

Daniel Series Part 22

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[0 : 00] Now, to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever.

Amen. We read that verse as we began this morning, and the reason for it was that we are suggesting that in Daniel's prayer, and particularly in God's response, we have a real-life example of this truth, of a man, a servant of God, who prayed to God, who asked of God, and God's response was immeasurably more than He had asked or imagined.

And we come to the chapter, and we come to it at the point, and indeed our reading was at the point at which Daniel's prayer is reaching a climax or crescendo, O Lord, listen, O Lord, forgive, O Lord, hear and act.

And the question that we pose is, what is it that Daniel most desires? What is it that the people stand in most urgent need of? Is their greatest need an end to the exile?

Is their greatest need freedom from captivity? Certainly Daniel does long for freedom and restoration, but he recognizes that the people's greatest need is for forgiveness.

[1 : 40] O Lord, forgive. Forgiveness granted will then open the door to a new beginning for the people. Without forgiveness, there can be no new start.

Now, that is a very important truth that we would do well to ponder on in our own lives, in your own life, in our lives as individuals, perhaps in the relationships that we participate in or are involved in, and our life as a church.

Without forgiveness, there can be no new start. So, this is the people's great need. And so, this is Daniel's request. He is able wisely to discern this.

And so, he asked of God that he would graciously forgive his people. And what is the Lord's response? Does God, in fact, do immeasurably more than all that Daniel asks or imagines?

Well, I want us to notice four elements of God's response as we consider that. We're going to look briefly at the immediacy of God's response. Also notice the assurance of God's favor.

[2 : 58] Then the deliverance that God decrees. And then, hopefully, as time is running out, the timetable that is announced. It's really in my interest to have as little time as possible for that, because that's when things get very complicated, and lack of time would serve as a useful excuse for not dealing adequately with that last part of God's response.

So, the immediacy of God's response, the assurance of God's favor, the deliverance that God decrees, and the timetable that is announced. First of all, then, the immediacy of God's response. Daniel prays. He confesses. He seeks forgiveness. He asks for forgiveness. And what is very striking, it was striking to Daniel, and it's striking for us as we read the account, is the immediacy of God's response.

We thought a little bit about that this morning, not in the sermon, but with the children. Daniel is blown away by God's immediate response. God interrupts Daniel in full flow.

We read there in verse 20, While I was speaking and praying, confessing my sin and the sin of my people, Israel, and making my request to the Lord my God for His holy hill, while I was still in prayer, Gabriel, the man I had seen in the earlier vision, came to me in swift light about the time of the evening sacrifice.

[4 : 23] Daniel is there on his knees or prostrate before God. And even as he prays, he looks up, and behold, the one described as the man Gabriel. He stands before him, a messenger of God sent to bring a message from God for Daniel.

Daniel remarks on the manner of Gabriel's arrival, He came to me in swift light, and in that way further emphasizing the immediacy of God's response.

So, this is what happened on this occasion. This is what is described for us. But can we do more than simply observe it and say, well, that's the way it was for Daniel? Or could we legitimately draw anything for ourselves and perhaps hope for a similar experience as we pray to God?

I think I would say two things in that regard. First of all, it is salutary and I think instructive to remember that God did not always respond to Daniel in this way.

[5 : 29] Far from it. We know from the book of Daniel, from Daniel's own testimony, that he had been praying to God in similar fashion for well on seventy years, from the beginning of the exile.

Indeed, we know that he prayed every day, indeed three times a day. Now, it is true that this prayer was granted a particular sense of urgency in the light of what he had read in the prophet Jeremiah and the sense that he had, the right sense that he had, that the exile was nearing an end.

And so, it is true that there would have been no doubt in Daniel's prayer, that greater sense of intensity and urgency. But the essence of what he is praying is what surely he had been praying throughout these years.

Confessing the sin of the people, seeking God's forgiveness, crying out to God that the people would be returned to Jerusalem. These things surely were things that he had prayed so often.

And on so many occasions, the response had been far from as dramatic as it was. On this occasion, God had often been or certainly appeared silent in the face of Daniel's prayers.

[6 : 46] But had God's silence, or in any case relative silence, been a cause for Daniel waning or giving up? By no means. He continued faithfully and persistently and perseveringly to cry out to his God.

It's worth to bear that in mind before we maybe think, well, this is the kind of response I'd like to have when I pray. Having said that, it's also legitimate to make the point that God's care and attention for us, however expressed, is always as immediate as the response that Daniel received to his prayer.

Now, the manner in which God will demonstrate that will be very different. But we can be sure that his care for us is a permanent one, that he hears our prayers and he is concerned to answer them in his own way immediately.

We think of the words of the psalmist, before a word is on my tongue, you know it completely, O Lord. But I want to move on to the second aspect that we just commented on or introduced, and that is, in God's response, the assurance of God's favor for Daniel.

Then in verse 23 we read, As soon as you began to pray, an answer was given, which I have come to tell you, for you are highly esteemed.

[8 : 18] I wonder if Daniel ever doubted God's favor towards him. After all, the years were passing, and Daniel wasn't getting any younger.

He was an old man. For so long, for decades, he had longed for an end to the exile. He had longed to see Jerusalem restored, the temple built.

These were things that he had longed for all his life, and there seemed to be no answer. His unrequited desire for restoration and freedom was almost, I imagine, overwhelming for him.

And in that context, what is the first thing that the angel is instructed to say to Daniel? The first thing that the angel is to say to Daniel is not the content of the decree.

That is what he will dwell on most. That will take up the bulk of what Gabriel has to say. But that's not the first thing that he is instructed by God to say to Daniel.

[9 : 30] Rather, the first thing that he has to say is to remind Daniel with this truth, that you are highly esteemed as soon as you began to pray.

An answer was given, which I have come to tell you, for you are highly esteemed. Gabriel does have a big message for Daniel, a seriously big message.

But his first words are, if we can paraphrase them, Daniel, God loves you. God loves you. Daniel, God has sent me in swift light from his very presence to remind you, to assure you, to delight you with this message.

I love you. You are highly esteemed in the very courts of heaven. What a wonderful message for Daniel to receive, if indeed Daniel was almost overwhelmed, overwhelmed by this sense of guilt and shame of his own and of the people that he was part of, overwhelmed by this exile that seemed to be never-ending, and yet here we have this comforting message from God.

I love you. You are highly esteemed. Well, that was true for Daniel and no doubt a great comfort to Daniel. But what about the likes of us? When we pray to God, do we have the assurance that we pray to one who loves us, that we also are highly esteemed?

[11 : 03] Well, I would ask you the question as we maybe just develop that thought. When you pray, in whose name do you pray? Well, you pray in the name of Jesus. And as we develop the thought a little further, is Jesus highly esteemed in the courts of heaven?

Well, of course, we know that he is the one most highly esteemed. We think of when he came to this earth and the Father looked down at Jesus fulfilling the mission that he had been given. And what were the words that he repeatedly used? You are my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. The Son highly esteemed by the Father. And the wonderful truth is that if we are Christians, then we are esteemed by God in the same measure and with the same intensity as the Father esteems his own Son.

For the Father looks down upon us and he sees us in Christ, in union with his esteemed, his highly esteemed Son. So the response of God is immediate.

It begins by comforting and delighting Daniel with an assurance of God's love for him. But then, of course, it continues. And in the response, we have recorded for us the deliverance that God decrees.

[12 : 29] In verses 24 and 25, we have described for us this deliverance that God has decreed on behalf of his people.

Now, it's really at this point, particularly as we go through these concluding verses to the end of the chapter, the beginning, really there in verse 24, that things do get a little complicated.

The decree itself, and especially the timetable that is set out, is one that is fraught with difficulties. And as I say, any reference to the timetable we're going to leave a little bit further down the line. But even in thinking about the difficulties of this passage, it's interesting to note what some worthies of the past have said concerning it.

And I won't take much time to do that, but it's of anecdotal interest to hear what others have said with regard to this passage. Going back a long time to one of the early theologians, going back to about the year 400 A.D.

[13 : 40] Jerome. And I just quote what he says about this part of chapter 9, the decree and all that is said in these verses. And I quote, Because it is unsafe to pass judgment on the opinions of great teachers of the church and to set one above another, I shall simply repeat the view of each and leave it to the reader's judgment as to whose explanation ought to be followed.

And then Jerome goes on to list nine conflicting opinions and ultimately is unable to decide which, if any of them, is right. So that's one way of doing it. Lay out the options and say, well, you choose. Maybe not the most helpful. If we think of somebody more familiar to us and moving through history a little, though not into modern times by any means, but John Calvin.

John Calvin has a very weighty commentary on Daniel. Indeed, on Daniel's prayer, he dedicates no fewer than 50 pages of commentary, which really are several lectures that he would give every day of the week.

He would just go through the book of Daniel, indeed the whole Bible. But when he comes to this part, God's response, this is what Calvin says, this passage might be considered nearly useless on account of its obscurity.

[15 : 01] That's rather bold language. And in fairness to Calvin, when he does go on to deal with the passage, he is able to deal with it very usefully and to identify much that is useful.

But this is certainly one thing that he says about it. And we could go on. Almost invariably, when you look to see what others have said about this passage, they almost invariably introduce what they have to say with this health warning.

You know, this is really difficult, this is really complicated, and I don't really know what it means. So, deep breath, and here goes. What I would say, notwithstanding the above, is that I do believe that there are big truths in God's response, in this decree that Gabriel brings and communicates to Daniel.

There are big truths that are not impossibly obscure or even unduly difficult to identify and understand. We stated at the very outset that God's response was immeasurably more than all that Daniel asked or imagined.

And in light of that, we can divide the response in two parts. First of all, an immediate and partial solution to the people's plight.

[16:18] The decree contemplates, firstly, an immediate and partial solution to the people's plight, or we could say what Daniel asked for. But the decree also, it contemplates an ultimate and complete solution to the people's plight, what Daniel did not ask for or certainly imagine.

First of all then, an immediate and partial solution. Now, we're not going to touch on timetable right now. We will do that in a moment. But we can simply note that however understood in terms of timing, the decree contemplates a twofold fulfillment within the space of what is recorded here for us as seventy sevens.

Notice there in verse 25, no one understand this, from the issuing of the decree to restore and build Jerusalem until the anointed one, the ruler, comes, there will be seven sevens and sixty-two sevens.

In verse 24, it speaks about a total of seventy sevens. But then, Gabriel goes on to explain that those seventy sevens will be subdivided. Seven sevens, sixty-two sevens, and then one final seven.

The moment we're just interested in the first seven and the subsequent sixty-two. And the first seven are of interest because it seems to me they do bring to Daniel what we are calling an immediate and partial solution, what he is calling out for on behalf of the people.

[17:47] By the close of the first seven sevens, however understood, Gabriel announces that Jerusalem will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble.

That's what we see there in verse 25. And it seems reasonable to conclude that this is a reference to the immediate aspect of God's response, namely, a return from exile for the people from Babylon to Jerusalem, in any case, those who availed themselves of the opportunity, and a rebuilding of the temple and city.

And this, of course, is what, in historical reality, is what began to happen with the decree of Cyrus that's recorded for us in Ezra chapter 1 and relates to just probably a few months after Daniel's prayer.

Daniel chapter 9 begins in the first year of Darius, son of Xerxes. And in previous treatments of Daniel, we've suggested that Darius is simply another name for Cyrus.

Now, that's debated. But certainly, the time period that the prayer relates to is the beginning of the rule of Cyrus. And Cyrus, at the very beginning of his rule, issued this edict that allowed the Jews to return to Jerusalem.

[19:07] And so, here in God's decree in response to Daniel's prayer, you have this immediate response. Yes, the exile will be ended. Yes, there will be a return to Jerusalem.

Yes, construction will begin on the city and the temple. That which you so long for, Daniel, it will be granted. And of course, subsequent to Cyrus' decree, we have recorded for us, especially in the books of Nehemiah and Ezra, the way in which that construction did begin.

And especially in Nehemiah, we're told how it was indeed in times of trouble, much opposition to it. But nonetheless, Nehemiah persevered and Jerusalem began to be reconstructed.

Well, this first part of God's answer, this first part that would be concluded within the seven sevens, this part of the decree that Daniel would have been able to understand would have filled him with delight and excitement.

It was evidence that the forgiveness that he was seeking was being granted and all that would flow from God's granting of the forgiveness that Daniel sought.

[20:25] So, this then is what we could call the immediate and partial solution to the people's plight or what Daniel asked for. He seeks forgiveness, he seeks restoration, he seeks an end to exile, and Gabriel comes and says, this is the decree that in this first part of the timescale set out, the seven sevens, there will be forgiveness, there will be restoration, there will be a Jerusalem that is reconstructed.

But that isn't all that God brings to Daniel. That isn't all that the decree contemplates.

There is another element to it, what we've called an ultimate and complete solution. The decree sets out a series of outcomes or accomplishments that will be arrived at or secured by the conclusion of the seventy sevens.

And in verse 24, we can identify six distinct but related outcomes. We could just read them there in verse 24. Seventy sevens are decreed for your people and your holy city.

And then we have these outcomes. What will be achieved? To finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy.

[21 : 53] Now, it's impossible for us, and it's unrealistic, it makes no sense, for us to read this decree and pretend that we are where Daniel was at the time of the evening sacrifice in Babylon in 539 B.C.

or wherever, or whenever it was exactly. No, that's not where we are. We are at the evening service in Bonacord in 2012, 2,000 years after the coming of Messiah.

And we can do no other but consider this decree in that light. And it seems to me that the conclusion is inescapable. The decree and the outcomes that are established or identified are so clearly messianic in content.

What we have here is decreed by God the coming and mission of Messiah Jesus as the ultimate and complete solution to the people's plight.

We can notice, and we'll have to do so very fleetingly, but we can notice the outcomes described. What are the outcomes described? Well, we've read them. First of all, to finish transgression, to finish transgression.

[23 : 05] This was Daniel's big problem. We're always sinning. Sin is so overpowering. We're forgiven and then we sin again. And the decree comes and says, a time is coming when there will be an end to transgression and the languages of sin being definitively dealt with.

The language points to a final victory over sin. Sin will be defeated. And we know in the light of Jesus, in the light of His coming, in the light of His work, that Messiah Jesus defeated transgression.

We're told also that our outcome will be that they will put an end to sin. Seventy-sevens are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin.

Again, the picture is one of a victory over sin, a once-for-all victory over sin. Daniel lived in a day when sacrifice for sin at the temple could not be made.

They were in exile in Babylon. But even the return from exile and the building of the temple and the reestablishment of God-appointed sacrifices would not put an end to sin.

[24 : 21] It would allow for sin to be dealt with in the manner that God had established, but it would not put an end to sin. Only the coming Messiah, only the Lamb of God, could put an end to sin by His once-and-for-all sacrifice.

But what other outcome? Well, the third outcome that we have identified there is to atone for wickedness. Here, perhaps, we're granted a deeper or fuller insight into the how of this victory over sin.

Not simply stated, well, there will be this victory, but how will this be? Well, it will be by means of atonement. The atoning death of the Messiah would atone for wickedness.

And here we come, I think, so clearly face-to-face with Jesus when the words of the writer to the Hebrews appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

But the decree continues concerning these outcomes to bring in everlasting righteousness. Bring in everlasting righteousness. Sinners will never be able to bring out righteousness from within.

[25 : 34] Righteousness can only be brought in from without. And this is what Jesus has done. Not only in the living of His perfectly righteous life, but in the imputation or gifting of His righteousness to all who believe in Him.

We are, to use the language of Scripture, we are, as believers, clothed with Christ, clothed with the righteousness of Christ, the righteousness of God that comes from God and allows us to be acceptable and delightful to God.

So, at the close of this scheme that is presented, this decree that is communicated to Daniel, one of the outcomes will be to bring in everlasting righteousness.

It goes on to seal up vision and prophecy. This is something that maybe isn't so immediately obvious as to its meaning in the context of the Messiah, and it can be understood in different ways, but perhaps the most likely meaning is that Old Testament vision and prophecy are sealed in Christ, sealed in the sense of confirmed in Christ, but also sealed in the sense that they are no longer necessary in the light of the appearing of the very Word of God.

And then there is a final outcome that we have there recorded in verse 24, to anoint the most holy, or as we have in the footnote in the NIV, the most holy one.

[27 : 08] And there's surely a reference to that which was prophesied by Isaiah. In Isaiah and chapter 61, in the beginning of the chapter, we read as follows, The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor.

He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives, and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. And the passage goes on, and a prophecy that was consciously and deliberately applied by Messiah Jesus to Himself, as we find recorded in Luke's Gospel in the fourth chapter.

So it does seem reasonable. It seems entirely legitimate to note this outcome that the decree contemplates and see in it a picture of the Messiah.

Jesus is the Holy One, the Holy of Holies, anointed by the Father with the Spirit, the one upon whose death the curtain that veiled the Holy of Holies in the temple was rent asunder no longer necessary and serving no further purpose.

Well, for Daniel, who could not have grasped in the measure that we are able to the full significance of this decree, this was still a glorious vision. It was as if he was trudging up a mountain, anxious to reach the peak, only to discover as he approaches the peak that there was still before him a glorious mountain range spread out.

[28 : 48] But not that that would produce in Daniel any sense of disappointment or frustration.

Well, I've reached one peak and it's still so much more to climb. No. Rather, in Daniel, a deep sense of gratitude for his own imminent arrival at the summit of the mountain he is climbing, but also awestruck with wonder at all that remains to be discovered.

Again, returning to the verse that we've been using as an introduction to the response of God to Daniel's prayer. Immeasurably more, immeasurably more than Daniel asked for or imagined.

Now, the angel tells us more, Gabriel tells us more about the anointed one, the language of the anointed one, follows in verses 25 and 26, and we're told more about this character and further details as to the manner in which he will secure these outcomes that are listed in verse 24.

We'll touch on these very briefly as we consider the final element of the decree, which is what we turn to now. That is what we've described as the timetable for all that is promised.

The first thing that we need to explain and of which there is widespread agreement is the significance of the sevens. There in verse 24 we first find this language, seventy sevens.

[30 : 19] In the older versions it speaks of seventy weeks, though the word literally that we have there is seven. So, seventy sevens. What does that mean? Well, there is, generally speaking, considerable agreement that this is a reference to seven years.

So, the sevens are blocks, if you wish, of seven years. The same kind of language is used in the book of Leviticus with reference to the year of Jubilee.

And we can just notice that very quickly. We're not going to be able to dwell on it at any length at all, but just very quickly to notice how that same language is used in Leviticus chapter 25 and verse 8.

As I say, in the context of the year of Jubilee, count off seven Sabbaths of years. Seven times seven years. So, the seven Sabbaths of years amount to a period of forty-nine years.

So, the seventy sevens would seem to be a reference to seventy blocks of seven years. Well, you can do the math and it comes out, I hope, at four hundred and ninety years.

[31 : 25] But even though there may be agreement, that that general agreement, that this is the time scale that is being identified here in the decree, that doesn't necessarily mean that one has to be agreed on whether these four hundred and ninety years should be understood as a literal period of four hundred and ninety years or understood symbolically.

Now, without doubt, the number seven does have symbolic significance in the Bible. And of course, if you speak of a period of seventy sevens, well, you could see that reasonably as intensifying.

The symbolism, a symbolism of completeness or of events occurring in the fullness of time. So, if events occur within a period of seventy sevens, it's not unreasonable to say, well, that could simply be saying that the events will occur when they are intended to occur.

In the completeness of time, in God's time, these things will happen. That's not an unreasonable way of understanding this. However, though it might be quite an attractive way of understanding it, as it happens, if you do fast forward from the time at which Daniel is making this request and God is responding to his prayer, if you do fast forward four hundred and ninety years, you do get more or less, but not quite, to the time of Christ.

And so, that would suggest that maybe the numbers are to be understood as being historical in character and not only as symbolic.

[32 : 59] Now, one difficulty is that the text, these verses from verse twenty-four through to the end, does not clearly identify the starting point for the calculation. So, if you want to do the sums and you want to work out, well, does it end up in the coming of Christ or some time during his life and ministry, you really need to know where am I starting from?

You know, and then you can do the sums, but what is the starting point? We're not actually told. Now, I've already suggested, and it does seem the obvious choice, is the edict of Cyrus recorded in Ezra chapter one, which dates to five hundred and thirty-eight B.C., just really about the same time as Daniel is praying and God is responding.

The problem with that is that if you take that as the starting point, you're left about fifty years short of the coming of Christ. Now, there are ways around this if you opt for a later starting date, and it is true that in the history of this time there were subsequent decrees that are significant, maybe decrees that relate more specifically to the reconstruction of the city.

Artaxerxes, among others, gave a specific decree, and depending on what decree you choose, it is possible to get things to add up more neatly, if you wish.

My own preference for what it's worth is to simply accept that we don't have sufficient information to state categorically the starting or indeed the finishing dates, and indeed some of the dates in between.

[34 : 32] But we can, I think, reasonably sketch out the chain of events. If we take it from verse 24 and just, really just identify what each verse is doing in that regard.

In verse 24, you have a statement that covers the entire period, seventy-sevens. Then in verse 25, you have presented the way in which this period is divided, or rather the first 69 of these 70 blocks are divided between 7 and 62.

And then in verse 26, you have described the final block of 7 in general terms. And then in verse 27, the same final block of 7 in more detail.

And so, the run of events, the chain of events would be something along these lines. The first seven weeks, this partial solution, this immediate answer that we've already commented on, so we don't need to dwell on anymore.

The following 62 weeks relate to the time following the first period till the coming of the Anointed One, the coming of Messiah, the coming of Jesus. And the 70th week, the period after the 62 sevens.

[35 : 53] This week, and possibly subsequent history related for us in verses 26 and 27. In this week, Christ is crucified. This week, or this seven, or each, of seven, that is, block of seven years.

In this week, Christ is crucified. Do you notice the language of the text? The Anointed One cut off and He will have nothing. Cut off and He will have nothing. And is that not a very suggestive description of the death of Jesus and the circumstances of His death?

There in verse 26, the Anointed One will be cut off and will have nothing. It almost brings to mind the very moment when Jesus cries out there as He hangs on the cross, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

And then in verse 27, there's further reference to the Anointed One. Certainly, if we understand the He at the beginning of verse 27, as I think we can, as being a reference to the Anointed One, He will confirm a covenant with many for one seven.

In the middle of the seven, He will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And so, a further reference with greater detail, if you wish, to the death of Jesus, that death that would end death, that death that would be the once and for all as sacrifice.

[37 : 14] But then also, in both the final verses, and contemplated within this final week, there's reference to great violence and opposition and destruction, and particularly destruction that would seem to be pointing to the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple.

We know that there was great prophetic significance in that siege and subsequent destruction of Jerusalem, something that was fulfilled in history in A.D. 70 with the siege of Jerusalem under who would become subsequently Emperor Titus.

The suggestion that the final week of sevens continues to the present, even, is one that has some merit and gains substance when we note how Jesus Himself makes reference to this passage.

We don't have time to look at it, but in Matthew chapter 24, in the context of describing the end times and also describing the destruction of Jerusalem, Jesus refers to this passage, or refers certainly to the language that we find in this passage.

So, that would suggest that perhaps this final block of seven is more open-ended and continues and speaks of the opposition to Christ and His people that is a feature of every age.

[38 : 37] But even if we are unclear as to all that has been spoken of here when we read of an abomination that causes desolation and of the violence and destruction and all this language we say, well, what is that really all about?

The important point is that whoever these enemies are or whoever this enemy is, if we want to personalize it, whatever they may try to do, ultimately, the end that is decreed is poured out on Him. Ultimately, justice prevails. I want to close with a wee story that I think maybe captures the meaning of this passage and indeed the book of Daniel, you might even say of the whole Bible, much more simply than maybe I've been able to do in exploring this decree.

But I think it's relevant. The story is told, as I understand, it's a true story, of a group of college students in the States who were studying the book of Revelation.

And they were gathered in their room and they were trying to understand the meaning of the book and they were having great difficulty. It all seemed so confusing and they just couldn't work it out. So they decided they would leave it to one side and they'd go and play basketball.

[39 : 52] Maybe a good idea if you're confused. Go and let off some steam. And off they went to the gymnasium. And they arrived at the gymnasium and here there was this old fellow, the janitor, Joe by name, who was reading.

He was reading something in a corner there reading and the young guys approached him and said, Joe, what are you reading? He says, oh, I'm reading the book of Revelation. And they said, oh, Joe, just forget about it.

There's just no way you're going to be able to understand that. And Joe looked up and he says, no, it's quite simple, really. Is it simple? Oh, yeah, the message is very simple. So what is the message?

And Joe looked up to these young guys and he said, Jesus wins. Jesus wins. And that's the message. It's the message of the book of Revelation. It's certainly the message of the book of Daniel.

It's the message of this decree. We can complicate it maybe. And in fairness, God has chosen to grant us an account that is complex. But at heart, this is the message.

[40 : 50] And if you draw anything from this, certainly go away with this assurance that Jesus wins. Well, let's pray. Heavenly Father, we come to you and we thank you that you are indeed a God who prevails.

you are indeed a God who secures victory for your people. You are a God who promises and who keeps His promises.

We thank you for all that you promised to Daniel in this decree, these wonderful outcomes that were contemplated and that we are able to see and with great excitement, recognize, find fulfillment in the coming and in the work and death and resurrection of Jesus, the Messiah.

Lord, we pray that we would live in the light of that great victory of our Savior. and we do recognize that there is much of opposition to Jesus and His people and His kingdom.

But we do thank you that the victory has been won and that the victory in due course will be finally and visibly and universally confirmed.

[42 : 05] And we look forward to that day. And all of these things we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, we're going to close our service this evening by singing again.

We're going to sing in Psalm 130. In Sing Psalms, Psalm 130, it's on page 173. We'll sing to the tune Martyrdom.

Lord, from the depths I call to you, Lord, hear me from on high and give attention to my voice when I for mercy cry. Notice the thing, especially the end of this psalm.

O Israel, put your hope in God, for mercy is with Him and full redemption, plenteous redemption. From their sins His people He'll redeem. We'll stand to sing this psalm.

Lord, from the depths I call to you, Lord, hear me from on high and give attention to my voice when I for mercy cry.

[43 : 35] Lord, in your presence through the Water matter. Thank you, Lord, If you are serious, For
ng innoc for shit, but yet forgiveness This is with you that we may fear you, Lord.

I wait, my soul waits for the Lord.

My hope is in His Word. More than the washman waits for dawn, my soul waits for the Lord.

O Israel, put pure hope in God, for mercy is with Him, and full redemption from their sins, His people
redeemed.

Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His
power that is at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all
generations, forever and ever. Amen.