at least the latter usually illustrate the irrationality of self-reliance. (See an example: <http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/08/21/confessions-of-an-ex-moralist/>)

"To Thine Own Self Be True." David Brooks, "It's Not About You," op-ed piece in the *New York Times* taken from his valedictory address, published 5-31-11. He notes the problem with living in a world where commitment to self is the only real commitment.

**The Burden of a King**

Kid's catechism: (1) Who made you? (2) What else did God make? (3) Why did God make you and all things?

Contrast the "American catechism": "The chief end of man is to glorify oneself and

living in comfort and ease forever.”

C. S. Lewis: There are only two kinds of people in the end: those who say to God, ‘Thy will be done,’ and those to whom God says, ‘Thy will be done.’”

### **The Beauty of a King**

“God really believes that he is the most worthy, most majestic, magnificent, glorious, stunningly beautiful being in the universe. And he is fixated on the certainty that only he deserves worship – that to him alone belong honor, glory, and praise forever and forever....all we can say is – he is right. He is astonishingly beautiful, utterly majestic and perfect in the symmetries of justice and righteousness, knowledge, and wisdom. He is as hypnotically compelling as a surging forest fire and ten times as dangerous. He is out of control – ours, not his.” Timothy Stoner, *The God Who Smokes*, 83.

Heidelberg Catechism, question and answer #1: What is your only comfort in life and death? That **I am not my own, but belong with body and soul, both in life and in death, to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ.** He has fully paid for all my sins with His precious blood, and has set me free from all the power of the devil. He also preserves me in such a way that without the will of my heavenly Father not a hair can fall from my head; indeed, all things must work together for my salvation. Therefore, by His Holy Spirit He also assures me of eternal life and makes me heartily willing and ready from now on to live for Him.

Augustine: “Our chief and entire good is to have him and to be his.” *City of God* 17.3

### **1 Corinthians 3:21-23**

He owns *everything*;, and everything that is yours belongs to him. Luke 16:12

Talents and time; treasures and trinkets (Luke 16:12). Our relationships are relationships with fellow-servants and fellow-rebels (Matthew 18:21-35). Truth belongs to God and is determined by him, not by us. Our minds are not our own; what we do with them, the way we think about God and his world, is done under his authority.

## **APPLICATION**

The goal of our study this fall: we need to see God as King, and get a working perspective of how a vision of God enthroned changes our perspective on every area of life. Every characteristic of God, and every area of life, can be viewed through the lens of God enthroned. Anything we think of when we think of “God” takes on fresh meaning and clarity when viewed from the perspective of God’s kingship and empire.

**DISCUSSION #2: What comes to mind when someone says the word, “God”? (i.e., concept, action; try to come up with ideas WITHOUT looking below)**

**How does thinking of God as KING impact your perspective on that concept or action?**

### **(1) God’s care for his people as the Shepherd-Father-King**

- A. Protector
- B. Redeemer
- C. Care in the face of disaster (Job, Ruth, Psalms)

One of the most challenging personal and pastoral tasks is the navigation of crisis, and Naomi in the book of Ruth is an example worth highlighting. David Jackman notes that despite her grief and complaint, she does not lose her faith:

“She consciously places all her pain, bitter experiences and hopelessness within the structure of God’s sovereignty, and she leaves the explanation and responsibility with him. *Whether that is escapism or realism entirely depends on the character of God.* The book (of Ruth) is designed to vindicate that character of steadfast love and dependability and to generate a similar faith in the Lord. He provides in his person the only context in which faith can learn to cope with the uncertainties, pain and bitterness of life. For he is also Yahweh – the God of covenant-love and faithfulness.”

- D. See “AntiPsalm 23” by David Powlison, the default approach.

## (2) Worship

The goal of God's act of redemption: *HIS FAME*. Exodus 8:1, 20; 9:1, 13; 10:3.

"God **reveals** his glory to all people,  
that he may **receive** glory from all creation."

See the Psalms, Revelation, Daniel. What is our response of worship supposed to look like? **Psalm 97**; Rom 12:-12. ..."Your God reigns....BURST INTO SONG!"  
Isaiah 52:7

## (3) Sin

You are not your own, you were bought with a price (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

Because of God's greatness and our importance, sin isn't just unfortunate or a matter of being "less than perfect"; not Lifetime, but HBO; not a comedy or even a drama, but a horror movie: **rebellion**, corruption, death.

### **Psalm 95**

John 8:34 Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, Everyone who sins is a slave to sin."

Because God is king over EVERYTHING, that means that error and rebellion everywhere is. Why Anglican *Book of Common Prayer* teaches us to ask for God's help in *every* area of life. Why we ask for forgiveness of what we've done wrong, and what we've left *undone*.

## (4) Mission

Kings in the ancient world loved to do difficult things. They build empires and monuments, establish peace and justice. Yahweh, the King of Israel and the world, has that same love for difficult and amazing tasks:

The King takes a world full of chaos and making it into a place of life, a garden, a temple for his people in his presence.

The King takes a really old risk-averse man and his wife with no kids as a starting point for blessing the whole world.

The King takes an uneducated, uncultured bunch of slaves and leading them out of Egypt to create a beachhead for his kingdom in this world, teaching them the what it means to be truly human along the way.

The King makes a Jewish peasant family the beachhead of New Creation, taking on the body of a poor Jewish man.

**God's mission is "the kingdom of God," and the establishment of that kingdom is the central plot of the Bible.**

### **Explanation of syllabus and reading.**

An African chief, when asked what he was doing differently now that he had found a new God and King:

An East Memphis man, upon finding out that "Christ" was not Jesus' last name, but a title that meant the Jewish Messiah, the King of Israel and the world who ruled with iron rod:

## 2 postures of a servant toward a king: trust and fear

“**By faith** Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death, and he was not found, because God had taken him. Now before he was taken he was commended as having **pleased God**. And **without faith** it is impossible to **please him**, for whoever would **draw near to God** must **believe** that he exists and that he **rewards** those who seek him. By faith Noah, in **reverent fear...**” Hebrews 11

“For we walk **by faith**, not by sight. Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to **please him**. For we must all **appear before the judgment seat of Christ**, so that each one **may receive what is due** for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil. Knowing the **fear of the LORD...**” 2 Corinthians 5

Let’s look at those highlighted words, and then I’ll make two observations:

### 2 Cor 5

by faith

pleased God

draw near to God

he rewards

reverent fear

### Heb 11

by faith

please him

appear before the judgment seat of Christ

we receive what is due

fear of the LORD

(1) I love the way these passage work to point out the critical nature of faith on the way to reward. Notice that faith itself is not *what* pleases God, but what faith does in our lives. For example, a few chapters later, Hebrews 13:16 tells us that sacrifices of generosity and doing good please God. In other words, righteous deeds done from a posture of faith in God are pleasing to the King.

(2) Faith and fear might sound like strange bedfellows, but they are two common ways of talking about a slave’s relationship to a master higher up the org chart of the ancient world. We trust the king or lord to help us and sustain us; he does what we cannot do. And we fear him, knowing the threat of judgment and the responsibility of obedience.