

“It’s All Part of the Plan” // Daniel 10–12 // *Shining in Babylon* #9¹

[\(DANIEL BUMPER\)](#)

MUSIC / UPDATE FROM CAMP

Well, let me start with a BIG shoutout to our student teams, our volunteers, worship leaders, Pastor Curtis, and so many others who were part of a group of 600 students and leaders who went to our student camp in Ocoee, TN last weekend.

In fact, if you went on that trip--student or leader--would you please stand up? Get this: **71 students** made a first time profession of faith. (Not simply 71 hands raised; but 71 students who have taken the step to talk to a leader to indicate they are serious about this!) Isn't that amazing?

Here's just 1 story out of that 71: On Night 2 of camp, Pastor Curtis asked all the students to write down things that they were struggling with and maybe were ashamed of. The next night, he had the students raise their notebook if for the first time they recognized that Christ's blood had power to cover these sins. A student raised her notebook during this time and one of her friends saw her. But instead of waiting for an adult or leader to go to her, she pulled the girl aside that night and talked with her, prayed with her, and asked her if she wanted to receive Christ. Students leading students to Christ! **Praise God! Let's take a moment and thank God, and pray for our student teams as they are busy with follow-up.**

PRAYER

INTRODUCTION

In the 6th Harry Potter book there is a scene that might be one of the most confusing, bewildering moments I've ever encountered in literature. Now that all the movies and books are out it's hard to capture the shock of reading it live when it first came out. And I know some of you are like, "Wait, is this going to be a spoiler?" But I feel like this is now part of our shared cultural knowledge, like Darth Vader being Luke's father. And if you're like, WHAT????? I got nothing left to say.) Albus Dumbledore, the wise sage of the Harry Potter series-- Gandalf, the Godfather, Santa Claus and Nicolas Cage all wrapped up into one--has been severely weakened through a battle with evil Lord Voldemort's Death Eaters, and as the battle is ending he's barely still standing. Severus Snape, who is a teacher at Hogwarts castle and Harry's nemesis throughout the series, is standing in front of him with his wand. Dumbledore is completely vulnerable before him. You've always been a little unsure about Snape, not sure where his loyalties lie. Dumbledore makes eye contact with Severus and says "Severus, please" and Severus, instead of helping him, aims his wand at him and kills him with a curse. It seems like the ultimate act of betrayal, a moment when evil triumphs over good and all is lost.

¹ **Works Consulted:** Sidney Griedanus, *Preaching Christ from Daniel*; Tim Mackie, "Resurrection Hope - Faithfulness in Exile," sermon preached on August 19, 2017; Beth Moore, "Daniel | Session 10: Speechless," Session 11: "Kings in Succession," and "Session 12: "Unexpected Answers to Prayer," 2006; Mark Driscoll, "Kingdom Down #10 - How to be Godly and Healthy in Crisis," sermon Preached at The Trinity Church, March 22, 2020; Mark Driscoll, "Kingdom Down #12 - 5 Things to Look Forward to," sermon Preached at The Trinity Church, April 5, 2020.

In the next book, however, you learn that Prof Dumbledore had secretly confided to Snape that he was dying of a slow and irreversible curse, and that through his death he could grant to Harry a power that Harry couldn't have as long as Dumbledore was alive--a power that could defeat Voldemort. So, Dumbledore makes Snape promise that when the moment comes, Snape will let him die. And suddenly the meaning of Dumbledore's plea, "Severus, please," is reversed. Dumbledore's death was not an act of chaos or betrayal; it was all according to plan.²

Many great stories involve chapters where the characters go through something that, at the time, feels chaotic, tedious, or tragic, only to learn later that *it was all part of the plan*. I'm thinking of Daniel Larusso's training at the hands of Mr. Miyagi, Luke's exile in the Dagobah system, or Lightning McQueen getting stranded in Radiator Springs. Or we've even seen it in the weird strategies of some of our Olympic athletes this week. The commentator comes on and says, *"Now, just because we're in the 7th of 8 laps and our runner is still in 14th place doesn't mean she'll lose. No, this is all a part of her weird plan to sprint past everyone at the last second."* And sure enough, it happens. --- Just so you know, if I were an Olympian, I would never have the discipline to pursue that strategy. I'd go out hot and if I got ahead, I'd try to stay as far ahead of everyone as I could for as long as I could. Which is probably reason #424 why I never made it as an Olympic athlete. "And coming in last is the USA's J.D. Greear, who actually led for the first 3 seconds of the race."

The point is, a lot of things that turn out quite well have sad, confusing chapters, but they're all part of the plan. **That's Daniel's message to us in his last 3 chapters.** Things are dark, he says, and they are about to get darker. **But don't despair; it's all according to the plan.**

We've called this series, **"Shining in Babylon,"** because the book is about shining with the light of an uncommon hope in an increasingly dark world. **Make no mistake:** the backdrop of Daniel's book is somber and heavy: and the world, for the foreseeable future, is not going to get much better; it's going to get worse. Several prophetic visions in Daniel tell us that. I know everyone today wants to think that the world is gradually progressing toward a utopia where we have no more political or economic problems, where everyone lives in abundance and prosperity and is united in one global village, but that's not where Daniel says the world is going. Nor is it where Jesus in Matt 23-24 says the world is headed or what John tells us in Revelation is ahead. Bible writers consistently tell us that the world is going to get a lot worse before it gets any better.

So, be encouraged. Let's close in prayer.

No, if you have your Bibles, **open them to Daniel 10** and let's look at Daniel's bad news / good news conclusion to the book. These last 3 chapters are Daniel's record of his final visions. There's a lot of details in here, and I know some of you **totally want to geek out on those details,** and we'll touch on a few of them--but we're going to focus mostly on the bigger point: *WHY Daniel tells us these things.* I love what **Martin Luther** said about this passage: **"Daniel concludes the record of his terrifying visions and dreams on a note of joy,**

² I owe this great little illustration to Rebecca McLaughlin, "4 Things Christians Much Reclaim," May 31, 2019. <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/podcasts/tgc-podcast/4-things-christians-must-reclaim/>

pointing to the coming of Christ's eternal reign of glory... Whoever wants to study them profitably dare not focus his attention on the details of the visions and dreams, but seek comfort in the Savior Jesus Christ whom they portray and in the deliverance he brings from sin and its misery."³ **Martin Luther**

You see, if you listen really closely, in the details of these prophecies you'll hear the footsteps of Jesus as he begins to run through the corridors of history, coming first to a manger in Bethlehem and ultimately to the throne of the Ancient of Days.

Bad news first--Daniel 10 **10:1** In the third year of King Cyrus of Persia, a message was revealed to Daniel... and then I, Daniel, mourned for three full weeks. The message was so heavy that Daniel mourned for 3 weeks. During that time **3 I didn't eat any rich food, no meat or wine entered my mouth, and I didn't put any oil on my body.** You know it's bad when you're too overwhelmed even to rub in your essential oils; Daniel can't even make it across the room to flip on his lavender diffuser.

So, vs. 4, an angel comes to comfort him; he puts a little dab of Chamomile behind his ear, flips on the lavender diffuser, and begins to explain the meaning of his vision to him.

A lot of things in this second vision of Daniel overlap with the previous visions we have studied in Daniel. **In fact, all the visions and dreams of Daniel, whether given to the pagan kings or Daniel,** are about a series of world kingdoms that will arise, each one oppressive and hostile to the gospel. After **Babylon came Persia**; after Persia, Greece; after Greece, Rome; and then after Rome, a final kingdom headed by the Antichrist.

Daniel explains to us that certain elements of the first few kingdoms give us a foretaste of what the final kingdom of the Antichrist will be like.

- **For example, in chapters 7 and 8, we saw that Daniel** prophesied that a ruthless king would arise out of Greece who would be particularly hostile toward God's people. That prophecy was fulfilled about 300 years later by Antiochus Epiphanes, who came to power around 160 B.C. And I showed you when we studied Daniel 7-8 that, just like Daniel prophesied, he was particularly blasphemous toward God and vicious toward God's people. He's been called the Hitler of the OT. He slaughtered, in cold blood, tens of thousands of Jewish men, women and children, and desecrated the Temple by sacrificing pigs on their altar and then forcing the Jews to eat pig flesh. He then committed what Bible writers call the abomination of desolations by setting up a statue of himself in the Holy of Holies and making the Jews bow down to it. (You can read all about this, btw, in 1 and 2 Maccabees, which are historical books written by Jews who lived before Christ's first coming. These books contain a lot of helpful historical information, although they aren't Scripture.)
- **Daniel explains that Antiochus Epiphanes was a type--a prefiguring--**of a future world king who will be everything Antiochus was, but much worse--the Antichrist.

³ Martin Luther, *Sämtliche Schriften* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1880)

I share that because the first part of Daniel 10 is again about Antiochus Epihanes, and **Daniel is describing the devastation Antiochus is going bring** to the Jews, and then suddenly, in vs. 36, Daniel switches from talking about Antiochus to prophesying about a future King, a King way into the future, a “King of the North”--the Antichrist. The switch happens in vs. 36, take a look: 36 “... Then (this) **the king will do whatever he wants. He will exalt and magnify himself above every god, and he will say outrageous things against the God of gods. He will be successful until the time of wrath is completed, because what has been decreed will be accomplished. 37 He will not show regard for... any other god, because he will magnify himself above all. 38 Instead, he will honor a god of fortresses—39 He will deal with the strongest fortresses with the help of a foreign god.** (Remember how I showed you in Daniel 7 that Daniel says the Antichrist has the eyes of a man but when you look at them you see something at work behind them that is NOT human--that’s what Daniel is saying again here--the Antichrist is empowered by a foreign god, namely Satan himself. And...). **He will greatly honor those who acknowledge him, making them rulers over many and distributing land as a reward.**

In chapters 7–8 Daniel said 3 things would characterize the rule of the Antichrist, and we see echoes of those here in these verses. Remember, we saw that:

- **He “devours much flesh.” (7:25)** His aim is to destroy. Hatred, prejudice, genocide, slavery, human trafficking, the commoditizing of the vulnerable, abortion, militarism--these are all tools in his arsenal. Secondly,
- **He doubts God’s word. (8:25)** He publicly undermines what Scripture teaches about things like humanity, sexuality, and salvation--and he even uses supernatural power to deceive them into believing it. Third,
- **He exalts man. (8:25)** The first one he exalts is himself, but he also tries to get people to do the same with themselves: to focus on themselves and glory in their capabilities and accomplishments.

Now, what we saw in chapter 7, and this is really important, is that even though the Antichrist himself is not here yet, the spirit of Antichrist is: **1 John 2:18 “Children, it is (already!) the last hour. And as you have heard that Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come.”**

We can see the spirit of Antichrist at work in our world all around us:

- **Devouring flesh.** The last 100 years have been the bloodiest century in all of human history; more people have been killed by genocide and war and abortion than any other century in history. He’s at work in your life to destroy your flesh. Through alcoholism and addictions and pornography and materialism and narcissism he is working to erode and destroy the foundation of everything good. Some of you are experiencing that right now.
- **He’s working to make you doubt God’s word.** It’s why I told you that some of you are like, “*Oh, I’m just QUESTIONING what the Bible says about sexuality. I’m just trying to find myself.*” And I’m like, “No, you’re not, you’re dabbling with Hell.” Our Enemy begins every attack by making you question God’s word.⁴
- **He’s at work trying to get you to exalt yourself.** To think that your agenda is the most important. That you know best. Through things as benign as Facebook and Twitter and Instagram reels and consumer-driven commercials and leadership seminars he’s trying to get you to fixate on yourself. He whispers in your ear

⁴ Head nod in some of these applications to Mark Driscoll

that you know what's best for your life; that no one else is looking out for you so you'd better; that you can only be happy when your kingdom comes and your will is done.

Make no mistake about it, my friend: The spirit of Antichrist is already here! And Daniel tells us that he employs the powers of the state and machines of culture and media to promote those things. He is basically in control of those things. He's the prince of the power of the air; the spirit at work in the unbelieving world. He's already here.

And the bad news is that things are only going to get worse as the Antichrist's coming nears: Daniel says at the beginning of chapter 12 about the end: "There will be a time of distress such as never has occurred since nations came into being until that time." (12:1)

- **Critics often say that evangelical Christians have a persecution complex**--that we always imagine everyone is out to get us, and, honestly, that's a valid critique--we can be a little paranoid and overly sensitive.
- But. But. We might be like that sometimes because we understand who is at work in the world and what his game is. Daniel tells us. Listen, let's be under no illusions: Persecution against Christians in the world is as high as it has ever been and it will likely only get worse. Open Doors, a ministry that helps the persecuted church around the world, tells us that today over 340 million Christians live in places where they experience high levels of persecution. That's the highest in history. Last year, almost 5000 believers were martyred BECAUSE OF their faith. 5000! Over 4000 Christian churches were burned. Another 4000 Christians were imprisoned, many without trial, because of their faith.⁵
- And even in our own country, where we supposedly have a guaranteed freedom of religion, we're seeing the steady eroding of those things. Already in some places, if you hold to what Scripture teaches about sexuality, or gender, or the way of salvation, you can be labeled as a bigot and cancelled or fired.
- **Dr. George Yancey, an AA professor** who has taught here at our church about overcoming racial strife, has written a new book on anti-Christian discrimination in America. He points out that 32 percent of all Americans identify (theologically) conservative Christians as their least favorite group in society, liking them "significantly less" than other groups. By comparison, only 31% identified Muslims that way. "So it's fair, Dr. Yancey says, to say that if we're concerned about anti-Muslim prejudice, and we should be, we should also at least be aware of anti-Christian prejudice." Dr. Yancey documents, with a **pretty impressive compilation of statistics**, that being a professing Christian will hurt you significantly in the academic world, the journalistic world, the political world, the artistic world, the medical world and, increasingly, even the business world.⁶

So yes, we can be a little paranoid, but you'll forgive me if we see a trajectory in these things that Daniel warns us about. And listen, I don't want to contribute to conspiracy theories--in fact, I'd say the spirit of the enemy is every bit as much at work in QAnon as he is in the ACLU. He's at work in every culture-shaping institution seeking to foster hate, doubt God's word, and exalt man.

⁵<https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.opendoorsusa.org/christian-persecution/&sa=D&source=editors&ust=1627316212519000&usg=AOvVaw0VlcT9ERIDcdXnfiueW6lc>

⁶<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/anti-christian-discrimination-america/>

Make no mistake, we are sending our kids out into a hostile world and we need to prepare them for that. We can't be content with a thin layer of religiosity, kids who don't cuss, don't have sex and know how to vote. We need to teach them that Jesus is worth living and dying for, and though the world may take everything from them for him, that he's worth it.

I read all this and I say, "No wonder Daniel was grieving!" What a dark view of the future. And we should grieve, too. The world, generally speaking, is a tragic place where God's people suffer and are sometimes tortured and slain again and again and it will only get worse. "They hated me, they'll hate you," Jesus said in John 15, and "Be assured, in this world you will have tribulation." Sometimes in church we're in such a hurry to rejoice that we overlook the grief that some people are feeling. Some of YOU, coming in this weekend, are facing pressure at your job; you are suffering from the scorn of friends for the sake of godliness. Or maybe you are just suffering. The world can be a dark place, and we want to grieve with you.

You say, "So what is the good news?" I thought you'd never ask! *Three elements:*

1. The Suffering is Limited

What stands out to me as I read this is how in control God seems to be of all of it. Daniel drops little hints along the way. Look at 11:36, for example, where, talking about the Antichrist, Daniel says: **He will be successful until the time of wrath is completed, because what has been decreed will be accomplished. (11:36).** "The TIME of wrath is COMPLETED; what HAS BEEN DECREED is accomplished." This is all part of the plan. Though persecution is real, and painful, it has all been decreed by God, the time has been set, and not an ounce more of it comes than God has intended. Like that terrible scene with Snape and Dumbledore. It looks bad, but it's all according to the plan, and one day the meaning of these tragic events will be reversed.

And one of my favorite aspects of Daniel is how specific God is about how long it will last. BTW, if you've never seen this, it will blow your mind. Go back to chapter 9, and tighten your belt and put on your nerd glasses:

24 Seventy weeks are decreed about your people and your holy city—to bring the rebellion to an end, to put a stop to sin, to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy place.

A "week" in the Jewish language means a period of 7. It could be 7 days, or it could mean, as it does here, 7 years. A week of years. How many weeks of 7 years are prophesied? 70. That's 490 years. **70x7=490 years.**

And what happens at the end of that 70 weeks of years? "Rebellion will be brought to an end and a stop will be put to sin; iniquity will be atoned for; everlasting righteousness will be brought in; all biblical prophecy will be fulfilled, and the most holy place will be restored."

“And when do those 490 weeks start?” you ask. Great question. **25 Know and understand this: From the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until an Anointed One, the ruler, will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks. It will be rebuilt with a plaza and a moat, but in difficult times.**

The clock starts ticking at **“the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem.”** That decree was given by King Artaxerxes of Persia around 445 B.C. (you can read about the event in Nehemiah 2:1–8). From that date there will be **seven weeks** and **sixty-two weeks**. Seven weeks is 49 years, which is roughly how long it took to rebuild Jerusalem; then sixty-two more seven-year periods pass after that.

Now, watch this: **26 After those sixty-two weeks** (plus the first 7) **the Anointed One will be cut off...** So, 7 weeks and 62 weeks = 69 weeks, and then the Anointed one will be cut off. 69 weeks of years (**$69 \times 7 = 483$ years**). Using the Jewish custom of a 360-day year, 483 years after 445 B.C. (when Artaxerxes' issued the decree to rebuild Jerusalem) would land us at A.D. 32 (**$445 \text{ B.C.} - 483 (360\text{-day}) \text{ years} = 32 \text{ A.D.}$**), the date Jesus was crucified. That's when "the Anointed One was cut off." God gave to Daniel the date that Jesus would die 480 some years before it happened.

A God who can prophesy the details of something like that is in control of all of it, wouldn't you agree? **IT'S ALL PART OF THE PLAN.**

26 Then, The people of the coming ruler will destroy the city and the sanctuary. (That happened in 70 A.D. btw, when the Romans re-destroyed the Temple and Jerusalem. And then, watch this--) **27 He will make a firm covenant with many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and offering. And the abomination of desolation will occur... “**

After the Anointed One--another way of saying that is “Messiah”--is cut off, there is one more “week” of 7 years. Now, there's two ways you could interpret this. One is that this last week of years are not literal years: That week represents the final chapter of human history, which we are in now, that has just stretched out for a long time.

The second way to interpret this, and I believe the correct way, is that after the Messiah was cut off, the timeline was paused, and we are now in a parenthetical period called “the church age,” where God has shifted the focus of his activity away from the nation of Israel to the church, which is comprised mostly of Gentiles (or non-Jews). But at the end of time, when the Antichrist officially makes his debut, the focus will re-shift to Israel, and we'll enter into that last 70th week, a 7 year period we call “the Tribulation.” The Tribulation of the book of Revelation is about Daniel's 70th week.

Here's why I strongly prefer that second interpretation:

- First, the first 69 weeks were literal. It was roughly 483, 360-day years to when Jesus died. So why switch the last 7 and make them an elastic metaphor?
- Second, as I noted, the book of Revelation is all about this 70th week and Revelation strongly implies this is something in the future and not something we're living in now. There's a few commentators that try to

argue we are living in the midst of Revelation now, but I just don't find their reasoning that compelling. I could be wrong, but it just doesn't seem to me to be written that way.

- Third, vs. 24 says that **"Seventy weeks are decreed about your people and your holy city..."** For Daniel, "your people" would be the Jews and "your city" would be Jerusalem. These 70 weeks focus on ISRAEL. Well, right now, as I've said, the focus of God's work is in the church, which is mostly made up of Gentiles (or, non-Jews). In fact, Paul says in Romans 9–11 that God has temporarily set aside his focus on Israel to build the church among the Gentiles, but one day in the future, Paul says, God will resume his focus on Israel and when he does, more people will get saved than any previous chapter in human history. It's gonna be awesome. But the point is, Daniel says these 70 weeks are about Israel. We live in an ellipses right now. And there's another really terrible week coming.

You say, "Pastor J.D., when do we get to the encouraging part?" Listen! The encouragement is in that word "decreed." If God decrees all this with this amount of specificity, doesn't that show us that he's in charge of all of it? And that means that what looks to us like bad news might one day be reversed to be GOOD NEWS? SNAPE drops Dumbledore. It's OK! It's all part of the plan!

And that means when something feels dark and chaotic to me right now, I can still rest in it, because (say it with me) **IT'S ALL PART OF THE PLAN.** And one day the terrible meaning of it will be reversed. It's not Dumbledore's tragic death but part of his ultimate victory!

I heard a man named **Steve Saint speak at a Desiring God Conference in 2005.**⁷ Steve was the son of Nate Saint, one of the 5 young missionaries brutally and tragically speared to death on the beaches of Ecuador in the **1950's**. They had been trying to establish contact with this isolated tribe called the Aucas, in order to bring food, supplies and eventually the gospel to them. But on January 8, 1956, they were deceived by the tribe and murdered by them. Steve was the son of one of these slain missionaries, and at this Desiring God conference, some 50 years later, he recounted how as a young boy he struggled with why God had ALLOWED that to happen. But now, he said, he realized that God didn't just allow it to happen, God planned it. Let that sink in. He planned it. And, Steve said, 50 years later, we see that God used the incident to pave the way for that tribe of Aucas to be saved. After the murder the wives of these 5 men went back to the tribe; the tribe was so moved by their generosity and forgiveness that peace was established, and eventually nearly the whole tribe came to faith. Several years later, in fact, Steve got to baptize the very man, Mincaye, who had put a spear into his father's heart. And that man, Steve said at this conference, "became like the grandfather of my kids, a beloved member of my family." Then Steve said this, one of the most powerful statements I've ever heard: **"Why is it that we want every chapter to be good when God promises only that in the last chapter he will make all the other chapters make sense?"**

It's all part of the plan. I know it's hard to believe in your life, but it's all part of the plan.

The suffering is limited. Here's the second element of hope. These are much quicker:

⁷ Steve Saint, October 8, 2005, "Sovereignty, Suffering, and the Work of Missions"

2. The Resurrection is Eternal

After Daniel tells us about this time of untold suffering (“There will be a time of distress such as never has occurred since nations came into being until that time,”) he says, “But at that time all your people who are found written in the book will escape. ² Many who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake, some to eternal life, and some to disgrace and eternal contempt. (Dan 12:2)

Just as a time of persecution is decreed, so is a resurrection, and as certain and real as our suffering, so is our resurrection. The Ancient of Days, who sits on his throne of wheels, saying, “I have decreed it all,” sits above it all and will restore it all. He had the first word and he’ll have the last.

Our hope, friend, is not in success in this life--perfect marriages, prosperous businesses, or political power. Our hope is in the resurrection of the dead; our hope is in the certainty that Satan and sin and death are defeated; and that just as hardship and persecution have been “decreed;” so is the eternal reign of the Anointed One, Jesus, who will renew and restore all things and let us rule with him forever.

MUSIC

But note, friend, that not everyone participates in this blessing. **Vs. 2** says “MANY who sleep in the dust will awake.” “Many” means “not all.” Vs 1 says it is ONLY those who are found *“written in the book will escape.”* **The Book of Life--the most important book in history**, contains a list of all those and only those who have repented of their sins and trusted Jesus as Savior.

Is your name in there--in this book? If we looked over the names, would YOURS be in there? One of the WORST feelings in the world to me is when I show up at some hotel late at night to check-in after travelling all day, and I give my name, “Greear,” expecting them to say, “Mr. Greear, your room is ready,” only to have the hotel clerk say, “I’m sorry, sir, your name is not on the reservation list.” And let me tell you, I stand there and argue like there’s no tomorrow. “*Well, I know I told my assistant to make this reservation,*” but inside I’m thinking, “Did I? Did I drop the ball?” (BTW, my assistant Aly will want me to point out here that this has happened only once, maybe twice in all the many years she’s worked for me.)

But how tragic to find out on the most important list ever compiled that your name is NOT on it?

And whose names are in this book? Is it church members? Is it people who lived mostly good lives? No. It’s those who have repented of their sins and surrendered control of their lives to Jesus and trusted in him as their only hope of salvation. Those who have been born again. Has there been a time when you were born again?

Salvation is a gift offered freely to all who will receive it; no matter who you are or what you’ve done, Jesus’ death has paid for your sin--atoned for it, covered it forever; but you have to receive it. It’s not yours until you

claim it. I read this week that last year **Americans left over \$3 billion** unclaimed in gift cards. \$3 billion! Just wasted. Never claimed. This offer is worth far more to you than 3 billion. It's the price of your soul. Don't leave it unclaimed!

The suffering is limited; the resurrection is eternal. Thirdly,

3. **The Power is Available**

In this in-between time, between Daniel's 69th and 70th week, Jesus has inaugurated something new. Daniel alludes to it in vs. 3: **And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever."** Daniel 12:3

Jesus talked about it this way: "All authority is given to me in heaven and earth, so go preach the gospel and make disciples of all the nations."

The power and authority of the kingdom is now here, upon us, to preach the gospel and make disciples. IOW, turn many to righteousness. The full measure of the Kingdom may be coming in the future, but the power is here now. Repeatedly throughout the Gospels, Jesus kept telling people, "You keep looking for the Kingdom of God as if it's only something coming in the future. But it's standing right in front of you. It's here. I'm it."⁸

And in the Holy Spirit, his power is in us. So, in the midst of a dark world ruled by the spirit of antichrist, we are to set up little outposts of the Kingdom, like bright stars dotted on an ink-black-sky landscape. With the power of the Kingdom, we are to preach the gospel that sets people free from sin and then work with our hands to restore justice, lift others out of poverty, break chains of oppression and promote peace. Our lives should give glimpses of that coming Kingdom, whose power is here at work in us now in the Holy Spirit. This is what it means to **shine in Babylon**: **"And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever."** Daniel 12:3

That's who we are as a church and who God has called us to be. So here's the question: ***Are you ready to be part of this movement?***

PRAYER

I have **2 invitations** for you:

- Get saved: want your name written in the Book of Life? Pray this... raise your hand. **Text Ready to 33933**
- Get involved (your campus pastor will give you the action step here in a moment). But tell God right now you're ready to shine in Babylon

⁸ Luke 17:21; Mark 1:15