

How Big Is Your God?

by Denis Lyle

The sermon emphasizes the importance of having a big God, who is bigger than our problems, and trusting in His ability to intervene and provide answers.

Scripture: Daniel 2:19, Matthew 11:25, Luke 21:24, 1 Corinthians 10:31, Hebrews 11:19

Topics: "Faith In God", "Prayer In Adversity"

Description

Denis Lyle preaches on the story of Daniel facing impossible circumstances but having a God-centered perspective, emphasizing the importance of having a high view of God to sustain us in life's crises. Daniel's character was shaped by his total faith in God, influenced by his upbringing, historical events, and sound theology. The sermon delves into Daniel's response to King Nebuchadnezzar's dream, highlighting Daniel's calmness, faith, and reliance on prayer in the face of adversity.

Transcript

Reading: Daniel 2:1-30 3. HOW BIG IS YOUR GOD From a human standpoint, this is a story of hopelessness. Nebuchadnezzar, the king has asked the impossible. The astrologers are absolutely correct in their assessment of the situation. "There is not a man upon the earth that can show the king's matter". (2:10) Yet Daniel has a different point of view. His perspective includes the God of heaven who can intervene in the circumstances of human history and perform a miracle. The astrologers are circumstance-centred, Daniel is God-centred.

He knew that as big as the problem was, God was bigger. I mean how does your problem compare with Daniel's Here he is facing the impossible. He is facing death! And so what does he do He commits his problem to God and goes to sleep. Isn't that remarkable My, Daniel is a remarkable young man. His life is characterised by a total faith in God even when faced with impossible circumstances. No doubt his character was shaped by the influence of his parents who were committed to God and gave him a name connected with God.

Wherever Daniel went in life that name would go with him! Then there was the influence of historical events. For when Daniel was born King Josiah was on the throne. (2 Chron 36:5-8 36:1-4 34:1) Daniel lived through an incredible period of revival, that no doubt left an indelible mark on this young man's life. Then there was the influence of theology. "Theology", you say "yes, theology". Theology, our study and knowledge of God has fallen on hard times these days. We are more interested in experience, pragmatism and self-satisfaction than we are in theology.

This is reflected in the content of our preaching, and the words of our music. But Daniel's character was shaped by his theology. He had a biblical, sound, high view of God. My, it was his high view of God that sustained him in the crisis of life. One of the reasons we live defeated lives is that we try to deal with the problems of life on our own. We fail to let God be God! You see, its not the size of your problem that counts, it is your view of God. HOW BIG IS YOUR GOD Well, lets look at Daniel chapter 2 and see how God- centred Daniel really is.

This second chapter falls into 3 sections. In (2:1-30) we have Practical Teaching: in (2:31-45) we have Prophetic Truth: in (2:46-49) we have Personal Triumph. Its the first section that concerns us this ...! And I have divided that also into 3 sections! (1) THE KING AND HIS CONSTERNATION Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, the mightiest empire in the world, was the greatest of all its kings. More is said in the Old Testament about this particular pagan ruler than any other. Here was a dream given to the king by God and through it a message from God for the king, and also a message for the kingdoms of the world, from his day all the way down to the coming of the Lord Jesus Himself.

Now this opening section deals with (1) You see, there was consternation for several reasons. There was dismay because of: (a) THE KING'S DREAM: Look at (2:1) "Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown". Nebuchadnezzar was like other world rulers who go to bed at night and wonder what the future holds for themselves and their countries. Here's a king who is thinking of the future. Who should succeed him to the throne What is the future of his mighty empire What is his own future Well, it was while the king slept that God gave him a mighty revelation about the future.

Does God still speak through dreams to day (Job 33:14-16) If we have dreams that we think are inspiration, they are more likely to be indigestion. If we think that someone can interpret our dreams we will spending our money and our time on guesses, speculation and mostly baloney. My, we have God's full revelation. The canon of Scripture is complete. And there's a big full stop at the end of it. But tell me: do you do what Nebuchadnezzar did Does the cares of the day become for you the cares of the night You see Nebuchadnezzar, did a thing that no believer in Christ should dream of doing.

He took his problems to bed with him. Its so easy to take our burdens to bed with us isn't it When Jerry Vines a famous USA preacher was in his first church he was trying to build up that work for God. One day he walked into the home of some of his members and collapsed right there on the floor. Later the Doctor gave him some advice. He said, " Young man I want to give you some advice as you begin your ministry. You take care of the day shift and let God take care of the night shift".

Nebuchadnezzar could conquer dynasties but he was afraid of dreams. (b) THE KINGS DILEMMA: He could not remember his dream. Look at (2:5) Those who you who do any dreaming know all about that. You dream a lot of rubbish and you try to recall it and you cannot get the thing clear at all. Its just a jumble in your mind. I heard about a fellow who was going this girl for about 20 years. One night he was leaving her to the garden gate as usual. He said to her, "Mary I had a dream last night.

I dreamt I was leaving you to the garden gate as usual, when suddenly I fell on my knee's and asked you to become my wife. Mary what do you think of that" She said, "John I think you talk more sense when you're sleeping than when you are awake." Do you ever dream and its all a jumble in your mind Added to this frustration, the wise men of Babylon were unable to help the king. Look at (2:2) Notice the " ands", sure if anyone can help the king, this group of consultants can. His brain trust was made up of four different groups: the magicians, who were also scholars: the astrologers or stargazers: the sorcerers who

were the mediums of their day (Exod 7:11:22:18) the Chaldeans who were the wise men of Babylon.

With this kind of brain trust in front of him, the king wanted them to tell him the meaning of his dream. I tell you the pressure is on as the king makes a demand (2:5-6) Do you know what he's saying, "Hurry up or I'll have your heads on a platter". Now there are a variety of ways to manage people. One popular way is Management by Walking About. This encourages the manager to get out of the office and walk around among the employee's. But Nebuchadnezzar introduces another style its called Management by Intimidation.

My, are you beginning to see why there so much dismay (c) THE KING'S DISAPPOINTMENT: Look at (2:10-11) Do you see what they were saying If they didn't have the answer, well noone else did either. They thought that wisdom originated and died with themselves. "there is not a man upon the earth that can show the king's matter". (2:10) Of course they were wrong because there was one man on earth who was not only living on earth but who was in direct touch with heaven. A man on earth but in touch with heaven and able to bring heaven to bear on the things on earth.

But they had forgotten that Daniel even existed. These professionals thought they were the only ones who knew anything! Now most of the time we don't want to admit that we don't know an answer. I heard about a young Doctor who had just opened his practice. When his first patient came in, he examined him but he had no idea what was wrong. He racked his brain, and thought back through all his medical training. He could not even guess what was ailing the man but he did not want to admit it.

Finally, he looked at the man very seriously and said, " Well sir, have you ever had this before" The man said, "why yes". "Well", said the Doctor "you have it again". You see, we don't like to admit when we don't know the answers. The intellects of Daniel's day did not know, and the intellects of our day are no better. They can tell us a lot of things, but they cannot tell us the answers to the basic problems and questions of life for that wisdom is beyond anything that is found in a textbook.

A cleaner sweeping the steps on the university campus, if he knows Christ, knows more about life and how to live it, than the professor who walks by him will ever know. Do you remember what the Lord Jesus said "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. " (Matt 11:25) No wonder the king was disappointed for the Babylonian trust brain said, "Nobody can do what you ask". Finally, there was dismay because of: (d) THE KINGS DECREE: (2:13) There was to be a mass execution, but the goal of it was to be Daniel and his friends!

Now this seems very strange to me that Daniel was included in the kings fatal order. Yet he was not summoned once before the king to tell or to interpret the kings dream! My, is that not strange You see, somehow I think that behind the hand of Nebuchadnezzar there was another sinister hand at work... the hand of Satan! Was this not the devils master stroke to eliminate Daniel Listen: if you " purpose in your heart", if you resolve in your heart that you are going to take a stand morally: doctrinally: ecclesiastically don't be surprised if the devil has a go at you!

Down through the years I've received letters from so called believers who've had a go at me because of the stand I've taken on certain matters. I was at a church not that long ago, and some man had a go at me because of my views on prophecy! My, if you are going to " purpose in your heart", you'll not please all the saints all the time, and you would be foolish if you tried! Now what do you do when you face an impossible situation Well, look at: (2) THE PROPHET AND HIS CONVERSATION I don't know where Daniel and his

friends were when the King was meeting with his wise men.

But as soon as word of the king's decree circulated in the palace the F.B.I. squad sought for Daniel and his 3 friends. Now what fascinates me in this story is that when they come to kill Daniel he responds with great calm and restraint. If you look closely at these verses you'll discover that the prophet Daniel engaged in conversation with four lots of people. (1) Arioch, head of the Babylonian hit squad: (2) Nebuchadnezzar in the Oval office: (3) To his three friends: (4) Above all else he spoke to the Lord.

You'll notice that Daniel spoke to: (a) "Arioch", That shows me Daniel's PRUDENCE: Look at (2:14-15) Instead of cowering in the corner like a trapped animal or brandishing a sword, Daniel invited Arioch to sit down and talk things over! Instead of panic there was prudence! How I would like to be in control of uncomfortable situations that I could handle each crisis with the poise and composure of Daniel! Daniel was not like the old lady who was driving her shiny new car in Philadelphia.

Suddenly at the cross-roads a heavy truck was unable to stop. It hit her and left a large hole in the side of her car. She was infuriated but then she managed to control herself by remembering her Quaker upbringing. She got out and walked over to the truck driver and said, "when thee gets home to thy kennel tonight I hope thy mother bites thee". There was composure on the outside, but inside she was raging mad! My, do you know what it is to face the irritations of life with unruffled composure (b) "Nebuchadnezzar", That shows me Daniel's PLUCK: Look at (2:16) My word... that's pluck for you.

I tell you this king when he was in good health, sleeping well was ferocious, but Nebuchadnezzar with nightmares: off colour: on edge: touchy: angry with his wise men for not being able to do anything. My, to that king in that state of temper this young man goes asks for an appointment and promises an answer. Now that's faith for you! For faith that anticipates the answer is really faith. Like Abraham on Mount Moriah ready to slay his only son "but he believed that God was able to raise up Isaac from the dead". (Heb 11:19) Like Elijah on Mount Carmel, sure that God would honour him and send the fire.

" Faith mighty faith, The promise see's Laughs at impossibilities And cries it shall be done." (c) "Three friends", That shows me Daniel's POLICY: Look at (2:17) He didn't call a sub-committee or convene a conference , but he sought the prayer fellowship of his three friends! My, Daniel does not face this crisis alone. He faces it with Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah... his friends! In the crisis of life we all need a few good friends who will stand with us and pray for us! My, when you're back against the wall... is this your policy Do you seek fellowship in prayer (d) "The God of Heaven", that shows me Daniel's PRAYER: Do you notice the contrast between Daniel and wise men of Babylon Daniel is marked by prayer, they are marked by panic.

He is characterised by confidence, they are marked by confusion. Nebuchadnezzar took his worries to bed with him, Daniel took his worries to God in prayer! Now notice from the context that they: 1. Prayed UNITEDLY: " That they would desire... "(2:18) I think I am right in saying that this is the first united prayer meeting recorded in the Scriptures. (not Aaron/Hur) Wouldn't you love to have been there I'm sure Hananiah didn't come to Daniel and say, "Daniel don't call on me to pray tonight I don't feel led to pray.

And Mishael and Azariah did not remain silent, like some of you men. They all prayed Unitedly! 2. Prayed FERVENTLY: " That they would desire mercies of the God of heaven". (2:18) This was real praying! Can't you hear Daniel encouraging them, "if you don't lift up your voice you might not have a voice to lift up by the end of the day". My, if your life was on the line, would you not be burdened about it How is it that the lives of others are on the line and we have so little burden Where are some of you when it comes to the

prayer meetings 3.

Prayed HUMBLY: " mercies", (2:18) Is this not the basis on which we pray We cannot go into the presence of God on the basis of merit, its only on the basis of His mercy! 4. Prayed SPECIFICALLY: Look at (2:19) Why had they gathered together for prayer Let me give it to you in one short sentence. They had gathered together to pray for Gods revelation and mans salvation. Now whats the purpose of our prayer meetings Why do we gather for prayer My, have we lost sight of the reason why we have come together Is it not for this reason Gods revelation and Mans salvation!

We have come to pray that the Lord through His Word will reveal Himself to men and the result of that will be salvation! Now look they prayed specifically! Look at (2:18) "this secret... " Do you ever switch off in the prayer meeting Why Because some believers have lost sight of the purpose. They go on a tour around the world and by the time they have landed again in Ulster again they have killed the prayer meeting and they have asked God for nothing! My, lets bring something or someone to God in prayer, oh if there's a Peter in prison will you pray for him specifically 5.

Prayed INTELLIGENTLY: Look at (2:18) "of the God of heaven". Now this lovely expression is peculiar to the books of the captivity. It occurs 9 times in Daniel: 6 times in Ezra: and 4 times in Nehemiah. (2 Chron 36 first time) You see, during the captivity God was known as the "God of Heaven". Why Well, Judah turned away from the Lord and Jerusalem was burned, and the Temple was destroyed, the prophet Ezekiel saw a vision of the glory of God departing from the earth. (Ezekiel 9:3 10:4 11:22-23) That Shekinah Glory cloud that had rested on the Mercy Seat lifted from the Holy of Holies and moved over to the threshold of the temple door.

Then it moved from the Temple to the Mount of Olives on the east of the city. Finally, it departed back to heaven and for a period of time (until Christ came) there was no glory of God on earth. God was the "God of heaven." My, do you see what they were doing This is confession. They are confessing that Judah's sin had put them in their captive condition! Judah is judged and they call him "the God of heaven." 6. Prayed EFFECTIVELY: " Then was the secret revealed... Daniel". (2:19) My, more things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of.

Only four of them but they meant business with God. As far as I know they were only three old farmers who got on their knees each evening in the old schoolhouse in Kells and they prayed the 1859 revival down on this province! Do you believe God answers prayer Do you believe that the God who answered Daniel's prayer is your God, waiting for you to bring your burdens to Him Isn't there a lovely touch in (2:20-23) You see they: 7. Prayed THANKFULLY: Before rushing off into the presence of the king Daniel spent time in the presence of God!

"Daniel blessed the God of heaven". He praised God: * For HIS ETERNALITY: " Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever". This is the first time in the OT that the words, " for ever and ever", are used and they are used in reference to God! Daniel recognises that God is not limited by time and space! When we face our mountaintop of problems we think that the entire universe centres around the crisis we face. My, Daniel faces a real crisis, but he looks beyond the problem he is facing death, and recognises that the God he knows is bigger than his mountain! * For HIS ABILITY: " For wisdom and might are His". (2:20) Wisdom is Gods insight, power is His ability to execute His wisdom and will for human beings and human history.

My, is this your God Is your God everlasting Is your God able * For HIS SOVEREIGNTY: Look at (2:21-23) Do you always praise God for answered prayer Do you remember the one who did and the nine who did not Someone has said, "praise without prayer is presumption, prayer without praise is ingratitude, but prayer plus praise will tear down the strongholds of the devil". Now look in (2:1-13) (1) in (2:14-23) we have (2) but in (2:24-30) we have: (3) THE LORD AND HIS COMMUNICATION Look at Daniel's mighty affirmation in (2:28) "But there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets". (3) You see, this dream was communicated or sent: (a) TO A TEMPORAL RULER: (2:28) says "But there is a God in heaven...

"The dream of world empire was not given to a Hebrew prophet but to a Heathen king. The vision did not centre on Jerusalem but on Babylon. The focus of interest was not the kingdom of God but the kingdoms of men. Now surely nothing could indicate more how low the Hebrew people had sank nor how high Nebuchadnezzar had risen. You see, with Nebuchadnezzar began a period of time called the "times of the Gentiles", (Lk 21:24) God gave this dream to (a) A vision of Gentile world power from the days of the Babylonian Empire until the final days of Gentile power and to the time when the Lord Jesus returns to earth to establish His kingdom. (b) FROM AN ETERNAL RULER: Look at (2:28) This dream was divine in its origin.

It was God given! Nebuchadnezzar was the temporal ruler but the Lord is the eternal ruler. My, God is still in control. God is working out His sovereign purposes in relation to the Jews/Gentiles and the church of God. (1 Cor 10:31) (c) THROUGH A SPIRITUAL RULER: " Then was the secret revealed unto Daniel". (2:19) Now Daniel was not the recipient of this dream but he was the expositor of it! Do you know something If you spent more time with the Lord and His Word, God would reveal a lot of things to you!

HOW BIG IS YOUR GOD My, do you realise this... that though your problem is big, God is bigger! Do you believe that there is "a God in heaven", this ... Do you think that there are no answers to your problem "There is a God in heaven... " Do you think that your present dilemma is hopeless " There is a God in heaven... " Do you think you have a burden so heavy it cannot be lifted "There is a God in heaven... "There is a God in heaven who will answer our prayers! There is a God who will meet our needs! There is a God in heaven before whom we can bring our wayward children. Will you lay hold of it this great truth this... "there is a God in heaven... "(2:28)

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