

Bethel

Pulpit

“There is a God in Heaven”

Sermon Number 478

**Sermon preached at Bethel Chapel, Luton,
by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom,
on Lord's day evening, 8th May, 2016**

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

There could not be a more simple statement of divine truth, and there could not be a more weighty statement, because really this is the message of the whole Word of God from the first verse in the Bible, and then all the way through. That is the subject of the Bible, God's Word, to tell us that "there is a God in heaven" – one God, only one God, the Creator of all things, almighty, holy, righteous, just, who He is, what He has done.

But especially the Word of God tells us about our relationship to Him, because every one of us has a relationship to this great, almighty God. He made us, and as He made us, we are accountable to Him. He has revealed Himself in His holy law, but especially in the ten commandments – who He is, what He desires, in worship, concerning His holy day, the reverence, the honour due to Him. Also, how we are to behave one to another – the things that are forbidden, like the lying, and the adultery, and the theft, and the covetousness; and the Word of God makes it clear this is in thought and word as well as actions. Now God has a perfect right over all His creatures, and one day we shall have to give an account, an account of the deeds done in the body. The solemn thing is that all of us are guilty – by birth, by practice, by nature – sinners, rebels against this great God.

Now, "There is a God in heaven." I suppose everybody believes it in this chapel, but O the difference if you really have that solemn realisation that there is a God in heaven, and how do I personally stand before Him?

But then of course the gospel reveals that He sent His dear Son. He is a God of love as well as justice. He made a way of salvation for His people in the Person and work of His beloved Son, and the Holy Spirit makes these things known, makes them known in the new birth, makes them known by divine teaching, that there is a God in heaven. And then it is this: that we want to know Him, and know Him in His dear Son, whom to know is eternal life.

I never forget the first time I ever heard Mr. J. H. Gosden preach. One of the first things he said was something like this. He said, “Real religion is very simple, but it is very solemn, and really it stands in two things: our knowledge of God and our knowledge of ourselves; our knowledge of ourselves in our need as sinners; our knowledge of God in Christ as our salvation.”

So what a word this is: “There is a God in heaven.” And may the solemn, sacred, weighty impression of this word rest upon our hearts this evening as we come into His immediate presence, and as we seek to worship Him in the way that He has ordained.

“There is a God in heaven.” I suppose a minister could preach hundreds of sermons on this text if he had the grace and ability. Really, I want to bring it before you in two ways this evening. First of all, as this truth is revealed in this book, in the Book of Daniel, and then secondly as this truth is made known very clearly in the life of His servant Daniel personally. And may the Lord grant us His blessing.

“There is a God in heaven.” Beloved friends, the different books of the Bible have a difference emphasis. You could not think of a more different emphasis in the book we read from this evening and the two books we read from this morning: the difference between the Book of Job and the Book of Daniel; the difference between the Song of Solomon and the Book of Daniel. If there is one thing that stands out in this book, it is the greatness of God, the sovereignty of God.

“Keep silence all created things,
And wait your Maker’s nod.”

You see God almighty on every page. You see God in control on every page. This great king Nebuchadnezzar, the mightiest monarch on earth, and how God was greater than him, and when his heart was lifted up with pride, the Lord humbled him and brought him to nothing. Under that he made one of the most wonderful statements of divine greatness and sovereignty anywhere in the Bible, and you all know what it is. “He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou?”

And then you come to Belshazzar, and in a moment the kingdom is snatched away from him. That terrible orgy, that awful, ungodly feast – he

invited thousands of his lords and they were mocking Almighty God, and they were drinking wine from the vessels of the temple in their drunkenness. There was one Lord they did not invite, and He came and wrote on the wall, and that same night Belshazzar was in eternity, and that night that great, that mighty kingdom came to an end.

And then you have Darius, and again all these kings, one after another, and all under the complete sovereign control of an almighty God. You see Him as one who hears and answers prayer. You see Him as one who delivers in the most impossible circumstances. You think of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and that burning fiery furnace. “But there is a God in heaven,” who can easily deliver them. And then you see all through these mighty kings, the Lord maintained Daniel and He maintained him in an exalted position. He was exalted by each of these three kings. It was Almighty God on the throne, in complete control. The great point to remember is this: that this God, the God of the Book of Daniel, is our God – our God today in judgment and in mercy.

We think of our country. Is it worse than Babylon? But the Lord is in control, and He will have the last word. You know what Churchill used to say, though it was not a quotation from Scripture: “Although the mills of God grind slow, they grind exceeding small.” In the church of God, and with us personally, because people out of the town might come, and if they turned in with us, as often they do, and we are pleased that they do, some of them might say, But why are all these people gathered on a beautiful, sunny evening and thinking about things that were happening in history all those hundreds of years ago? What are they thinking about? Now the point is this: I said at the beginning that God is the God of the Bible, and we said that God is the God of the Book of Daniel. God is the God of history, and those who look at history rightly, see the hand of God in it all the way through, today as then.

You young ones, when I was young, there was a saying. They said, “History is *His story*.” There was a good measure of truth in that. But the Puritans emphasised this point. All these wonderful happenings – the Red Sea, and things in the Books of Samuel, Kings and Chronicles, the Book of Esther – all these things, God is the same today, in His justice, in His divine judgments – He “will by no means clear the guilty” – but in His mercy and

in His love and in the way He deals with His people. May that be an encouragement to some of you here this evening. You have your concerns; you have your problems; you have your needs. But this great God of the Book of Daniel, “This God is our God for ever and ever.” He has not lost any of His power. His love and mercy are unchanging. “He will be our Guide even unto death.”

“But there is a God in heaven.” So first of all, it is *in the Book of Daniel*. Now secondly, then, as so clearly made known *in the life of Daniel personally*. In a sense, a lot of this is a subject for children and young people, because most of the godly divines who understand these things believe that Daniel in chapter 1 when this book begins was about fourteen years old, only fourteen years old. When Nebuchadnezzar invaded Jerusalem, he was snatched away; he was taken those hundreds of miles away to Babylon and in captivity there. It must have been very, very sad for him. What about our children, our young people, if they were kidnapped and taken away into the midst of godless Russia or one of these Islamic countries? I wonder how they would fare. You come to it personally.

That ungodly king Nebuchadnezzar started a course of severe indoctrination. They were given different names. Their godly names were taken from them and they were given a name following an evil god. Daniel was called Belteshazzar, after the Babylonian god Bel. And they were indoctrinated in all their religion and all the literature and the science and all the learning of Babylon. At the end of three years, they must have forgotten Israel altogether, forgotten Jerusalem, forgotten their God. Now Daniel did not, and that is a miracle of grace, and all through this book we see one thing: that Daniel was blessedly able to stand firm. He did not conform. Right from the beginning he took a stand. I would say it to you young ones, if it is at school, if it is at work, take a stand from the beginning, because otherwise it will be much harder the second time. They were going to be fed on the finest of food from the king’s table, and wine from the king’s table, to make them fair and fat and flourishing, and Daniel refused.

The one thing that struck me when reading the chapter – and I hope things strike you when reading the chapter – the politeness and courtesy with which Daniel refused. He requested that he could have something else instead, pulse, some kind of vegetable, which does not sound very attractive.

What was the point? Well, whether it was eating food forbidden to the Jews in the law of Moses, or whether it was because this food had been offered to idols, or whatever it was, Daniel had a principle. He knew there was a God in heaven, and the whole of his religion from first to last was before the God of heaven. In Old Testament language, he possessed the holy, tender, filial fear of God in his heart, and if you desire that, if Daniel's God gives it to you, if Daniel's God is yours, you will have a religion before Him, in His sight, and there will be some things that you cannot do, whatever other people do, and they may only seem to be small things, and people may say there is no harm. He knew there was a God in heaven, and he honoured that God in heaven, and he obeyed that God in heaven, and he walked before that God in heaven, and we find later that three times a day at least he prayed to that God in heaven.

Now in the second chapter there was that absolutely ridiculous treatment of the magicians and the astrologers by King Nebuchadnezzar. He had a dream. They were to tell him what it meant, but he could not tell them what his dream was. If they could not, they would be massacred, and if they could, they would have the highest honours in the kingdom. This was the kind of background to the life this boy Daniel was living, but it was, "So did not I, because of the fear of God." He did not do these things legally; he did them in love, and the Lord honoured him in it. It was that God in heaven who gave him the strength and the might and the ability to stand. It was that God in heaven who honoured him in it.

The last sentence of the opening chapter: "Daniel continued even unto the first year of King Cyrus," which we are told was a period of about seventy years. So it was a long life. He is a young boy here in his mid teens, and at the end of the book he is an old man in his mid eighties. O to have a religion like that! He never deviated. O doesn't Daniel put your little life to shame! He never deviated; he continued; he endured. It was a most ungodly environment. It was before these heathen kings. But he did not turn his eyes away from the Lord. He did not forget his religion. People would say, Is it possible for a child of God to hold an eminent position in a godless country? It is almost like saying, Can a fish still live, can it exist, when it is taken out of water?

"Lord, help us on Thy grace to stand,
And every trial firm endure;

Preservèd by Thy sovereign hand,
And by Thy oath and covenant sure.”

“And Daniel continued even unto the first year of King Cyrus.”

And what a wonderful way the Book of Daniel ends. Daniel, the aged servant of the Lord – we do not know what is going to happen to him, but the Lord gives him a beautiful farewell word: “Go thou thy way.” I wonder how many of us the Lord could say that to. Keep on going on in the way you are going now. Or would He root us up out of our way? Would there be something to be made right, to be corrected? “Go thou thy way till the end be: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days.”

“And Daniel continued.” O for grace to continue! We have not yet endured to the end. “He that endureth to the end” – and only he that endureth to the end – “shall be saved.” You say, I thought our doctrine is once saved, always saved, the fifth point of Calvinism, the eternal perseverance of the saints. It is true all the elect, the redeemed will endure to the end, but it is only as we endure to the end we prove we are amongst them. That prayer:

“Lord, hast Thou made me know Thy ways?
Conduct me in Thy fear;
And grant me such supplies of grace,
That I may persevere.”

“There is a God in heaven.” Now this word I have read as a text was spoken by Daniel, and he spoke it to the king, a heathen king. He was not ashamed to speak of his God. I wonder if we are sometimes. “The king answered and said to Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, Art thou able to make known unto me the dream which I have seen, and the interpretation thereof?” But you see the humility of Daniel. He was not lifted up with all these things. There was a God in heaven who honoured his profession, who made him low and kept him at His feet. He kept Him, but He also kept him low.

“Daniel answered in the presence of the king, and said, The secret which the king hath demanded cannot the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, the soothsayers, shew unto the king; but there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what

shall be in the latter days.” Even when speaking before the king, he bore witness to Israel’s God, and in the presence of a heathen, idolatrous king. “There is a God in heaven.”

Now there is another thing, and this is the secret outwardly of all Daniel’s life and witness and profession. His knowledge that there was a God in heaven was not just an empty, outward knowledge. He was a man of prayer, and he prayed to God continually. He prayed three times a day, and he opened his windows toward Jerusalem, and as he prayed his way along, he knew what it was for prayer to be answered: in this case here, that wonderful deliverance as the Lord showed him the answer; especially in that case when he was cast into the lions’ den. Everybody knows about Daniel and the lions’ den – real lions, and when his enemies were thrown in, they tore them to pieces. They were not impotent lions. And we know the end, but Daniel did not. “Is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee?” And Daniel knew the answer, and what about you here this evening? Many of you need deliverance in so many ways. Some of you long for it spiritually; some of you are praying for it in your family; some of you need it in your health problems and with those you love. Some of you need it in deep family concerns.

Now what is the answer to this question: “Is thy God ... able to deliver thee”? Now is He? Do you know what Daniel walked out and what he proved? “Call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me.” “There is a God in heaven,” who, “with heaven and earth at His command waits to answer prayer.”

But Daniel in his choices, in his decisions, it was this: is it for the honour and glory of God? Now there is a principle there. The things we do, the things we do not do, the decisions we take, our choices, things in the family, things in your soul, the things in your relationships with other people, the things at school and work, things in the church of God – is it for the Lord’s honour and glory?

But the way Daniel behaved – supported, kept by this God whom he knew and loved and served, and his faithfulness before Belshazzar in interpreting the writing on the wall. That word he spoke to this mighty king Belshazzar. He said, “God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified.” What a witness! What a thing to say to

a king! And the king had to fall under it. But it was spoken to a heathen king. What about those of us who have heard the Saviour's name, who know it, who profess it? What about this word? How do you stand? "Weighed in the balances, and ... found wanting." This was Belshazzar. What about you and me? "Weighed in the balances." "God in whose hand thy breath is" – apart from God you cannot breathe any breath – "and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified." Well, Daniel could say it. He sought to walk it out. But how often we come so far short here. This God whom we know and love and profess to serve, we have not glorified.

But do not think of any of this in a legal way, and do not think of any of it in a way that this was just a moral character or a brave man. In New Testament terms, he was constrained by the love of Christ. Like the Apostle Paul, he was a willing bondman of the Saviour. He was found at His feet. And the only reason that Daniel was different to anyone else, because this God who is in heaven was with him all the way, and He heard and answered his prayers, and He kept him, and He upheld him. But he was honoured in it. "Them that honour Me I will honour, and they that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed."

And so you find the Lord with him, not because he deserved it, but in the riches of God's mercy, and this is why he was able to stand. This is why he was able to continue – that continual help given. It was divine help from that God in heaven. He was kept; it was by that God in heaven. His prayers were answered; it was from that God in heaven. He was brought safely through; it was by that God in heaven.

Then you see, this solemn, latter day in the history of the world. Here we are, and what kind of country are we living in? Everything outwardly has changed since Daniel's day, but there is still this rock foundation: "There is a God in heaven." If this foundation be removed, what can the righteous do? Blessed be God it never can be removed. It is not a precarious throne on which He sits. But we have things that Daniel never had – to see all these things in the glorious gospel of the grace of God; to see them all shining in the face of Jesus Christ.

"There is a God in heaven."