

Title: "I Have a Question. Then"

Main Text: Daniel 2:46-47, Daniel 6:25-26

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Greetings in peace. Today's message is from the book of Daniel. Let's read Daniel 2:46-47 and 6:25-26.

Daniel 2:46-47

46 Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell prostrate before Daniel and paid him honor and ordered that an offering and incense be presented to him.

47 The king said to Daniel, "Surely your God is the God of gods and the Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries, for you were able to reveal this mystery."

Daniel 6:25-26

25 Then King Darius wrote to all the nations and peoples of every language in all the earth: "May you prosper greatly!

26 I issue a decree that in every part of my kingdom people must fear and reverence the God of Daniel. For he is the living God and he endures forever; his kingdom will not be destroyed, his dominion will never end.

Amen.

Today's message, titled "I Have a Question. Then," is a supplementary part of the Daniel series I previously mentioned.

Recently, I have received questions from some of you like this: "Did King Nebuchadnezzar and King Darius go to heaven?" Some of you might ask this question because of the statements Nebuchadnezzar made after hearing the troubling dream he had and Daniel's interpretation of it.

Nebuchadnezzar said in Daniel 2:47, "Surely your God is the God of gods and the Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries." In chapter 3, verse 28,

Nebuchadnezzar also said, "Praise be to the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego." In verse 29, he continued, "Therefore I decree that the people of any nation or language who say anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego be cut into pieces and their houses be turned into piles of rubble, for no other god can save in this way."

It is clear that Nebuchadnezzar's words were sincere. So, the question arises: Wouldn't it be fitting for him to go to heaven?

King Nebuchadnezzar knew about God. When we say he knew, it means he fully understood and believed in God. Since he knew God, he also believed in Him. Some people have asked, "Did Nebuchadnezzar go to heaven?" because he knew and believed in God. This is a reasonable question. Most believers think that if someone believes in God, they will naturally go to heaven. Therefore, it is logical to ask, "Since Nebuchadnezzar believed in God, did he go to heaven?"

However, is this really the case? If knowledge of God and the belief stemming from that knowledge were enough, even demons would be considered believers. James 2:19 says, "You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder." Demons also believe there is one God and tremble. This is what James, a disciple of Jesus, wrote in the Bible.

That is not all. If knowing God equates to believing in Him, then even Pilate and his wife knew about Jesus. In Matthew 27:19, Pilate's wife refers to Jesus by saying, "Don't have anything to do with that innocent man." By calling Jesus an "innocent man," she acknowledged that He was blameless. How did Pilate's wife know about Jesus? She knew through a dream. Because she saw it clearly in her dream, it must have been even more urgent to her. That is why she pleaded with her husband to have nothing to do with Jesus.

Indeed, Pilate was already trying to release Jesus. In Matthew 27:23, Pilate asks, "Why? What crime has he committed?" This indicates that Pilate knew Jesus had done nothing wrong. Although Pilate ultimately handed Jesus over due to the pressure of a possible uprising, he was aware of who Jesus was. Thus, in Matthew 27:24, it is recorded, "When Pilate saw that he was getting

nowhere, but that instead an uproar was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd. 'I am innocent of this man's blood,' he said. 'It is your responsibility!'" Pilate publicly washed his hands to show he was not responsible for Jesus' death. Pilate knew who Jesus was.

Even those directly responsible for crucifying Jesus—the chief priests and those with them, the scribes, the centurion, and even those guarding Jesus' tomb—knew about Jesus. The centurion and those guarding Jesus said in Matthew 27:54, "Surely he was the Son of God!" So, can we assume that these people were saved because they knew and believed after crucifying Jesus? While the Bible records that Jesus suffered under Pilate and was crucified, it does not record that Pilate was saved. Knowing and believing in that way does not guarantee salvation.

I hope this clarifies your questions about the salvation of Nebuchadnezzar and Darius.

To become children of God and enter His kingdom, one must believe in the name of Jesus. Believing in Jesus' name also involves repentance. Why is repentance necessary when we believe in Jesus' name? The name of Jesus is defined in Matthew 1:21 as, "He will save his people from their sins." Therefore, believing in Jesus' name means realizing that one is a sinner and repenting.

Along with repentance, one must also accept Jesus as his or her Savior. To accept Jesus means to receive Him as one's Savior or King. In other words, accepting Jesus implies belonging to Him.

Indeed, accepting Jesus as one's Savior and King is the fundamental condition for being saved and going to heaven. John 1:12 states, "Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God." If someone does not meet the clear condition of accepting Jesus, they cannot become children of God. Consequently, they cannot enter heaven either.

What is repentance? Is repentance crying out, beating your chest, and tearing

your clothes? No, repentance means realizing your sins, feeling contrition, confessing, and turning away from them to correct your ways.

After repenting, one must accept Jesus as his or her Savior. What kind of Savior? Jesus should not be accepted as a servant, friend, or companion that we command. Jesus must be received as our King, and we must become His people, belonging to Him and serving Him.

If you belong to a king, you must follow the king's commands and live according to the king's will. However, Nebuchadnezzar was not one of God's people. God was not his God. God's kingdom was not his kingdom. For Nebuchadnezzar, God was always "Daniel's God" (2:47), "the God you believe in," or "the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego" (3:28). Nebuchadnezzar did not accept God as his own God. He did not receive Him, worship Him, serve Him, offer sacrifices to Him, live according to His will, or follow His laws.

Nebuchadnezzar certainly knew God. He believed in God. However, the God he believed in was 'Daniel's God,' or 'the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.' Nebuchadnezzar thought of God's kingdom as the kingdom of Daniel and his three friends. Nebuchadnezzar considered his kingdom to be Babylon and himself as the king of Babylon. He still worshipped idols. He did not belong to God, nor did he follow God. He neither offered sacrifices to God nor built a temple for God. Knowing God does not mean that one automatically becomes one of God's people.

The same was true for King Darius. In Daniel 6:16, Darius says to Daniel, "May your God, whom you serve continually, rescue you!" Darius referred to God as "your God." Darius knew and believed in Daniel's God, but he did not believe in that God as his own God. That was the difference between Darius and Daniel.

Even after witnessing the miracle in the lion's den, King Darius said to Daniel, "Your God, whom you serve continually, has rescued you," but he did not accept Daniel's God as his own God. Darius did not belong to God. For him, God was always "Daniel's God" and "your God." To Darius, God was merely the God of Israel, a seemingly insignificant nation among the kingdoms of the world, not

the God of his own kingdom.

Darius did not accept God as the God of his country and did not proclaim to his people that their God was also the God of Israel. Although Darius knew and believed in God, he did not receive God as his own. Consequently, he did not live a life belonging to God.

Neither King Nebuchadnezzar nor King Darius worshipped God like Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego did, nor did they follow God's laws. Instead, they created large idols and worshipped them. Nebuchadnezzar became enraged and his face changed color when Daniel's three friends refused to bow to his idol.

Knowing and believing in God does not make one God's people. Simply saying, "I believe in Jesus, I believe in Jesus," without bearing the fruits that align with that faith, does not constitute true faith that leads to salvation. These kings never went to the temple in Jerusalem to worship God in spirit and truth. They also did not build temples for God in their own countries to worship Him there.

These kings did not keep God's laws, which are to be observed by those who belong to Him. They did not destroy the shrines and idols in their lands, repent, and turn back to God.

The people of Gadara during the time of Jesus were no different. Gadara is a region mentioned in Matthew 8:32. The people dragged a madman who disturbed their community out of the town and shackled him with chains. Jesus cast out the many demons that were inside this madman. The demons entered a herd of pigs, causing the pigs to perish, but the madman was set free. This news spread throughout the town. In verse 34, it is mentioned that the people of Gadara came out to meet Jesus, who had performed this incredible miracle. They saw Jesus, who had done what they had never heard or seen before.

The people of Gadara saw Jesus, who possessed far greater spiritual power and authority than any figure from the Old Testament. They also saw the madman, who had to be isolated until then, transformed into a new person. Therefore,

they clearly saw and understood who Jesus was. They believed in who Jesus was. But what did they do because they believed in Jesus? Did they repent of their sins and welcome Jesus, making Him the Lord of their town? Did they accept Jesus as the Lord of their region? No. They became very disturbed after knowing and believing in Jesus. In the end, they pleaded, "Jesus, please leave our region," as recorded in Matthew 8:34.

Do people today not believe in God because they do not know Him? Do they not believe in Jesus because they do not know Him? When you tell those who claim to know God, "Then you should also believe in Him and serve Him as Lord," they become afraid. They say, "Oh no, don't say such things," and run away, just like the people of Gadara. Do you think the people of Gadara were saved? No, they were not. King Nebuchadnezzar and King Darius, whom you asked about, were no different from the people of Gadara.

Let us pray.

Heavenly Father, we reflect on ourselves, realizing that we have thought too lightly of going to heaven. To go to heaven, we must believe in Jesus' name, do what His name requires, and accept Jesus as our Savior and King, following His commands. We now see that we have felt too secure in our belief without the actions that such faith demands.

Oh, Lord!

Do not let our faith be like that of Nebuchadnezzar or Darius. May the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego become my God and our God from now on. Help us to move towards the kingdom of God with the right confession and the right way of living, so that when Jesus judges the world, we will not hear Him say, "I never knew you." We earnestly pray in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen, Amen.