

Judges 16:1-31
The Real God and the Fall of Samson
Sermon Outline

Introduction: It is hard to swallow the notion that there is only one God. We prefer a generalized spirituality where all the 'gods' (and nations) get along. This is why Judges 16, where Yahweh humiliates and then flattens Dagon, can be so troubling to us. But the trouble diminishes (at least a little) if we allow ourselves to imagine that God is real, rather than an idea that has arisen (in various forms) with the rise of human consciousness. If he is real then he cannot be everything we think he is; he is who he is. Notice three things about the real God, according to Judges 16.

I) The real God wins—despite the weaknesses of his people

A) Samson is weak

Samson embodies his people (us)

God (Reality) triumphs over Dagon (fantasy) anyway

B) Meaning for us

One of the reasons we are put off by 'religious types'...

The deep contest has always been "Deus contra mundum"—God against all of us

II) The real God remembers his servants, despite their flaws

A) Samson

- Answered prayers
- Burial

B) Us

III) The real God dies with his enemies

A) Samson and Jesus

- Parallels
- Divergence

B) This God must be real

Questions for Reflection this Week

- 1) Why do so many in our time (perhaps your) find the notion that there is only one true God offensive? What conditions (socio-political realities and philosophies) contribute to the offense we feel over the notion?
- 2) How do you react to Judges 16, where Israel's God humiliates the Philistines' God, in the light of question 1?
- 3) React to the following statement: "The deep contest that the Bible describes is not 'Samson versus the Philistines' or 'Christians versus Muslims' or 'Republicans versus Democrats' or 'Protestants versus Catholics'. It is rather 'Deus contra mundum'—God against the world. The solitude of Samson illustrates this. Samson had no allies (even from his own people) because God has no allies (apart from those he makes allies by grace), loving with a holy love a whole world order that is marshaled against him."
- 4) Samson chooses to live and act on his own and he ends up with the loneliness he has chosen. Itemize the ways in which he acts alone. Itemize the deep loneliness that comes upon him at the end of his life. The read v. 31 and compare it to Luke 23:50-56. What does v. 31 tell us about God's heart toward Samson despite all of his problems?
- 5) In Judges 16:30 Samson cries, "Let me die with the Philistines." Say these words aloud in the way you imagine Samson said them. Now replace 'the Philistines' with your name and imagine Jesus saying the same words as he prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane. How is the tone different? How is the meaning different? Thank Christ.