

# The Message of the Old Testament

## Session 2 A Book about God – He is the God of Israel and the nations

**There was a universal belief that different gods had their own areas of authority and activity**, 1Kings 20: 26-28. It was thought prudent to acknowledge the local deities by suitable acts of worship – hence Israel was often seduced into the worship of the Baals, Hosea 2: 8-13.

**The outcome of war was considered to be a reflection of the relative strengths of the rival gods.** If your side won you took the defeated gods and placed them in the temple of your god to signify this victory. This is what Nebuchadnezzar did when he conquered Jerusalem; of course there was no God in the Temple in Jerusalem so he took sacred vessels etc. Daniel 1:1-2.

The revelation to Israel was that **their God was not a local deity** with limited range of action – He is **the Lord of the whole earth** and in fact, of everything that exists, Psalm 96:5, Isaiah 42: 8 – **The LORD of Hosts**, Isaiah 6: 3, 5, 47: 4.

**Pharaoh** found this out to his cost when he foolishly said “Who is the LORD that I should obey him?” Exodus 5: 2.

**The Assyrian general** besieging Jerusalem made the fatal mistake of comparing the LORD to the local tribal deities, Isaiah 36:18-20.

**The LORD spoke of pagan emperors as his servants**, unwittingly doing his will, Isaiah 10:5-12, 44: 28 – 45: 7.

**Daniel had dramatic visions of the rise and fall of major world powers** with the clear understanding that God’s hand was behind it all, guiding history towards the fulfillment of his purposes in the revelation of the Messiah, Daniel 7.

### Current relevance:

- **This understanding affects how we look at world events – a clash of cultures for dominance.**
- **It challenges our tendency to live in “two worlds”, secular and sacred.**
- **There is a resurgence of paganism and relativism – New Age, Eastern religions etc.**