

THEISM

God Is Lord

God wants you – God wants the world – to know that He is Lord. A Lord is a ruler, a master over servants. God is Lord whether or not one knows it. Whether or not one knows God as Lord makes a difference in one's trust, obedience, and worship. Such knowledge determines one's behavior and the quality of one's life. When people know not and serve not God they come under Jeremiah's description as foolish, silly children, having no understanding, "wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge" (Jeremiah 4:22). They "have bent their tongues *for* lies. They are not valiant for the truth on the earth" (Jeremiah 9:3). Hosea noted that a lack of knowledge of God is associated with no truth or mercy in the land (Hosea 4:1). A nation that knows and serves God as Lord will be blessed, whereas a nation that knows not God will be cursed (see Deuteronomy 28). Throughout history, God has had one or more contenders for his Lordship. Sometimes people, like Eve (Genesis 3:1-6) have wanted to be their own God or lord. However, people have generally sought to make idols their lord, rather than God. Such idols were represented by images of wood, stone, or precious metals (Deuteronomy 29:17), whereas God is invisible (Colossians 1:15-16; 1 Timothy 1:17; Hebrews 11:27). Modern idols are in forms of pleasure, power, wealth, and fame.

The idolatrous nature of cultures surrounding the patriarchs and their descendents, even while the Israelites were in Egypt, meant that the Israelites tended toward idolatry and toward forsaking the God of their forefathers (Genesis 31:19-35; 35:2, 4; Exodus 12:12; 32:1, 23; Joshua 24:2). Extensive commandments were given to them that they should not be idolatrous (Exodus 20:3; 23:13, 24; 34:17; Leviticus 19:4; Deuteronomy 5:7; 6:14). Yet, the Israelites, along with other nations, served and worshipped idols (1 Kings 16:13, 26; 21:26; 2 Kings 17:15; 21:11; 21:21), making them their lord. The primary idol was Ba'al, or Ba'alim in plural form (Numbers 25:3; Deuteronomy 4:3; Judges 2:11; 10:10; 1 Samuel 7:4; 1 Kings 16:31-33; 18:19, 22; 2 Kings 8:27). Often, idol worship was syncretistic, i.e. worshipping both God and the idols of Ba'al (Numbers 25:3; Judges 2:13; 6:28, 30-32; 1 Kings 16:31-32; 18:21, 25-26; Jeremiah 11:13, 17; 19:5), and/or worshipping also the sun, moon, and stars (2 Kings 17:16; 21:3). When various deities contend for the minds of mankind, how can people determine which God is truly the Lord?

The God of the Bible has made himself known as Lord by his great power. The Israelites would come to know God as Lord when he removed them from the burdens of slavery by the Egyptians (Exodus 6:7). Pharaoh would know that God is Lord when the waters in the river were turned into blood (Exodus 7:17). When the Israelites complained about lack of food after departing from Egypt, God instructed Moses to tell them that "At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall be filled with bread. And you shall know that I *am* the LORD your God" (Exodus 16:12).

God has made himself known as Lord by his many judgments. Ezekiel prophesied that the judgments of God against the Israelites for their idolatry would reveal that he is Lord (Ezekiel 6:7, 13). God's judgments of destruction against Israel, against false prophets, against other nations, etc. because the people had failed to obey his commandments were intended to cause the people to know that God is the Lord (see Ezekiel 7:4, 9; 11:10, 12; 12:20; 12:9, 14, 21, 23; 14:8; 15:7; 22:16; 23:49; 24:24; 25:5, 7; 35:4, 9, 12).

The people would know that God is Lord, not only from his judgments, but also because of his renewal of the covenant with them after their punishment (Ezekiel 16:62; see also 20:42, 44; 36:11; 37:6-13). Joel promised that after the exiles returned from captivity God would bring vengeance upon the enemies of Israel, "So you shall know that I *am* the LORD your God, Dwelling

in Zion My holy mountain. Then Jerusalem shall be holy, And no aliens shall ever pass through her again” (Joel 3:17).

In the Old Testament, the idea that God wants people to know that He is Lord is expressed in many ways and on various occasions. When Joshua instructed the priests to stand within the Jordan River with the ark of the covenant, he said to the people of Israel, “By this you shall know that the living God *is* among you, and *that* He will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Hivites and the Perizzites and the Girgashites and the Amorites and the Jebusites” (Joshua 3:10). Before David slew Goliath, he said that the Lord would deliver Goliath into his hand, “that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. Then all this assembly shall know that the LORD does not save with sword and spear; for the battle *is* the Lord’s, and He will give you into our hands.” (1 Samuel 17:46-47). On another occasion, David prayed that the enemies of Israel would be confounded, dismayed, be put to shame and perish “that they may know that You, whose name alone *is* the LORD, *Are* the Most High over all the earth. (Psalms 83:17-18). Solomon prayed that all peoples of the earth would know the name of God and fear him (1 Kings 8:43; 2 Chronicles 6:33). When the Syrian army came to fight against Israel, God informed King Ahab that he would deliver the Syrians into his hands, and by that Ahab would know “that I am the Lord” (1 Kings 20:13, 18). When Elijah stood on Mt Carmel in contest against the prophets of Ba’al, he wanted the people to know God. Therefore, he prayed, “LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that You *are* God in Israel and I *am* Your servant, and *that* I have done all these things at Your word. Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that You *are* the LORD God, and *that* You have turned their hearts back *to You* again” (1 Kings 18:36-37). When Hezekiah was confronted by officials of the Assyrian army and threatened with destruction of Jerusalem he prayed to the Lord saying, “save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that You *are* the LORD God, You alone” (2 Kings 19:19).

Through Isaiah, God promised Cyrus, King of Persia, conquest and riches, “That you may know that I, the LORD, Who call *you* by your name, *Am* the God of Israel. . . . I *am* the LORD, and *there is* no other; *There is* no God besides Me. I will gird you, though you have not known Me, That they may know from the rising of the sun to its setting That *there is* none besides Me. I *am* the LORD, and *there is* no other; (Isaiah 45:3, 5-6). Through Hosea, God said, “Yet I am the LORD your God Ever since the land of Egypt, And you shall know no God but Me; For there is no Savior besides Me” (Hosea 13:4). Through Joel, God said, “you shall know that I am in the midst of Israel: I am the LORD your God And there is no other” (Joel 2:27).

Because the people were generally involved with various forms of idolatry associated with the nations around them, God’s many displays of power over nature, and his judgment against people for their wickedness, were intended to convince them that He was indeed the Lord God. The designation, “Lord God,” used 533 times in the Bible, emphasizes that God is Lord. In the New Testament, God is designated as the “Lord God Almighty” (Revelation 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7; 21:22) and the Lord God Omnipotent (Revelation 19:6). The Lord’s role as judge is also indicated in the New Testament (e.g., Acts 17:22-31; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10; Revelation 18:8). God’s lordship is also recognized for his redeeming Israel by sending his Son to reign forever over the house of David (Luke 1:32, 68). As Lord, God rules over nature and human events. Because God is Lord, his commandments should be obeyed (Leviticus 18:4, 30; 19:3-4, 10, 31, 34, 36; 23:22; 25:55; 26:1). Because God is Lord, we ought therefore to worship and serve God, not idols.