

There is a fascinating book that was written several years ago that is generally viewed as the definitive history of AA. The title is arresting. Not God! Not God! You see, a fundamental issue for an alcoholic is the mistaken belief that they are fully in control of their lives, including their drinking. And the path to sobriety begins with the admittance that I am not in control. And every meeting has the "my name is Joel and I am an alcoholic". But that illusion of being in control, of being god is not limited to alcoholics. It was at the root of the first sin found early in the book of Genesis. Eat of this fruit and you will be like God. And many people spend their whole life under the illusion that they are god and that the rest of the world should revolve around them. So I want you to take just 15 seconds, turn to your neighbor and say John you are not God. Now don't argue about it. We have that settled but all of us regularly get confused over this. John Ortberg says this. Do you know the difference between God and us? God never thinks he is us.

In our text this morning King Nebuchadnezzar is going to begin the journey that will lead him to accept the fact that he is not God. Remember where we had left off last week. The King is at the most secure time in his long reign, when there were no legitimate threats internally or externally to his authority. He had everything a king could want. Power, wealth, territory, authority, and security. He was a god. And those closest to him. The ones upon whom he depended made their feeling abundantly well known. Verse 4. O King, live forever. If you were to diagram how this looked it would be a big circle with the name Nebuchadnezzar in the middle. The whole world revolved around him. And a lot of people in our world have this same illusion. They want what they want when they want it. And the king wants his answer and if he doesn't get it, then off with your heads. This is a classic sign of immaturity and arrested development. Low threshold for frustration. Quickly impatience and reactive if he doesn't get his own way. For many people power confuses them into thinking they are in the center of the world. We can point to the world of politics, we can point to the world of business we can point to the world of athletes and coaches alike who believe they are at the center of everything and so the rules are different for them.

So the king calls for the experts and look at their response. 10-11 The astrologers answered the king; "There is not a man on earth who can do what the king asks! No king, however great and mighty, has ever asked such a thing of any magician or enchanter or astrologer. ¹¹ What the king asks is too difficult. No one can reveal it to the king except the gods, and they do not live among men." The gods do not live among men. You know even though I don't believe that, there are times when I wonder, does God really know? Does God really care? Am

I in fact left alone in the world? And instead of placing my burdens at the feet of Jesus, I keep carrying them around.

Well, Daniel goes to the Lord with his three friends and God answers their prayers and we find this beautiful hymn in verse 20-23. Now we will get back to that but let's keep going. Daniel is taken to the king by Arioch and just a side note. Notice how he tries to get the credit. Of all your advisors only I have found one who can tell you your dream. I was the only one wise enough to search out among the Hebrews captives. And then we hit is square in verse 26 The king asked Daniel (also called Belteshazzar), "Are you able to tell me what I saw in my dream and interpret it?" And Daniel makes it abundantly clear that no man can do that but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries. I just love that. Daniel refuses to take the credit. In fact Daniel also includes his friends in this. Verse 36 Daniel says we will interpret it. Who is the we? I believe his three friends the one he makes sure get to share in the spoil's in verse 49. You see there is this attitude in the heart of Daniel and his friends that believe if I am not God then the issue of who gets the credit and the promotion and the adulation isn't a big deal. Daniel is not obsessed with his image. He has no spin-doctors to parlay this into a big time recognition. There is no man but there is a God in heaven.

And so Daniel tells the dream about this amazing statue made out of the best of materials but there is a fatal flaw in the foundation. A flaw that makes it vulnerable to destruction. Now make no mistake about it. Verse 37 You, O king, are the king of kings. The God of heaven has given you dominion and power and might and glory; ³⁸ in your hands he has placed mankind and the beasts of the field and the birds of the air. Wherever they live, he has made you ruler over them all. You are that head of gold. He acknowledges the strength and might of Nebuchadnezzar and the glory of the kingdom that will come after his, but there is a power external to man. It is the power of God and he will destroy the power and authority of men. And there will be a hinge in history upon which everything will turn and change. And that was the coming of Jesus Christ. Bette Middler recorded a song years ago entitled God is watching us. And it included the words from a distant planet. Well she was wrong. God is not only watching over his world and creation He is here and at work and you know what. I am not God but I am his friend. I am his child. Yes there is a God in heaven but He is also right here. I know Him. He is mine and I am not alone.

There are tow other implications of this story that would be easy to miss. The first is that Daniel is a book on evangelism. It is about four young men that regularly took risks to share the God they knew and trusted. Here is the most powerful man in the world and yet Daniel with wisdom and tact brings him the word of the Lord. Now look quickly at verse 4. It is very unusual, because from here until the end of chapter 7 the language is

Aramaic rather than Hebrew. The rest of the Old is in Hebrew, the language of God's people but this section is recorded in the most common and widespread language of the day. Aramaic. I believe it is for a purpose. God is not the God of only the Hebrew people. Remember Genesis 12; all the nations will be blessed. And the word that is used to describe God is not the usual Hebrew Yahweh or Eloiam, but rather the God of heaven. He is not just the Israelites God. He is Lord of Jerusalem and Babylon. He is the Lord of all nations. He is the Lord of every city be it Tokyo, London. New York or Minneapolis. He is the Lord of Daniel and He is the Lord of Nebuchadnezzar. And that is part of Daniel's ministry. To bring the truth about God to those in his world. How about your world. In the marketplace, in the neighborhood, on the tennis court or out on the lake. Maybe you have some people in your life that look around with the same eyes of Nebuchadnezzar. Everything revolves around them and God has placed you there to bring the truth that only God is God.

There is one last truth here that is especially appropriate for us in these days. If God is God and I am his friend I do not need to be afraid or worried. I don't say that to lay guilt on you but to relieve you. You don't have to carry that load of worry anymore. Our shoulders are not big enough. Give it to God. Daniel was convinced that it all rested on God and the reason I say that is look where the hymn of praise is found. In the middle of the story not the end. His life was in competent hands and when the dream and its meaning came he praised God. Long before he went to the king. So many possibilities. The king refused to see him, killed before he got there, the king could have rejected his message, but that was not the issue. It all was in God's hands. Dear ones your airplane travel is in God's hands. Everyday when you send your kids out the door they are in God's hands. Again and again in both the Old and New Testament we have the command not to fear. In fact it is the most often written command in the Bible. To fear not. So today, what do you have to place in God's hands? Where has God placed you to be His spokesperson? And lastly, have you come to admit that you are not God. Will you stand for closing prayer?