

Bethel Pulpit

Sermon 276

There is a God in Heaven

**Sermon preached at Bethel Chapel, Luton,
by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom,
on Lord's day morning, 29th June, 2008**

Text: *"But there is a God in heaven" (Daniel 2. 28).*

Perhaps some of you are thinking, Have we come all the way to chapel this morning to be told a simple thing like this that everybody knows, that "There is a God in heaven"? Perhaps you say, Surely there is no need that something like this should be mentioned, something like this should be spoken about! Of course we know that "there is a God in heaven." Well, it is almost the first thing we were taught when we were tiny children, that there is a God, and that God is in heaven.

O but did you ever come to know it and realise it and feel it, that "there is a God in heaven," that His eye is ever upon you, that you have sinned against Him, that He is angry with your sins, that you are not in a right relationship with Him, that one day you must die, you must meet Him, that one day He will judge you, that you will hear the everlasting sentence? O what a difference between reading in the Bible that "there is a God in heaven," and *knowing* that "there is a God in heaven"! How many of you, beloved friends, *know* that "there is a God in heaven"?

Years ago there was a renowned atheist. He did not believe there was a God in heaven, and in his bedroom by his bed where many Christian people have a beautiful text, he had a different kind of text. It said, "God is nowhere" – a statement of blasphemy, atheism. "God is nowhere." One day he was very ill and a tiny granddaughter came to visit him. She told him she was just learning to read, and the wicked old man said, "You read what it says over my bed" (that terrible word, "God is nowhere"). The little girl learning to read, read it very hesitatingly, and she read, "God – is – now – here." God is now here! It was like an arrow in that old man's heart. He trembled before it, the realisation that there is a God in heaven and that God is now here.

O may each one here this morning know it, not just through learning it in Sunday school or reading it in the Bible, but under the Lord's own teaching: "There is a God in heaven." May you never be satisfied until you are able feelingly to say, This great God in heaven is *my* God and *my* Father.

“There is a God in heaven.” Perhaps some of you as you grow older know the fiery darts of Satan, the awful temptations of Satan. Is there a God in heaven? Is there? O to be delivered, to be upheld, to be held fast when the enemy comes in like a flood with these blasphemous thoughts, these atheistic thoughts. May the Spirit of the Lord lift up a standard against him. But perhaps it is like this when you come into your sorrows and trials and difficulties and perplexities and you cannot see the Lord’s hand in it; you hear a cruel whisper, not whether there is a God in heaven or there is not a God in heaven, but “Where is now thy God?” when He hides His face from you.

In Puritan days there was a godly minister; I believe he was in the city of Norwich. He was most cruelly treated and arrested for preaching the everlasting gospel and sentenced with imprisonment. He was treated with all kinds of indignities and he was taken to prison strapped upside down under a horse. The streets were lined with people and a most wicked woman came out to mock him, and as he passed, she cried, “Where is now thy God?” And the dear, godly man said, “In Micah chapter 7 verse 10.” The woman did not know what it meant, but she went home and found a Bible and read there that it is the wicked woman who says, “Where is the Lord thy God?” and what the end of that wicked woman will be: she will be trampled under foot in the streets. It is not like those stories with a happy ending where she became an eminent Christian. Sad to say, as far as we know she never did, but the experience so affected her that it is said she went every day to the prison and took bread and water to that man she had abused.

Really, this is the foundation truth of all real religion: “There is a God in heaven” who is the Creator of all things. “There is a God in heaven” who is almighty. “There is a God in heaven” who is holy. The prophet Isaiah had always believed there was a God in heaven, but one day he went into the temple and in a vision he saw the Lord “high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple.” He saw God in all His glory. He heard the holy angels singing, “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts.” He had always known there was a God in heaven; he *knew* there was a God in heaven now, and his life was never the same afterwards. “Woe is me! For I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.”

“There is a God in heaven.” And the holy Scriptures reveal that God in heaven is a glorious Trinity – Father, Son and Holy Ghost – three Persons, one God. It is a great mystery; we cannot understand it, but we are called to believe it. For,

“All true Christians this may boast,
(A truth from nature never learned),
That Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,
To save our souls are all concerned.”

“There is a God in heaven,” God the Father, and that God in heaven, God the Father, loves sinners, loves His people with an everlasting love, and God the Father in heaven is the Father of His people in Christ. The wonder of it, that this great, almighty God, the Creator of all things, is the Father of His people in Christ! “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.” There is so much about this in the New Testament. We have tended to shrink away from it in our chapels, because so many people speak so lightly, so glibly about God being their Father, and so many contend God is the Father of everyone. The Lord Jesus said to some, “Ye are of your father the devil.” O but,

“Behold what wondrous grace
The Father has bestowed
On sinners of a mortal race,
To call them sons of God.”

“There is a God in heaven,” God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in covenant from everlasting He planned salvation, He chose a people, He loved them with an everlasting love, He ordained them to heaven and He devised a way of salvation through which the vilest of sinners should be “saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation.” You remember that word: “We must needs die” – the certainty of it – “and are as water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again” – the finality of it – “neither doth God respect any person” – the equality of it – “yet doth He devise means, that His banished be not expelled from Him.” O the mercy of it, the everlasting covenant “ordered in all things, and sure,” in which there is a God in heaven and in love and mercy He devises means whereby His banished may return! Perhaps there are some of you here this morning feeling you are among the banished ones. You feel you deserve to be banished eternally. You fear lest you should be banished.

But bless the eternal Father, the God in heaven, that in covenant He devised means whereby these banished ones might return. He decreed that the everlasting gospel of His grace should so simply and clearly set forth the way in which these banished ones may return. They are called to return; they are welcome to return. O the loving welcome ordained for these banished ones! For the heavenly Father has devised means that they might return. O bless God that “there is a God in heaven,” a God of love, a God of salvation, a God of mercy.

“There is a God in heaven,” God the Son, the Son of God from all eternity, completely equal with His Father, “very God of very God.” “There is a God in heaven.” But the wonderful thing for you and me this morning, beloved friends, is that He did not remain in heaven, that He did not stay in heaven, that He left heaven and He came to this sinful earth with a purpose of love and mercy that sinners might be eternally saved. O “there is a God in heaven.” Have you ever blessed Him that He left heaven? “Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” It is also beautifully summarised in that wonderful verse, and so many of you are always so pleased whenever I quote it: “Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich.”

“There is a God in heaven.” Did it strike you this morning – so often when I am reading the chapter, there is something strikes me – that the wise men said to King Nebuchadnezzar, “The gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh” (verse 11)? The heathens believed in all kinds of gods, but they thought it impossible that any of these gods, these false gods, would ever condescend to come to live here upon earth in this world of sin and sorrow and wickedness. That is just what God the Son did. “The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.” O what matchless condescension that “there is a God in heaven”! He was the Son of God in heaven from all eternity, and not just in heaven, but in the bosom of His beloved Father, “rejoicing always before Him,” and yet even before the world was made, His “delights were with the sons of men,” “rejoicing in the habitable part of His earth.” Do you believe it, that the Son of God

in heaven, even before the world was created, saw a city called Jerusalem and saw a hill called Calvary and He saw a cross upon that hill, and love to sinners brought Him down to suffer, bleed and die?

“This was compassion like a God,
That when the Saviour knew
The price of pardon was His blood,
He pity ne’er withdrew.”

Blessed be the Son of God that though He was in heaven, He left heaven, came to this earth, lived a holy life, brought in an everlasting righteousness, died an accursed death, rose triumphant from the dead, the work of redemption for ever finished.

But you know this morning, “there is a God in heaven,” this same dear Saviour who once left heaven for earth. He is in heaven this morning as true, almighty God, crowned with glory and honour. We speak of Him as the God-Man, because that sacred humanity He took into union with His divine Person can never be separated to all eternity. He still lives and reigns, the God-Man in heaven.

“Here is my hope, my joy, my rest;
Hither, when hell assails, I flee;
I look into my Saviour’s breast.
Away, sad doubt and anxious fear;
Mercy and love are written there.”

O may you see God in heaven, that glorious God-Man, ever living, ever interceding, almighty to save, and though He is true almighty God, He still retains that loving, human, sympathising heart. O that loving welcome that He gives to this poor, venturing sinner who has been brought to feel his need.

“Come, then, repenting sinner, come;
Approach with humble faith.”

What? To this great God? Yes; sinners are welcome on mercy’s ground, because the Saviour has died.

“Come, then, repenting sinner, come;
Approach with humble faith;
Owe what thou wilt, the total sum
Is cancelled by His death.”

May you have that writ of cancellation in your conscience this morning, because “there is a God in heaven,” the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who can give you that writ of complete release and the cancellation of all your debt in your conscience.

“There is a God in heaven” – God the Holy Ghost, equal with the Father, equal with the Son. And the Holy Ghost is God in heaven, but His sacred influence is known and felt on earth, in the church of God, according to the Saviour’s promise to the end of time: “I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever.” What does God the Holy Ghost do? He has three great works. The greatest of all His works was the mysterious conception and incarnation of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, born of Mary. That was the Holy Ghost’s greatest work. And His second work is the inspiration of the holy Scriptures. They are divinely inspired. And His third work is the work of grace in a sinner’s heart, first of all in the new birth – “Ye must be born again” – and then in that gracious teaching and leading we need so much. “As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.” He teaches the people of God; He instructs them; He leads them; He corrects them; He converts them; He draws them to the Saviour; He reveals the things of Christ to them. “There is a God in heaven,” Father, Son and Holy Ghost, one God. May we this morning in love and reverence and adoration worship Him.

Now this God in heaven is in complete control. That is the point that stands out of this chapter, Daniel chapter 2, and really the whole of the book. I have often told you, whenever I open my Bible at the Book of Daniel, I think of this word:

“Keep silence all created things,
And wait your Maker’s nod;
My soul stands trembling while she sings
The honours of her God.”

Throughout the Book of Daniel you have the greatness of this God in heaven; you have His divine power; you have His sovereignty. Daniel knew it and he believed it and he experienced it, and for about seventy years. You read of this king, Nebuchadnezzar, and he goes the way of all flesh, and then there is Belshazzar, and he goes the way of all flesh, and then Darius, and he goes the way of all flesh, but we read this: “And Daniel continued” – seventy years. A young man, young boy – Almighty

God's purpose that in that great empire he should have an important position at the king's right hand. Nobody could overthrow Daniel. Lions could not destroy him.

In the Book of Daniel, we see the greatness of the God in heaven. It is this: He is in complete control. And the God of the Book of Daniel is still the God of heaven and He is still in complete control. That was a lovely word we read this morning. I seemed to want to linger over it. Did it affect you? "And in the days of these kings" – this wonderful kingdom of Babylon, and then the Medo-Persians, the Greeks and the Romans symbolised by this terrible image – "in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever" (verse 44).

"A kingdom which can ne'er decay,
While time sweeps earthly thrones away."

Now where are these mighty kingdoms today? And then you think even with some of us in our own little lifetimes there were these various kingdoms in Europe and one by one they have disappeared.

"A kingdom which can ne'er decay,
While time sweeps earthly thrones away."

O to have an interest in this kingdom! "Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear." You look on this glorious kingdom, the kingdom of grace and glory, and you say,

"Jesus! to Thee I breathe my prayer;
Reveal, confirm my interest there."

"There is a God in heaven," this God of the Book of Daniel, this God in complete control, this God controlling today, all these happenings in the world and our lives' minutest circumstance. Nothing happens by chance; nothing happens by accident. "There is a God in heaven." But sometimes His way is in the sea, and His paths in the mighty waters, and His footsteps are not known. We cannot understand His ways; we cannot understand His dealings; but we have to realise He is the all-wise God, that He never made a mistake and He never will.

“Too wise to be mistaken, He,
Too good to be unkind.”

And we have to seek that humble, loving submission to His holy will, for,

“By His saints it stands confessed,
That what He does is ever best,”

even when we cannot understand it.

“There is a God in heaven.” But as we move towards the close,
“There is a God in heaven” to hear and answer prayer.

“With heaven and earth at His command,
He waits to answer prayer.”

“There is a God in heaven” with whom nothing is impossible, a God in heaven who is an almighty Deliverer, who says, “Call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me.” “There is a God in heaven” who makes all things work together for His people’s real, eternal good, and for His own honour and glory. “There is a God in heaven” who understands and knows and cares. “Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you.” “There is a God in heaven” whose love is as great as His power, His mercy as great as His might, a God in heaven who can uphold you and support you and sustain you and bring you safely through. “There is a God in heaven” who says, “Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness.” “There is a God in heaven” who “is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy.” “There is a God in heaven” who has promised to give you grace all sufficient and strength made perfect in weakness. “There is a God in heaven” who will “supply *all* your need” – every need – “according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”

“This, this is the God we adore.” And as we speak this morning of this great God in heaven, may some of you sweetly be able to feel, “For this God is our God for ever and ever: He will be our Guide even unto death.” For “there is” – *there is* – “a God in heaven.”

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This God is the God we adore
Our faithful, unchangeable Friend;
Whose love is as large as His power,
And neither knows measure nor end.
'Tis Jesus, the First and the Last,
Whose Spirit shall guide us safe home:
We'll praise Him for all that is past,
And trust Him for all that's to come."

Joseph Hart