

The True Rock Says

Proper 11

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Isaiah 44:6-8

Grace, peace, and mercy be to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

“If ya smell what the Rock is cookin’.” Whether or not you were watching WWE wrestling in the 2010s, you may have heard this quote. Before Dwayne Johnson became an actor for “The Fast and the Furious” series and other adventure films like the upcoming “Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle,” he was a wrestler whose call name was “The Rock.”

Like the other wrestlers, The Rock had signature moves which he would employ once a match to defeat his opponent. His signature move was titled “The People’s Elbow.” Yet The Rock is also known for raising one eyebrow in posing, and for his taunts. He would say the one mentioned a few moments ago about what The Rock is cookin,’ but he would also frequently say “The Rock says.” He would say “The Rock says” and then taunt his opponent.

If any of you watched wrestling in those years, you may have picked up on something that a classmate from Sem’s son picked up on: that the WWE uses a lot of Christian elements, though not in the way in which they were intended. In one of my classes, my classmate brought up how one of the wrestlers called himself the “King of Kings” and how his son had asked “Isn’t God the ‘King of Kings’?”

In our Old Testament text, God answers the boy with a resounding “yes.” As we’ll hear, there is only one God, one Rock, and it is He, God, who is the King of Kings.

Verse 1

“Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts: ‘I am the first and the last; besides me there is no god.’”

The true King of Kings, the true Rock, declared to the Israelites that He is eternal, the first and the last. Nothing else is eternal. Going back to the WWE for a moment, consider how long any of those wrestlers keep a Championship belt. It is most certainly not forever. Not even the one who claimed to be the King of Kings kept his belt until today, let alone for all of time. In the 2010s, one of the big names was the Rock; today he is more of an actor than a wrestler. These days, John Cena is one of the big names; but how long will he keep his spot on top? I confess that I haven’t kept track, and that as far as I know he may no longer even have a belt today.

The commentary notes on this verse make an interesting point regarding God as the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last. In the “first and the last” phrase God says about Himself that “(a)s first, He has no creator; as last, He alone remains standing.” To go back to wrestling for a moment, there’s an event known as the Slobber-Knocker match. A Slobber-Knocker match is a competition in which wrestlers come to the ring every so often and try to stay in the ring until he is the last one standing. What God is saying with the “first and the last” phrase is that if there a competition for whether other gods existed, He would be the last one standing. In fact, this actually occurred with Elijah and the prophets of Baal. The prophets of Baal tried all day to get Baal to respond, but he did not; Elijah prayed once and the Lord acted immediately—He alone remained standing.

Just as in the Old Testament, the unbelievers today have their own ideas and conceptions of what God should be like, or how many gods there should be, or that there is no such thing as a god. These people put all

their effort into what they can accomplish here and now to make a name for themselves. Winning a belt for the longest amount of time; becoming the richest, most famous boss of a major corporation; being the most famous YouTuber; finding the best way to have the most fun while they're still alive because in their way of thinking, there is no afterlife: it's all about the here and now. For them, they may have some ideas of right and wrong, or they may do whatever they want to reach their goals, whether they treat others well or not.

Be careful, friends in Christ, that you do not envy them or go after their ways. God, the true King of Kings and the true Rock says that their ways will be put to the test.

Verse 2

The true Rock says, “Who is like me? Let him proclaim it. Let him declare and set it before me, since I appointed an ancient people. Let them declare what is to come, and what will happen.”

God the King of Kings and true Rock speaks to those who claim to have other gods and tells them to bear witness to their god or gods. God has shown His presence in historical, documented accounts. What of these other gods? What of those who claim that there is no God?

Every ideology other than Christianity is a false doctrine and fake faith system, whether it is acknowledged as one or not. Over the last few weeks, and for the second time in my life, I got to see fossils of dinosaurs in Colorado and Utah. And for the second time in my life, I did not see the humanoid creatures that supposedly came before human beings according to the false doctrine of evolution. God demands to know: Where is their proof?

God who is the beginning and the end, the Alpha and the Omega, called the people of Isaiah's time to testify, to show their might, and has been proven to be the last God standing. Today, through His Word, God still proclaims His presence, and history bears witness to His actions—that Jesus was a living, breathing human being has been documented, and so have other events of the Scriptures.

Yet still many do not believe God's Word; and they will be called to account for what they believe either when they die or when Jesus returns from the dead. When they meet Jesus, He will ask them directly why they did not believe Him. And Jesus will be judging the living and the dead, both the unbelievers and the believers. Are you ready?

In Christ Jesus' death and resurrection, you are ready. Every sin you have committed, every good that you have omitted has been paid for by His blood. And He has given you His Spirit to trust and believe that what He has spoken and what He has done are true. Through His Word, you have been brought to repentance and confessed your sins in the absolution this morning. Now your sins are forgiven and your conscience has been made clear. You will also be receiving Jesus' very body and blood which will strengthen your faith to life everlasting. So yes, you are ready for His return, even if it should be immediately following our service, this afternoon, tomorrow morning, or if you die before He returns.

Verse 3

In our last verse, the true Rock says, “Fear not, nor be afraid; have I not told you from of old and declared it? And you are my witnesses! Is there a God besides me? There is no Rock; I know not any.”

Here God Himself reminds you of what was just preached to you: that you have received His Word of old. You have no reason to fear or be afraid. God tells us that there is no Rock, not any, besides Him. But in Him, we have a Mighty Fortress, a strong abode in which to live and move and have our being.

More than that, God has called us, you and me, to be His witnesses to the world. We have the privilege of being God's spokespeople to the world. In sharing His Word, you are not alone, for God Himself goes with you. Your sins have been forgiven in His Son's death and you have been made right with God. You are like a boy whose idol is John Cena and you are given the chance not only to be Cena's biggest fan, but to announce his entrance into the ring—only instead of for Cena or the Rock or any other wrestler, you've been given the opportunity to announce God's presence. And you and I already know that the other contenders will not even make it to the match.

It may not appear like it at this time, but you and I shall be proven right. Those who speak and trust in God's Word will never be put to eternal shame. Is there a God besides ours who is eternal and so merciful as our God and His Redeemer Jesus Christ? Through His Spirit we believe that there is no other Rock; we know not any. In Jesus' Name. Amen.