

God's Ultimate Answer to All Human Prayers

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[0 : 00] Well, do turn with me, if you were, to Daniel chapter 9. Before the service, David Robery made a comment to me and said, when I said to him, Daniel 9 was a very complicated chapter when you read all the commentaries, and his answer was, well, any fool can make something seem extraordinarily complicated.

I'm not sure if he was trying to encourage me for the evening. Well, you must be the judge of that. But here's what I think it's about.

God's ultimate answer to all human prayers. And hopefully at least that's simple. Where do you turn in a time of crisis?

A time of personal crisis, perhaps, in your life, when you're confronted with real danger or threat, or maybe even just real challenge or pressure. Where do you turn at a time of national crisis, when we face political upheaval, or perhaps a threat of war, or perhaps even natural disaster, rather like the islanders in Java and Indonesia at the moment, with the volcano threatening to erupt.

The answer to that question will reveal a very great deal, won't it, about where the real focus, where the real trust of your life lies.

[1 : 28] It will reveal a lot about what your understanding of life is, and the world, and perhaps your understanding of God. I guess many Christians, when facing crisis, will find themselves, perhaps understandably, searching for some kind of special guidance from God, perhaps even a vision or a prophecy, maybe some special sign that will help them understand their situation, something that will guide them as to what to do in such a time of danger.

Well, our chapter opens tonight in a time of crisis for Daniel, a time both of personal crisis and, indeed, national crisis.

Verse 1 tells us it is the first year of Darius. So it's the year of the fall of Babylon, when Belshazzar's kingdom, as we've already seen in chapter 5, was removed from him, and the whole empire of Babylon was taken over by the Medo-Persians, under Cyrus.

Cyrus here called by his throne name of Darius, as apparently was the custom often for the first year of a ruler's reign. So it's a time of huge upheaval, right at the centre of the known world.

The world superpower had just changed. And Daniel was in the midst of that, as one of the top civil servants in the nation. These were not easy times.

[2 : 57] And, of course, we also know from chapter 6, don't we, that these were times of personal crisis for Daniel. There were enemies plotting his own downfall. There were many who were desperate to see him at the bottom of the lion's den.

So what do you do in a time of crisis, when the government's in turmoil, when your job's on the line, when your very life may be threatened for your faithfulness to God?

What do you do? Well, what does Daniel do? Remember, this is a man who sees visions and dreams. He's one who understands mysteries and riddles.

What does he do? Well, verse 2 tells us, doesn't it? He seeks answers in one place only, in the scriptures, in the books, the books of the law and the prophets.

Isn't that striking? A man like Daniel, who's the recipient of all sorts of special visions and revelations, is actually driven by these things to delve more and more deeply into the written word of God.

[4 : 03] And that's what he does. And he does delve deeply. This is not text fishing.

This is not some kind of trite handling of the Bible. We're told he perceived. That is, he sought to find understanding of God's actions in history.

He wrestled with the meaning that he found in Jeremiah's prophecy. It was serious study. It's the very opposite of the kind of trite searching for texts that religious lightweights would seek.

No, Daniel knew that with God, all the answers to life and to the world and to personal crises and everything else were to be found in one place alone in the scriptures.

And he knew that to find these answers, you had to take God seriously. You had to wrestle with his truth. And so he did seek God's answers.

[5 : 07] And in doing so, it led him to prayer. And in turn, that prayer led him to see more still as God answered him and revealed even more to him. A wonderful, wonderful message about the grace of his ultimate answer, not just to Daniel's prayer, but indeed to every crisis of history.

Every crisis in the personal lives of every man and woman and child who's ever lived or whoever will live. So let's do as Daniel did.

Let's engage our minds to study the scripture and let's see what answers can be found there. And I think that we'll find that in this chapter we see that the answer to every human need, to every crisis, to every prayer, lies in the three things that are exposed here.

Understanding God's covenant, unloosing godly confession, and unveiling God's Christ. first of all then, God's covenant understood.

That's really the message of these first two verses. That the answer to all human crises and global crises and every personal crisis is to be found only in the revelation that comes to God's people.

[6 : 30] The revelation of his gospel, his covenant purpose for the world. That's the great message that's contained in these first two verses. In that simple little phrase Daniel perceived in the books.

Because what he did know and understand deeply from the scriptures was the truth about the one true and living God. Daniel had no fantasy God. Daniel had no God of his own imagining.

No God somehow concocted in his own image like so many people seem to have today. No.

Daniel's God was the God of the Bible. He was the covenant God.

A serious God. A holy God. A God who takes sin so seriously that he can't even look upon it much less dwell in the presence of sinful people.

The whole of the scripture makes that clear and we know that Daniel knew the Bible back to front. He knew it like the back of his hand. And this chapter has Daniel focusing very clearly on two places in scripture.

[7 : 40] On Jeremiah the prophet as we read but also clearly on the books of Moses. The law. The book of the covenant. Again and again throughout Daniel's prayer here he makes reference to God's covenant law which the people had disobeyed.

Which the people had abandoned. Let's look at verse 5. We have rebelled against your commandments. Verse 11. We have refused to obey your voice. And the curses written in the law of Moses have been poured out against us.

Because you see Jeremiah just like all the prophets was simply a messenger. He was a preacher of God's covenant. The prophets simply expounded and applied Moses' foundational words over and over and over again.

That's what the prophets did. That's all they did. So that to refuse to listen to the prophets was to refuse to obey Moses.

And therefore it was to reject the very words, the very covenant of God himself. Says that in verse 10. We have not obeyed the voice of the Lord our God by walking in his laws, in his covenant which he set before us by his servants the prophets.

[8 : 55] To reject the prophets is to reject God himself, to reject his covenant. And that's why Daniel knew that the exile that his people were experiencing was not arbitrary.

Israel's exile was not just due to the ebb and the flow of the nations of the ancient world, nor was it just explainable by the powers behind this world's history that Daniel had already seen in some of his visions.

The spiritual warfare, the battles that were going on above and beyond the veil that Daniel had insight into. Now ultimately all of this was due to sin, to the sheer rebellion and the iniquity and the perversity at the very heart of God's own covenant people.

That was the root cause of everything and that is fundamental to understanding God's covenant revelation to all humanity. Verse 11, all Israel has transgressed your law and turned aside.

And that is why the exile happened. That's why God's curses were poured out on them as verse 11 says, because we have sinned against him. Sin is the great problem.

[10 : 20] Verse 13, we're told that Moses had warned about this clearly again and again in his law. He'd said such a calamity would come. If you don't believe that, read Leviticus chapter 26 or

Deuteronomy 28 and 29 when you go home.

It's plain as a pike staff. And that's why Daniel says, all of this has come upon us just as Moses said, just as Jeremiah prophesied. He was merely God's contemporary preacher sent to apply God's word with clarity to that particular generation.

He was sent to say to them, enough is enough. You're going into exile just as Moses promised. And it's going to be no joke. Not just a flash in the pan.

It's going to last for 70 years. Symbolic for the perfect period of God's time of punishment, seven times ten. apparently an accepted period of standard rebuke from the gods in the ancient world. And God says, you are going to learn that God's covenant word cannot be treated lightly. You're going to learn that you cannot presume upon God. You're going to learn that sin matters.

[11:39] And just as we read in Jeremiah 25, God would use Nebuchadnezzar as his servant. Imagine that. To punish Israel. But after the 70 years, God would also punish Babylon for her sin.

No favoritism. Sin matters to God. And as we read in Jeremiah chapter 29, there would also be after that restoration for Israel when at last they would call upon the Lord.

They would seek him with all their hearts. And in that day, not only would there be restoration to the land, but there would be much, much more. All those wonderful promises we read.

Promises of a restored messianic king, David, whom God would raise up. Promises of a new covenant. Promises of the ultimate dwelling of God with his people forever and ever in righteousness.

The ultimate getting rid of sin, that which had separated them from God. So here we are. It's the first year of the Persian empire.

[12:48] It's almost 70 years since Nebuchadnezzar first took captives to Babylon, Daniel among them. And Daniel had now witnessed the overthrow of Babylon just as God had promised.

They had been punished. So was God's other promise about to be fulfilled? Was God indeed going to restore his people, to visit them, to take them back to their land, to usher in all of these marvelous promises that Jeremiah and Isaiah and the other prophets had spoken about?

All these extraordinary blessings of the covenant that all the prophets had said would be fulfilled in the latter days, in the days beyond exile? That was Daniel's question.

Surely the end of the exile must be drawing near. God's prayer. But if that was so, why begin to pray so fervently for God to act?

Instead of just waiting and letting God do what he was going to do anyway? Well, you see, the first thing to say about that is that God's revelation to his people is never just a matter of information.

[14:01] It's not just facts. God reveals himself to us when he speaks in his word. He's the covenant God and covenants are not just to be learned about but they're to be entered into.

It's what you do in a marriage covenant. You don't just talk about it, you enter into it. And God speaks personally to his people and whenever he speaks personally he demands a response. He calls forth a response. Whenever he speaks it produces a response. Because if we've really encountered the living God his righteousness for one thing exposes us.

To grasp God's covenant to really understand his gospel promise is to be personally exposed. And the only response that's appropriate is to humble yourself in prayer.

That's the evidence of God at work in the human heart. We know that, don't we? Just remember Saul of Tarsus after his encounter with the risen Christ on the Damascus road. What did they say of him? That showed that his life had changed.

[15:03] Look, he's praying. To begin to grasp God's covenant, God's gospel promise forces you to your knees.

It must do always. But also, you see, to grasp God's covenant, to get an understanding of his gospel, his sovereign claim on all of our life, never can lead to an attitude of fatalism.

It's quite the opposite. coming to terms with a sovereign God heightens our sense of responsibility, our obligation. God is sovereign and therefore we are utterly responsible to him.

We must obey him. You can't begin to grasp the revelation of God to his people. You can't begin to grasp what the gospel means without responding.

repentance. That response is always one of repentance. That explains why the bulk of this chapter, verses 3 to 19, are taken up with Daniel's great prayer of response.

[16:08] Because true understanding of God's covenant revelation in scripture always leads to godly confession being unloosed in us. repentance. The answer to all human needs can only be

found in true repentance from God's people.

In response to the revelation that he gives to us. Daniel's response to God's revelation is the only appropriate response to God's revelation because it is a revelation of his righteousness.

Verse 7, to you, O God, belongs righteousness, but to us, hope and shame. And that's why confession is the keynote of this prayer.

See, it's very telling, isn't it? We like to think that we know God. We like to think that we're intimate with God. We like to think that we're friends with God. We somehow think that that means that we can be casual with him.

We can be informal with him. But it's never that way if we see scripture as our witness. Never.

When men are truly confronted by the living God, not some figment of their imaginations, but the true and living God of scripture, the covenant God, when they get an insight into the real reality of the gospel of his covenant, they don't go into some sort of ecstatic dance.

[17:35] They don't jump around as though they're having some sort of fun time. No, it's quite the opposite, isn't it? They fall on their faces. They're floored by his holiness.

They're floored by their own sin. Remember Isaiah, I saw the Lord high and lifted up, thrice holy.

And he said, Woe is me, for I am a man of unclean lips.

That's what happens when you get an understanding of God's covenant. And Daniel, likewise, is driven to confession. He must be. He can't do otherwise, because he's begun to understand the true holiness of God, his righteousness and his own shame.

And he is the Lord, and that means that to love him is to obey him. That's what love means in the Bible, to obey, to be utterly subject to.

Not sentimentality, it's not an excuse to behave any way you like and justify it by saying, well, it's all right, we're in love. It's nothing like that at all. Jesus says, to love me is to keep my commandments.

[18:42] John 14, verse 15. That's why Daniel is driven to confession, because true repentance is the only appropriate response when God begins to give you a grasp of his covenant gospel.

And notice that Daniel's response is both personal and corporate. He prays in verse 4 to the Lord, my God, in several other places. But also in verse 10 and many other verses, he's the Lord, our God.

There's a clear sense in Daniel's prayer of solidarity with his people in their sin. He doesn't pray, oh Lord, forgive them. They're all awful sinners, not like me, your holy prophet.

He doesn't pray, oh Lord, these other people in our church, their doctrines so impure and so wrong, not like mine. Well, that was all true.

But Daniel didn't pray that. No, verse 5, we have sinned, he says. We have been wicked, we have rebelled, we have turned aside. Isn't it striking to you that when Daniel was facing all kinds of personal threats in his own life, all kinds of threats to his own personal safety, these were the things that were filling his prayers.

[20:05] This is what Daniel was praying about day after day at his open window in chapter 6 when they were trying to catch him out and get him in the lion's den. All his prayers were directed towards Jerusalem, that's where his windows faced.

He was taken up with the great issues of God's plan and his purpose for his kingdom. His heart is not burdened for his own skin. He's concerned with his people's sin, the sin of God's people, people of his choice.

It's just a question worth asking, isn't it? How often we display that same kind of responsibility.

We're facing a crisis in our national church with the coming General Assembly.

Well, is that what's filling our prayers? Are we imploring God for mercy to us despite the woeful neglect of his word and his ways in our church?

Or is it in fact the case that our prayers are full of endless requests about me, about my health, about my job, about my exams, about my need for a marriage partner or whatever else it might be?

[21:20] Well, I know I don't stand up to Daniel's standard. It's a real challenge, isn't it? But Daniel's prayer is a big prayer. It's a real prayer. And notice there's nothing vague in it.

Just see how clear he is, how specific he is, how honest he is. Look at verse 5. It's sin that's our problem. A deliberate turning away from God.

It's wrong. It's a deliberate perversion of our lifestyle. It's wickedness, he says, deserving punishment. It's rebellion against our sovereign Lord.

It's turning away. It's apostasy, running away from God. Verse 7, it's sheer treachery. Nothing vague about that. There's no excuses.

There's no blaming it on society or his genes or his upbringing or anything else. And the root of it all? Well, it's there in verse 6 and verse 10 and verse 11.

[22 : 18] We read it. Deliberate refusal of God's word. We have not listened. We have not obeyed his voice. We have refused to obey his voice.

And that's why everything that's happened to us, says Daniel, has been richly deserved. It all happened, verse 11, because we have sinned against him. God has simply confirmed his words. As verse 13 says, as it is written, so it has happened. And that, you know, is the proof that Daniel has actually grasped the gospel, isn't it?

That's the proof that Daniel has understood God's covenant. If you've still got any excuse left to offer for your sins, or if you've still got any resentment in your heart that bad things that happen in the world or that happen to you are somehow God's fault, if those thoughts are still in your mind and your heart, you haven't yet understood the gospel of God.

No, you haven't. Now, when God's covenant gospel is really understood, real godly confession is always, always unleashed.

[23 : 36] And so, in these verses 3 to 12, Daniel confesses freely all the sin that has led to his people's exile. But did you notice this verse 13? All this calamity has come upon us, yet we have not entreated the favour of the Lord our God.

Verse 14. God's done all of this to teach us about sin and holiness, and to cause us to repent, but he says still we have not obeyed his voice. And that's the awful thing.

Do you remember in Jeremiah we read that he said that after the 70 years the people would seek God. They would call upon him and then God would answer and God would restore them.

But instead, verse 13, they've gained no insight from God's truth. They have not turned from their iniquities. And so Daniel could have no confidence that God would even now bring them back out of exile.

Yes, God had judged Babylon as he promised, but would he also inevitably cause Israel to return? Well, not according to Moses.

[24 : 49] No. Not according to God's covenant. Listen to what God did say through Moses in Leviticus chapter 26. Don't look it up now. He's talking about the curses that God would visit on his people for disobedience in order to teach them to listen, in order to teach them to seek him again.

This is what he says. Leviticus 26, verse 18. If in spite of this you will not listen to me, then I will discipline you again sevenfold for your sins.

Verse 23. If by this discipline you are not turned to me, I myself will strike you sevenfold for your sins. Four times in that chapter God says that if his punishments don't bring Israel to repentance, he will multiply that punishment seven times.

And that's Daniel's great horror. He knows that they haven't learned their lesson. He knows that even the calamity of the exile, the worst thing under heaven that's ever happened to God's people, he says, verse 12, even that hasn't taught them the lesson.

It's a terrible realization you see that when you do get a grasp on the true gospel of the covenant God, of righteousness and holiness, and when you know that what is needed is a deep repentance, a total change of heart that's demanded, it's the very time that you understand just how impossible such a thing actually is for sinful human hearts.

[26 : 32] That's when you really begin to understand how utterly impossible it is to keep covenant with the covenant God. And that's what Daniel saw was true for all Israel.

He understood that 70 years must pass before the end of the desolation of Jerusalem, but how many more years? They've gone on sinning.

Would God really multiply his curse of exile seven times? That's what explains Daniel's sackcloth and ashes and fasting.

All he can do is appeal to God's mercy. Verse 3 says he turned to the Lord with pleas for sheer mercy. Verse 17, listen to your servant and to his pleas for mercy.

You see, God had said in Leviticus chapter 26, if they confess their iniquity, if their hearts are humbled, then I will remember my covenant.

[27 : 31] But Daniel knew they hadn't done that. They hadn't turned. Yet even then God had said this, yet I will not destroy them utterly and break my covenant with them, for I am the Lord their God.

I will, for their sake, remember my covenant with their forefathers. So Daniel knows that he cannot appeal to any obligation for God to act just because 70 years are coming up.

He can only appeal to his mercy. He can only appeal to the honor of God's name and that's what he does in verse 17. Verse 19, for your own sake, O Lord, make your face shine on your sanctuary. Verse 18, because this is the city that bears your name. Verse 19, O Lord, hear, O Lord, forgive, O Lord, pay attention and act. Delay not for your own sake, O my God, because your city and your people are called by your name.

Israel as a whole, you see, will never repent, will never be faithful to the covenant, so Daniel must stand in the breach and repent for them.

[28 : 47] Daniel must repent vicariously in their place for his people, pleading with God to vindicate his own name, to show his righteousness to the world in a great act of mercy.

one man in Israel who truly understands that God's salvation is first and foremost a vindication of his own righteousness, his own name, his own glory.

That's the heart of the gospel. That's what Paul says in Romans 3 and 26. God does it to show his righteousness, to show that he is just, as well as the justifier.

You see, Daniel in his burden for the glory of God and for the salvation and restoration of his people, such that he so deeply identifies with his people and wrestles with God for his salvation by sheer grace and mercy from God.

Daniel, in being like that, unknowingly displays a pattern of something far, far greater. something that because of his deep personal identification with God's covenant purposes, God is going to reveal to him now in a wonderful, wonderful way.

[30 : 09] So we read in verse 20 that his prayer is answered even while he's still praying. Gabriel comes from God to give him insight and understanding because he, Daniel, says verse 23, is greatly loved.

Because God has seen in Daniel's heart of prayer the reflection of his own heart of love and mercy for his people and his own desire for his holy name.

And because of that, Daniel is going to be allowed to see into God's heart. And Daniel is going to see the purposes of grace that God has for his people far beyond even what Daniel has seen and understood thus far.

And so the answer is revealed in verses 24 to 27. And he sees God's Christ unveiled. He's shown that all the answers to all the crises in the world and the sin of God's people and the personal need of every human being in rebellion against the covenant God can only be found ultimately in one place, in the true Redeemer for God's people, in the Anointed One, in the Christ.

And that's what these verses are all about. They've proved very difficult verses that provoked all sorts of weird and bizarre interpretations by people who are obsessed with end-time prophecies.

[31 : 44] But you know, I think that when we see them in their context as the answer to Daniel's covenant prayer, when we see them in the context of all the covenant promises of God that he's been speaking of here, then at least the big picture is surely clear enough, even if some of the details will elude us.

He is unveiling to Daniel God's ultimate answer to his people. And all of those answers lie in the coming of an Anointed One, a Messiah.

God is saying this to Daniel, Daniel, you've been interceding, seeking the answer for your people Israel. You've been seeking the restoration of my kingdom on earth. And for that, you're beloved in heaven, because you reflect my heart.

But Daniel, this, this is far, far bigger than even you understand. The 70 years of exile that you're thinking about, they're just a microcosm of the great thing I'm doing to restore the exile of this whole world from the problem of sin.

Sin is a far greater and deeper issue than even you understand. And so, yes, it is, in one sense, a horrifying message.

[33 : 02] The restoration promised by Jeremiah cannot come just now because your people have not repented. And there will indeed be a prolonging of the exile, just as Moses said, because Israel has not repented.

It won't be just 70 years. It will be 70 years times 7. 70 years. 70 years. Until that time comes when all things that are promised in the prophets will appear.

So it is a hard message. And yet also, it's a wonderful message because then, then at last I am going to deal with sin and transgression once and for all and forever.

It won't just be a returning to the land for my people. It will be a transformation of the universe, just like Isaiah promised. It will be the time of the new hearts for my people, just like Jeremiah promised. It will be the day when mourning is turned to joy forever. It will be the day when weeping is done away with. And there is reward. It will be the day when my servant David will sit as the anointed king on the throne over his people.

[34 : 23] It will be the day of a holy new covenant. Not like the covenant that Israel could never keep, as you know, but promised by Jeremiah, the law written on your very hearts.

The day when once and for all, as Jeremiah said, I will forgive their iniquity. I will remember their sin no more. That's what you're caught up in, Daniel.

And that's what you must understand. That's what you saw in those dreams that you've seen before now. That's how God's kingdom is going to take over the whole earth, as you saw in chapter 2.

That's how the triumph of the Son of Man and the saints will become the reality.

This extended period of Israel's spiritual exile, waiting for God's promises, seven times longer than even the Babylonian exile.

This is the womb in which my final answers to the prayers of all penitent sinners is being formed.

[35 : 30] It will be long, but that time will come. And it will come with the coming of an anointed one, who will be cut off, and who will make a strong covenant with many.

That's what I want you to understand, Daniel. That alone is the real ultimate answer to your prayer. Just look for a minute at the detail. Verse 24 gives us the big picture.

It tells us why this anointed one must come. Israel cannot keep faith with God's covenant. So after 77, 70 weeks of years, the perfection of God's time, he will usher in a new covenant.

Negatively, we're told three things. It will be an end of sin forever. It will finish transgressions. It will once and for all atone for iniquity, just as Jeremiah had promised.

And then positively, that will mean the ushering in of everlasting righteousness, sealing, fulfilling all prophecy and vision, everything that was promised, complete, and anointing, literally, a holy of holies, the place where God himself dwells in the midst of his people.

[36 : 46] No longer any barriers because of sin. God, Emmanuel, in the midst. That's why the anointed one must come. There's no other way to fulfill God's purpose, to answer your prayers.

Verse 25 next tells us how he will come. He will come about through first, yes, a physical return to the land. The city of Jerusalem will be rebuilt, but not with the glorious blessings that the prophets foresaw.

No, it will be built in troubled times, not peace. That's the first seven weeks of years. Then there would be 62 sevens, 62 weeks of years, a long silence of waiting.

And as Habakkuk had said earlier, the saints must live by faith, trusting that God had not forgotten about them, trusting that his promise would be fulfilled. And only then, after the 62 weeks of years, in the 70th week would come the great denouement of history.

At last, the days promised by Jeremiah would come. Verse 26 and 27 tell us what this Messiah, this anointed one, will do when he comes.

[38 : 10] And notice these two verses are parallel. They're saying the same thing. So verse 26, an anointed one is cut off and will have nothing, or will be cut off and not by himself, as one translation says.

It's a word used for a sacrificial death. But in doing so, verse 27, he shall make a strong covenant with many for one week. That is to the very end of that 70th week.

What did Jesus say in the upper room? This is the new covenant in my blood. What did he say as he ascended to heaven?

I am with you to the very end of the age. Second, verse 27, he shall put an end to sacrifice and offering, because he's dealt with sin forever.

And verse 26, an invading prince will destroy the city and the sanctuary. Well, we've just been in Matthew chapter 24. We're very familiar. It was the Romans who sacked Jerusalem in AD 70, but it was God who did it, because he in Christ put an end to the temple forever.

[39 : 21] And then, verse 26, to the very end, there will be war, desolations are decreed. Verse 27, abominations till the very end, till the final judgment on all enemies.

And all this will happen, as verse 27 says, literally, in the midst, halfway through the week, in the midst of the 70th week, which is the time that all the prophets pointed to the latter days, the day of the Lord, the day of the coming of the kingdom of God.

And at its heart, the very defining moment is the life and the death and the resurrection of an anointed one, who in his death deals with sins forever and ushers in instead an everlasting covenant of righteousness.

You see what God's saying to Daniel? He's saying to him that the answers to all of your prayers, the answers to the need for Israel's forgiveness and restoration.

And indeed, the answer to the sin and to the rebellion of the whole world against the covenant Lord is only to be found in an atonement for sin and in a fulfilling of all righteousness worked in the cross and in the resurrection of the anointed one, the Lord Jesus Christ.

[40 : 53] that's the answer. That's God's ultimate answer to every single human prayer.

Understanding God's covenant, you see, is ultimately impossible without the unveiling of God's Christ, his anointed one.

So whatever difficulties there may be in a passage like this, don't miss that. That's what matters. The anointed one is the answer to every crisis in history, every crisis in the nations, every problem in your life.

The answer lies in the revelation, the unveiling of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now this is a vision that Daniel receives.

The numbers surely are to be taken as round numbers, even as symbolic numbers, and yet, the simple fact is that some 70 or 80 years after these happenings in 445 BC, the decree did go out from Artaxerxes, Nehemiah chapter 1, to rebuild Jerusalem.

And it was indeed rebuilt in times of trouble within that 49 year period. And then there was a great and a long silence, a silence of God's word for more than 400 years, 62 weeks of years.

[42 : 19] Until approximately the early decades of what we now, of course, call the first century AD. And what do we find after all those silent years? What do we find in the opening chapters of the New Testament?

Well, of course, what we find is a faithful, godly remnant, no doubt like Daniel, studying the scriptures. People like Simeon and Anna, waiting, we are told, for the consolation of Israel, waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem.

We find men coming from the east, from Persia, from the land of the Chaldeans, also somehow knowing that a king is about to be born, a prince, an anointed one, in Jerusalem.

Perhaps they too have been perceiving in the books, maybe the books of Jeremiah, maybe even the books of Daniel himself, this prophecy. And they came. They came, faithful Jews, the righteous, living by faith, waiting, and pagan Gentiles, formerly separate, excluded from the covenants of promise.

but all alike, now at last, finding their answers in the Anointed One, Jesus Christ, the one who atones for iniquity, the one who brings everlasting righteousness to all who rejoice in him, and to all who come to him for mercy.

[43 : 52] And so it is today. These things are no mere history lesson, although indeed they are staggering merely as that.

But it's for you also, that's why it's in the Bible. When you grasp God's covenant gospel fulfilled in Jesus Christ, just like Daniel did, yes, it does floor you, doesn't it?

because it confronts you with the truth that we have not listened, we've not obeyed, we have rebelled in every way against the sovereign covenant God.

And even when we want to repent, because we understand that, we discover we're not able, we're helpless, we can't keep covenant with God. We have to say with Daniel, to you, our Lord belongs righteousness to us, open shame.

Like Daniel, we can only cry for mercy. We have to say, because of your great mercy, O Lord, hear us. O Lord, forgive us, delay not for your own sake, hear us because of your great name.

[45 : 09] And I don't know, maybe some of us tonight are feeling we need to pray in exactly that way. but you know, that is a prayer that the Lord God of heaven always answers in the same way.

He answers it with an unveiling of his anointed one, the Lord Jesus Christ. And he says to us, he alone is the answer that you need.

I've come to tell it to you, he says, because you are greatly beloved. That was his answer to Daniel.

His love and mercy, he revealed the gospel of his son, the Lord Jesus Christ. That's his answer to the whole world. For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believes in him should not perish, should not be flooded in iniquity and sin and shame forever, but should in him have everlasting life.

The Lord Jesus Christ, the anointed one, the Messiah, he is the ultimate answer to every human prayer. that means, friends, if you have a need tonight, however great or however small it is, God's answer to you is to unveil his Messiah, the Lord Jesus, and to point you to him and to say, there, there's the answer to all of your prayers.

[46 : 51] And he's the answer I've sent to you because you, you are greatly loved. That's the message of Daniel chapter 9.

Let's pray. Our Lord and God, we marvel at the wonder of your great and glorious gospel.

The word that Daniel saw in these amazing revelations so many hundreds of years before our Lord Jesus even came. And yet to us we have something even more marvelous.

We have in the words and the work of your Son, Jesus Christ, your final word, your final revelation, your final answer to every prayer of ours.

we pray that tonight you would unveil him afresh to us and may we rejoice in him and the marvelous things that he has done.

[48 : 01] For we ask it for your great name's sake. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.