

# The Hope of all History

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[ 0 : 00 ] What do you turn with me if you were to Daniel chapter 7? I apologize in advance tonight, my voice is a bit croaky, but it seems to have been Sunday every day this week, and I've been preaching rather a lot, so that's why.

Daniel chapter 7. The hope of all history is revealed. The second half of this book of Daniel is, I suppose, considered by many folk to be one of the most challenging parts of scripture, and therefore there are twin dangers as we approach it.

The first is that of obsession, the kind of reading of Daniel that leads to all sorts of wild and crazy interpretations, interpretations taken up with the minutiae of these prophecies, the identity of the fourth beast, whether it's communism or the United Nations or whatever it is you want it to be, whether it's the ten horns that, well, at one time were considered to be the nations of the European Union, and caused such anguish to many Christians in this country when Britain became the tenth nation to join the EEC, and people worried that it was going to bring about the apocalypse, or the identity of the little horn, who has been identified as all kinds of different people, from Napoleon to Mussolini to, goodness knows who else, it is easy to become obsessed with all of these sorts of things, and lead to a kind of frenzy of concern and nervousness.

The other danger, the other extreme, is really that of avoidance. We just preach through Daniel to chapter 6, and then stop there. And interestingly, a number of people have already said to me, are we going on or stopping at chapter 6?

Well, we are going on, because this is God's word for us today. It's written for us. But, of course, we need to approach it the right way. And when we do do that, we begin to see just how relevant this scripture is for us today, and how many lessons and how much learning it has for Christians in our age and indeed in every age.

[ 2 : 12 ] So, first of all, let's remember the context of this chapter 7 in the structure of the book. Remember, it's the end of the section written in Aramaic, not Hebrew.

Chapter 2, right through to the end of chapter 7, are in that different language. And chapter 2 and chapter 7 are, if you like, the brackets, the bookends of that section. And chapter 7, like chapter 2, we have a vision where the veil is taken away so that we see behind the scenes of history.

And what we see is a great sweep of history, the history of heaven and earth, right from the very beginning, the creation, right through to the last judgment. It's the very fulcrum of history and eternity, in particular, that is revealed to us in chapter 7.

The glorious event, the event at the heart of all history that straddles all eternity, the glorious triumph of the Son of Man and the dominion and the glory and the kingdom that is given to him, a kingdom that will last forever.

The later chapters of Daniel take up parts of what we see in chapter 7 in more detail. But as Bob File puts it in his book, this chapter is in a very real sense what he calls the hinge of the book.

[ 3 : 33 ] Because on it hangs everything else in history and in eternity. So we must take seriously this chapter's position in the book as a whole.

Secondly, we should notice the context in history. You see in verse 1, we're told this happened in the first year of King Belshazzar. That is, it happens before chapter 5 and the story of Belshazzar's downfall and Babylon's downfall.

Do you remember after chapter 4 we have Nebuchadnezzar apparently converted, at least outwardly, and no doubt an upturn in the fortunes of God's people, publicly.

No doubt the cause of true faith had some relief, had some encouragement, for these days. But of course, with the coming of Belshazzar, that all changed. Do you remember he was the king who set himself up against the God of heaven.

And we can imagine Daniel, can't we, living in Babylon in these days and questioning in his prayers, Lord, what's going on? After all that you've done through your witness in this place, through me, through my compatriots in chapter 3 and chapter 4 and the change of Nebuchadnezzar, why is it that things seem to be getting worse, not better?

[ 4 : 57 ] How long is it going to be, Lord, until we see these things that you've promised, that you've revealed in my dreams? the end of all evil, the end of those who oppose you, justice for the oppressed, for the captives, the reign of peace.

How long is it going to be, Lord, before you set up this kingdom that you say is going to be without end? You see, there's quite a contemporary ring about that whole situation, isn't there?

How long, oh Lord, has been the cry of the faithful saints all the way through history? And it's certainly true today, isn't it, in our 21st century world?

Just think of the history that we look back on in these last century or two. Think of the great optimism of the 19th century.

A world in the West triumphing in its own progress. A mark of civilization. Everything marching on towards things getting better and better.

[ 6 : 02 ] Technology, science, medicine and so on. And then of course, came the 20th century. And all that was smashed. All that utopian dream, two world wars, the nuclear arms race, the Cold War, genocide.

dictatorships. And now, in our 21st century, things seem to be even more unstable, even worse. We live in a world now with the new plague of global terrorism.

Just think of, in Christian circles, all the evangelical triumphalism of the 19th century, the golden age of missions, the great millennial optimism of ushering in the kingdom within a generation.

That's not what we've seen, is it? Not in the West, anyway. What we seem to have in the West today is the twin threats of rampantly rising secularism, on the one hand, and on the other, at the opposite extreme, the rise of militant Islam.

Both of these things implacably opposed to the people of God. And yet, you still seem to find in many sections of the church today the same kind of triumphalistic choruses.

[ 7 : 23 ] Revival is just around the corner. There's a new movement of the Spirit coming, and this is what's going to be it. We hear that sort of thing all the time. But you see, isn't it just that kind of a situation that the message of Daniel's vision in chapter 7 is a great restatement of sanity and of balance and of truth.

Because what we're seeing in this chapter and in the chapters that follow is behind the scenes into the heavenly history of this world.

Behind the real life conflicts of practicing faith in a pagan world that we've seen in the first six chapters of the book, we're seeing behind the scenes to the real spiritual war that has been raging and that is raging and that will rage right until the end of human history.

These visions put what we know of human history into the context of eternal reality. They show us how to understand human history, the past and in the present and also, crucially, in the future.

They show us how to find the answers to the great questions of history and of life. And they teach us that to find these questions we must actually be able to see beyond human history, beyond the earthly realm altogether and see right into the heavenly realms.

[ 8 : 54 ] Now, it's a long chapter, it's a complex chapter, so I'm going to just try and summarize the main points of it under three main themes. First of all, it tells us very clearly about the ceaseless terrors of the world's evil empires.

Second, it tells us at the same time about the certain triumph of the Lord's glorious kingdom. And thirdly, and very importantly, it tells us about the costly trials of the saints of the Most High.

So firstly then, the ceaseless terrors of the evil empires of this world. If you look at the first eight verses, that first section of Daniel's vision of the beasts, and then the section from verses 15 to 25 that give the interpretation of all of that, the point is made abundantly clear.

And it's this. Human history will throw up monstrous evil, monstrous opposition to God throughout history and right till the very end of history.

And moreover, God himself allows such evil empires to arise and to fall. Remember chapter 2 says, he is the one who raises up kings and puts them down.

[ 10 : 16 ] God allows it, but nevertheless, this monstrous evil in history that we've been witnesses to right from the very beginning of time, arises out of this world.

It comes from this world and its people. See in verse 3 it says, these great beasts arise out of the sea. Then in verse 17, in the interpretation, we're told the sea is symbolic of the earth, the world of humanity.

And four monsters arise out of the world of humanity. The number signifies completeness. The numbers in this kind of apocalyptic literature are often very important and symbolic and it's like the four winds, the four beasts come from every direction.

Now, certainly on one level, it's no doubt that these represent four specific kingdoms that were going to arise immediately after Daniel's time.

Just exactly the same as are portrayed in chapter 2. Almost certainly Babylonia, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome. The scholars argue about that. Some of them take a different view, especially those who discount the possibility of predictive prophecy.

[ 11 : 32 ] But I want to suggest that these specific identifications are not actually the main point for us. Because clearly this vision goes beyond all that. Because it speaks of ultimate realities.

It speaks of final battles, of final triumph of God's kingdom over all the others. the end of the chapter with verse 27 clearly is a picture of the everlasting reign of the saints of the Most High.

So whatever this vision might have had for the specific centuries coming straight after Daniel's time, it most certainly also speaks of a recurring reality right through the years of history.

And of course it does describe the world that we know, doesn't it? It describes the world that we know today, it describes the world of history that we're familiar with, and it tells us that this history will be the same right till the end.

That's why when we get to the very end of the New Testament, for example, in the book of Revelation chapter 13, we find a very, very similar apocalyptic vision to this one of four beasts all rolled into one, also arising out of the sea and waging war on the saints right until the end.

[ 12 : 48 ] And you see, that's its relevance for us as Christians in the 21st century. What Daniel saw and what Daniel understood and had to understand in his time was what Christian believers need to see and understand at all times, and what we need to see and understand.

That humanity is always throwing up monsters and monstrous regimes in response to the God of heaven and in opposition to the God of heaven.

And Christian people must never be naive about the reality and the strength of human evil and depravity. That is the naivety of the secular humanist. It can never be the mistake, the naivety of the Christian believer.

We know the evil in the heart of mankind. And notice in verse 2, notice that these things happen precisely because God is at work on the earth, not because he is absent.

It is when the winds of heaven blow upon the seas, upon the waters, upon the world of humankind, that conflict is inevitable. See, it is a rebellious, it is a sin-cursed human world adrift from God that reacts against God's spirit blowing on the earth, that throws up opposition to God in every age.

[ 14 : 16 ] And instead of things getting better and better, in fact it is quite the opposite. The opposition gets worse and worse and fiercer and fiercer. And we need to see this, we need to understand this.

And we mustn't be naive as Christian people today. We must face the reality of the ceaseless terrors that this world will throw up right to the end. We are to expect it in history.

So you see, the Christian who takes his Bible seriously cannot cherish optimistic utopian desires for society. What was it they sang at the 1997 election?

Things can only get better. Well, we know that's nonsense, don't we? We've seen it. Christian people who take the Bible seriously can never pin their hopes on the centres of world power, whether it's the European Union or the United Nations or the United States or whoever it is.

Now the Bible is clear. Things are not getting better and better, they're getting worse and worse. As monstrous evil lurches to monstrous evil.

[ 15 : 23 ] That's the message of this chapter. And we're to expect this as Christian believers in a cursed world. And what's more, we're to understand that the more the winds of God blow on the earth, the more convulsions there will be on the earth.

You see, you cannot have a witness strong and powerful for the Most High God in the pagan environs of Babylon without stirring up evil and beastly opposition.

That's why in the chapters we've read we've seen fiery furnaces and lion's dens. And by the same token you cannot have a real and a living testimony to the Lord Jesus Christ in the 21st century in

Glasgow, in Scotland or anywhere else without stirring up the same convulsions and the same opposition.

You see, it's when the winds of heaven blow upon the earth that the beasts of the earth stand up and respond. It's the winds of war that we've spoken about. Blowing. And the battles arise on terra firma.

They arise in our real life experience. And the Bible tells us that these battles will become fiercer and harder and more frenzied as evil reaches a climax before its final destruction.

[ 16 : 45 ] And that is what Daniel sees in this vision. And that is precisely what the Lord Jesus teaches plainly and the apostles teach in the New Testament.

Just remember when Jesus himself began his earthly ministry and all of a sudden there's a sudden upsurge in demonic activity. He has opposition at every turn. The demons are coming from everywhere to confront him.

What did Jesus say? I came not to bring peace to the earth but a sword. And that greatest moment of divine intervention stirred up the greatest opposition of humanity.

You see it again in the early church just reading through the Acts of the Apostles. Fearsome opposition, fearsome persecution at that absolutely crucial time for the future of the entire worldwide church.

And on every page we see opposition being stirred up. And that is always the pattern. As the winds of heaven blow upon the sea of humanity so earth stirs up its opposition.

[ 17 : 51 ] Remember what Paul said to the Corinthians? A great and effective door for gospel ministry has opened unto me. and there are many adversaries.

So you see if as Christians we think things are only going to get better and better, revival is just around the corner, well pray God that revival may be just around the corner.

But if it is, let me tell you this, beastly opposition is also right around the corner. It can't be any other way. There never will be any hunky-dory blessing times when everything is rosy and blessing alone abounds.

There will never be such times. We mustn't be naive. We're warned that there will always be ceaseless terrors, persistent turmoil from this world against the God of heaven and against all of those who are associated with the God of heaven.

right to the very end. Man is responsible for it. It is all his doing. It arises from the earth.

[ 19 : 03 ] But God allows it. God is in control. God is on the throne. That brings us to the second main focus in this chapter because do you see at verse 9 how there is a sudden change in the whole vision?

we go from raging turmoil to a picture of serenity and peace. We go from dreadful darkness to resplendent light. We go from the terrors of earth to the throne that's set in heaven.

And that is the great centerpiece of the chapter. It's the great fulcrum of all history and all eternity. It's a revelation of the certain triumph of the glorious kingdom of God.

You see, though the raging and the rebellion of this world is relentless and is terrible, Daniel sees very clearly that it does have an end.

God is on the throne in heaven and he will establish his kingdom. He will establish his kingdom by a glorious intervention in human history from beyond human history that will end human history.

[ 20 : 15 ] and it will instead inaugurate a kingdom of glory that will never ever end. There is a grand finale and whatever else this chapter has to say to us, and there are many things, it certainly tells us this in an absolutely unmistakable way.

Daniel sees there is an inevitable final judgment. There is a final vanquishing of all evil. and there is an inevitable triumph of the people of God, of the saints of the Most High God as he calls them.

Look at what Daniel sees there when he looks up from earth to the throne room in heaven. He sees the throne room of God and he sees the throne of God in verse 9. He sees the authority of God towering above history and of the earth and of time itself.

He is the ancient of days, the everlasting one. There is a total contrast to the picture of the turmoil of earth. It is a picture of absolute sovereignty, the bright purity of holiness, verse 10, the fire that symbolises both God's mercy and his judgment.

And he sees, what does he see? Calm as you like. The books are opened and judgment begins. It is deliberate, it is definite and it is deadly.

[ 21 : 43 ] Look at what he sees when he looks back down to earth in verse 11. He looks back on what had been a fearsome, frenzied, turmoil scene and what does he see?

Well, just a fiddling anticlimax. Utter destruction. The beast killed, his body destroyed. It is a picture of God's judgment on evil all through history.

He sets up and he destroys and more than anything it is a picture of God's judgment at the end of history. Then he looks back up again in verse 13 to heaven and what does he see now?

Well, he sees the son of man coming to the throne in power and in triumph. In total contrast to the beasts of the earth, to this vision of what mankind has become in his rebellion against the throne of heaven, no, he now sees a man as he is meant to be.

Do you remember how the writer to the Hebrews speaks about it later on? That is what Daniel is seeing. He is having a prophetic vision of the one who was made for a little while lower the angels but now crowned with glory and honor.

[ 22 : 56 ] And see in verse 14, what does he receive? Dominion and glory and kingdom and all the peoples and all the nations serve him. And you see verse 18, with him and because of his triumph, his people, his saints will reign with him.

They will possess the kingdom forever. And again, that's just what the epistle to the Hebrews tells us so clearly later on. He is the founder of their salvation.

He, Jesus Christ, the risen one, brings many sons to glory with him. He destroyed the one who had the power of death and therefore he delivered all of those who were subject to lifelong slavery under the power of the great beast, Satan himself.

so that in his triumphant glory, all his saints also, as verse 18 says, will possess the kingdom forever.

Forever and ever. You see what Daniel is seeing here? He is seeing the decisive act of God's authority and God's judgment in human history.

[ 24 : 10 ] He's seeing the glorious ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ. He's seeing the glory of the risen Jesus, triumphant over the grave, ascending to heaven on high, having defeated death, having defeated hell itself.

He's seeing what happened after the first Easter. And yes, of course, we see that much more clearly today than the prophets saw it even then.

But Daniel saw it nonetheless. That's what he's recording. Daniel sees the sovereign judge on his throne. What were we reading on Good Friday in John 12?

Now is the time for judgment on this world, says Jesus as he goes to the cross. Daniel sees the Son of Man in glory receiving the kingdom. Now is the hour for the Son of Man to be glorified, said Jesus on the way to the cross.

Daniel sees the destruction of the beast and of every evil power in the world. And what does Jesus say? Now is the prince and the ruler of this world cast down.

[ 25 : 18 ] Daniel is seeing hundreds of years in advance what John on the island of Patmos saw after the event, recorded in his vision in Revelation chapter 4 and chapter 5.

He's seeing the ascension of the Lamb who was slain, who is the Lion of the tribe of Judah, who is the Root of David, the Son of Man, the Son of God, Jesus Christ.

He's seeing the one who is rising victorious to the glory of his Father. And he sees in that vision, in the ascendant triumphant Son of Man, he sees in him the answer to all world history.

He saw in advance the glorious end of history, the finale. And he needed to know that, he needed to see it, he needed to understand it, so that he could live his life faithfully in a pagan world.

He needed to see that, as did his people, so they could live in sure and certain hope of the future, and therefore live in strong and settled faith today.

[ 26 : 32 ] And friends, that is exactly why you and I need to see this very same vision. That's why it's in the Bible for us today. Because for us it's far more wonderful even than it was for Daniel.

We stand on this side of its fulfillment. We stand on this side of the historical events that this all pointed forward to. We look back on Easter Day, two thousand years ago, and we know for sure that all of this is so, because we know that Christ is risen, and his body was not in the tomb.

Because we know that he has ascended on the clouds of heaven, and that judgment has been declared on all evil, and that death itself is conquered, and that the saints of the Most High shall certainly receive and possess the kingdom forever.

And so we have hope as Christian people. We know that God is on the throne, no matter how evil the days look. He's already bringing about a final consummation when all evil will be absolutely and utterly destroyed forever.

And when the truth of verse 14 will be revealed forever, a glorious kingdom of everlasting righteousness. And that's why we have hope. And our 21st century world is so hopeless. [ 28 : 03 ] Isn't that true of our society today? Our false utopian dreams have been smashed. They're hollow amidst the carnage of the history of the last century.

And what's replaced these hollow dreams in our 21st century? Well, it's marked, isn't it, by disillusionment, by apathy. There's no meaning, there's no vision, people have no hope. A pessimism that surrounds our culture is destroying people's dreams for the future. That's why, surely, we're not even interested in democracy anymore. A mature Western democracies can't even get people out to vote.

That's why we're a society that, with no future to look at, is so determined to think of nothing but the present, the immediate, the material. No wonder the great scourge of our society today is psychological breakdown and depression.

I was just reading in yesterday's Times newspaper that something like 90% of the population of this country are touched in some way or other by psychological damage and depression.

[ 29 : 19 ] The commonest cause of death in men under 45 in this country is suicide. Did you know that? It's a mark of a society that has no hope.

That's why we're a society that focuses ever more on the instant than on instant gratification. That's why our sex lives are in a mess. And our society is overcome by pornography.

That's why drugs are on the rampage in our society. That's why there are so many unhappy relationships around because they're born out of a fear of commitment and anxiety and being frightened about the future.

So many people face life in a directionless way. So many people confess that their lives are meaningless. So they're chasing after the latest fads to occupy their time.

Why else would you have grown men spending hours and hours and hours in the day playing on Game Boy machines? It should be for people under the age of about 10.

[ 30 : 28 ] Why do we have people, men and women, whiling away hour after hour after hour on inane and vacant daytime television? It's because we're a culture with no hope for the future.

If ever a culture needed a dream to rekindle hope than it is our one today. Not another illusion. Not something to sparkle seductively and then just fade away to a wisp like these utopian dreams of the 19th century.

But a real vision. A real vision of hope. A real theology of the future. You see, that's what Daniel sees here in this chapter. An eschatology.

A view of where this world is going. Of where it's going under God's sovereign control. And where it's going to climax under God's mighty plan and purpose.

Purposed from the beginning of time. And promised. Accomplished in Jesus Christ. It's a theology of hope. And it was that that sustained Daniel and his compatriots and the other exiles in their captivity.

[ 31 : 42 ] It was that that kept Daniel's windows open towards Jerusalem no matter what the threats on his own life and society was doing round about. It was that that kept John on the island of Patmos of the first century when he was taken away and exiled there.

It was that hope that has always been the meat and the drink, the food of Christian believers in times of adversity. Whether the first and second century martyrs.

Or the 17th century martyrs and covenanters here in Scotland. Or men like Dietrich Bonhoeffer and others in the 1930s in Germany.

It's that hope that sustains our Christian brothers and sisters today in countries of the world where still they are being martyred. And their children burned and tortured for the sake of Jesus Christ.

The vision that God is on the throne. That the Son of Man has ascended in glory.

[ 32 : 44 ] That even now he is seated and the court sits in judgment. That already he has proclaimed eternity in favour of the saints of the Most High God.

As John Calvin put it, God must win. That's the verdict of the heavenly court. And that's the message here.

That is the Christian gospel. That's the message of Easter. Christ is risen and God must win. Because Christ is risen and ascended on high. And with him his saints shall reign. They shall receive the kingdom and shall possess it forever. Forever and ever.

And that's why the New Testament continuously speaks about Christians as people who have hope. Remember Peter in his letter says that it ought to be the most obvious thing about us. We should always be ready to give a reason for the hope that's within us.

[ 33 : 46 ] And that presupposes of course that there is a hope within us. That it can be seen that there's hope within us. When did somebody last ask you or me about the hope that is within us? We're people of hope.

And that's the message of this chapter you see. It's not about predictions. It's about a perspective on the future. A perspective that gives us a glorious gospel of hope.

But although this is certainly true. It's not all that there is in this vision. There is also a very great challenge to believers.

And that's the message that alarmed even Daniel. You see in verse 15 he was alarmed. And in the very last verse in verse 28 he tells us again he was alarmed. His thoughts alarmed him. And that is because we also need to take to heart what this vision tells us about the costly trials of the saints of the most high.

The vision and I suppose particularly verses 19 to the end highlight the paradox of the saints who receive the kingdom and possess it eternally even now as verse 18 says.

[ 35 : 01 ] So already they are reigning with Christ on high and yet are still at the same time at war with the beast. Christ as verse 21 says.

This horn made war with the saints. They are still even under his power as verse 25 says. They shall be given into his hand for a time and times and half a time until a final judgment.

When at last says verse 26 all his dominion shall be taken away and shall be utterly destroyed forever. And that is what bothers Daniel in verse 15.

That's why he wants to focus on understanding this fourth beast and why he asks in verse 19 all about it. This kingdom that seems different, that seems to survive the destruction of the beast.

And especially this little horn that seems to go on opposing God and his people right to the very end, even after somehow it's been destroyed. And you see the rest of the chapter focuses on this awful truth.

[ 36 : 08 ] And what is pictured here is the whole of the history of the Christian church. It's the increasing ferocity of opposition to God that the world faces after the coming of Christ and his triumph and leading up to the time when he will come again in glory and bring a final end to all things and consummate his kingdom forever.

And what we have here you see in picture form is a great paradox and it is the paradox of the Christian life. About a kingdom of God where believers are already reigning in power and yet they find it is at the same time a suffering kingdom.

The tribulation and the reign of power go together. The suffering and the glory are inseparable.

That's why I think that prophetic schemes that talk about something called a great tribulation followed by a glorious millennial reign of Christ or vice versa or whatever way around it is, I think generally we have to say are unhelpful.

Because in this chapter and in fact in the whole of Daniel and in Revelation and everywhere else in scripture, you cannot separate the suffering and the glory. They go together.

They go together right until the very end and that is precisely what bothers Daniel so much. Of course, we know from the Lord Jesus teaching that that's certainly true, don't we?

[ 37 : 39 ] In the world, he said, you will have tribulation. But be of good cheer, I have overcome the world. We get it from Paul in the great victory chapter of Romans 8.

What does he say in that great chapter of the victorious Christian life? We are being killed all the day long, he says. Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors.

Reigning but suffering. And Daniel saw that the saints of the Most High God share in the sufferings of the Son of Man just as they share in his reign in power and glory.

And that's what troubled him. He saw and he began to understand the true cost of what it means to be called to reign with Christ and to share his victory.

He began to see all of those years before Jesus even came what Paul makes so clear in Romans 8 when he says we are heirs, heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

[ 38 : 43 ] That's what Daniel saw. He saw, you see, that salvation for the saints was all bound up with their union with their Saviour, the Son of Man himself.

And therefore he saw that the glory of that includes inevitably the cost of a life of witness and a victory with him. By the way he grasped this all, remember, before chapter 6 and his stand before the lion's den.

And this is what's helped him stand. He understood the cost of standing for the Lord Jesus. And you see, you can't really begin to understand that truth. You can't really begin to come to terms with it without being deeply troubled, without being alarmed, because it is alarming.

Don't you find that alarming? That you're reigning with Christ in the heavenly realms and yet you suffer all the time? Remember the Lord Jesus in Gethsemane, when he came to the fullest understanding of the cost of his faithfulness in working God's salvation?

He was, what do we read? He was overcome with sorrow even to the point of death. He was, deeply, deeply troubled. There's not an awful lot of talk in modern popular Christianity about costly commitment like that today.

[ 40 : 13 ] There's an awful lot of talk about celebrations and power and worship and tingling experiences. You see, Daniel's towering witness, Daniel's impact on a pagan culture for so many decades came from exactly this understanding, that to stand and to reign with the King of Glory means to suffer with him, to share in the spiritual battles with him, whatever the cost, knowing that the present suffering is not to be compared with the glory that awaits the saints of the Most High.

Daniel saw it and he understood God's unfolding plan of salvation and Daniel was therefore a realist. He was not a deluded fantasist about spiritual life.

And let me tell you friends, it's realists who count for God. Because only realists can stand at all in the face of the fierce battles that we face, the battles without the world and its opposition, the battles within, with the world and the flesh and the devil.

But realists have grasped the paradox of the costly trials of the victorious Christian life that go on right till the very end and the last day.

But yes, the saints possess the kingdom and they reign with Christ now and yet also they battle and they suffer and even at times they're overcome and yes, they die.

[ 41 : 56 ] They know that there is a not yet, that there is a final victory still to come. That verse 26 says, there is a time in the future when at last all the enemies will be placed under his feet and all the kingdoms of the whole of heaven will be given to the saints.

So friends, we need to learn the lessons that Daniel learned. Otherwise it will wreak havoc with our Christian lives. I can't say this too seriously.

We must have a biblically realistic view of the world now as it is what we have and of the future. That is certain but is not yet.

We cannot have false dreams. There is no place for naive utopian dreams for Christian disciples.

No place at all. We can have no confidence in worldly powers to achieve peace and justice and the joy that we long for whether it's in national politics or international diplomacy or saving the planet through ecological change or special Christian experiences that promise all sorts of victory.

None of these things may be wrong in themselves but they are not the answer. No false dreams. But then at the same time no false despair. We are not to be disillusioned and apathetic when the world seems to be getting worse and worse.

[ 43 : 23 ] We are to know that this is what will happen. Isn't verse 25 a perfect description of our own day? A culture that is blaspheming God. Persecuting believers more and more.

Bringing in new and different religions. New morality. New laws. It is a pretty accurate description of our land today, isn't it? Well don't hold your hands up in horror and try and hide and run away to a holy huddle somewhere.

Expect it, says Jesus. Expect worse. No. No dreams to let us down but at the same time no despair to get us down. Rather perspective.

Look where Daniel looked. Look at the reality. There is a throne set for judgment. There is a victorious king.

There is a battle won. There is a certain end to all evil. It's been declared already in heaven and it is coming at last to this earth.

[ 44 : 24 ] And in the meantime while we do fight these battles right to the end. Battles for the gospel in the world and in the church and in our Christian lives.

Remember that everything that God revealed to Daniel in this vision about the triumph of the Son of Man. Every single thing came to pass. Remember that Jesus Christ is risen today and we sing hallelujah.

And so just as surely everything that God promised and everything that Jesus explicitly promised to us himself shall come to pass. He shall come again in glory.

And there shall be an end to every one of these costly trials for the people of God. And verse 27 shall be fulfilled. The kingdom and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole of heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High.

Their kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom and dominions shall serve and obey him. All of that is true because Jesus Christ is risen.

[ 45 : 39 ] He is risen indeed. And that's why we are a people of hope. Daniel looked forward and he trusted the word of God. Every which word has been fulfilled.

And we look back and look forward with even greater confidence. We are a people of hope. Well let's pray.

O God for whose coming in glory we long. Your gospel of hope shall be ever our song of rescue from judgment and life without end for all who to Jesus belong.

And may the vision of your throne in heaven and the promise of your coming back to us sustain us and cheer us. Whatever the turmoil of this earth may throw up until that day.

May the hope of the gospel of Jesus Christ be our salvation. For we ask it in his name. Amen.

[ 46 : 50 ] Well we end by singing the other hymn on your sheet. O God of our fathers, creator and Lord. Majestic in glory by heaven adored. To first generations.

Your promise revealed. Your fullness. In Jesus declared. To first generations. Steer lequell of the church Tom Jesus Christ His hands. Maybe the heart of his God.

Even if he would say something. There is cold and cold and cold. Amen. And we are tree above God. Amen. Come to earth. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.