

Daniel Chapter 12:3-13

Prophecies of the Tribulation and the Resurrection

This week we finish off going through the book of Daniel. As an overview, the first 6 chapters are an overview of the life and times of Daniel.

Chapter 1 - Daniel's decision to remain pure and not eat the kings meat and wine.

Chapter 2 - Nebuchadnezzar's dream - the statue.

Gold head - Babylonian Empire

Chest and arms of silver - Med and Persian Empire

Belly and thighs of bronze - Grecian Empire

Legs of iron - Roman Empire

Feet of iron and clay - Revived Roman Empire lead by 10 kings or leaders. It is during their reign at the time of the 7 year tribulation period that Jesus comes back.

Stone cut without hands that becomes a great mountain and fills the whole earth and completely destroys the other kingdoms - the end of human government and the start of the physical kingdom of God on earth. Jesus returns and rules and reigns on the earth for a thousand years, followed by eternity.

Daniel 2:43-44 - As you saw iron mixed with ceramic clay, they will mingle with the seed of men; but they will not adhere to one another, just as iron does not mix with clay. And in the **days of these kings** the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever.

Daniel 7:24-27

²⁴ **The ten horns are ten kings**

Who shall arise from this kingdom.

And another shall rise after them;

He shall be different from the first ones,

And shall subdue three kings.

²⁵ He shall speak pompous words against the Most High,

Shall persecute the saints of the Most High,

And shall intend to change times and law.

Then the saints shall be given into his hand

For a time and times and half a time.

²⁵ 'But the court shall be seated,

And they shall take away his dominion,

To consume and destroy it forever.

²⁷ Then the kingdom and dominion,

And the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven,

Shall be given to the people, the saints of the Most High.

His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,

And all dominions shall serve and obey Him.'

It should be clear that these 10 kings are contemporaneous, that is, they are all living at the same time, because the Antichrist replaces 3 of them. Again, these are the 10 minus 3 kings or leaders, along with the Antichrist who will be ruling the earth and then defeated when Jesus comes back.

Chapter 3 - Nebuchadnezzar's image of gold and Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego being thrown into the fiery furnace. But God saves them and gets much glory.

Chapter 4 - Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the tree being cut down and his humiliation and restoration - a beautiful picture of just how far God will go to save someone, and how easy it is for a person's pride to keep them from being saved.

Chapter 5 - Belshazzar's Feast and the writing on the wall - on the night that the Medes and Persians defeated Babylon.

Chapter 6 - The plot against Daniel by the leaders of the Medes and Persians, resulting in Daniel being thrown into the lions den. But God saves Daniel and gets much glory.

Chapter 7 - Daniel's first vision - the four beasts which correspond to the four empires depicted by the statue in Chapter 2. Also, we get a birds eye view of what will happen in heaven in the end times as God's court is set up and the Father's fiery judgement is meted or poured out on the earth with the final result being that all the nations are given to Jesus to rule and reign. Daniel received the vision in the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon.

Chapter 8 - Daniel's second vision - vision of the ram and the goat. More details about the Mede and Persian empire and the Grecian Empire, with the prediction of Antiochus Epiphanes stopping the daily sacrifices and the restoration of them after 2300 evenings and mornings. Daniel received the vision in the third year of Belshazzar king of Babylon.

Chapter 9 - Daniel's prayer for the people, based on the 70 year prophecy in Jeremiah, which is answered by the incredible 70 weeks prophecy concerning the nation of Israel. Happens during the first year of Darius the Mede.

Chapters 10 to 12 - Daniel's third vision, which he received during the 3rd year of Cyrus king of Persia. It can be broken down into three parts:

- > Chapter 10 - insight to spiritual warfare, the battle between angels and demons
- > Chapter 11:1-34 incredibly detailed prophecy of the life and times, battles and intrigues of the northern and southern Grecian sub empires, finishing with Antiochus Epiphanes and the abomination of desolation, that is, when he defiles the temple and stops the daily sacrifices.
- > Chapter 11:36-12:13 What it will be like during the last half of the tribulation period, as well as insight into the two distinct resurrections - the just and the unjust.

We are about halfway through the last section and will start our study at chapter 12 verse 3 today, but will start reading at verse 1 of chapter 12 to get the context.

Prophecy of the End Time

- 12** "At that time Michael shall stand up,
The great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people;
And there shall be a time of trouble,
Such as never was since there was a nation,
Even to that time.
And at that time your people shall be delivered,
Every one who is found written in the book.
- ² And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake,
Some to everlasting life,
Some to shame and everlasting contempt.

3 Those who are wise shall shine
Like the brightness of the firmament,
And those who turn many to righteousness
Like the stars forever and ever.

4 “But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end; many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase.”

5 Then I, Daniel, looked; and there stood two others, one on this riverbank and the other on that riverbank. 6 And one said to the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, “How long shall the fulfillment of these wonders be?”

7 Then I heard the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand to heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever, that it shall be for a time, times, and half a time; and when the power of the holy people has been completely shattered, all these things shall be finished.

8 Although I heard, I did not understand. Then I said, “My lord, what shall be the end of these things?”

9 And he said, “Go your way, Daniel, for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end. 10 Many shall be purified, made white, and refined, but the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand. 11 “And from the time that the daily sacrifice is taken away, and the abomination of desolation is set up, there shall be one thousand two hundred and ninety days. 12 Blessed is he who waits, and comes to the one thousand three hundred and thirty-five days.

13 “But you, go your way till the end; for you shall rest, and will arise to your inheritance at the end of the days.

2. A promise for the righteous (3)

3 **Those who are wise shall shine
Like the brightness of the firmament,
And those who turn many to righteousness
Like the stars forever and ever.**

a. **Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament:** Those who live in God’s wisdom will **shine**. Despite the entire calamity, all the difficulty coming upon Israel, God has **those who are wise**, and they **will shine**.

b. **And those who turn many to righteousness like the stars:** Here, the wise among God’s people are those who **turn many to righteousness**.

All God’s people are like **stars** in the sense that they radiate light and help others to see and find their way. But certainly, those **who turn many to righteousness** shine even more brightly, helping even more people to see the light and find their way.

c. **Forever and ever:** The brightness of God’s wise ones, and those who **turn many to righteousness**, will last forever. It isn’t fading. It endures, when so many other things that we put our effort into, even if they succeed, give only a temporary “shine.” It is worth it to invest our lives into the things that last **forever and ever**.

Remember the poem: “Only one life, will soon be past, only what’s done for Christ will last.”

C. Conclusion of the book [12:4–13]

1. Instructions to seal the book (4)

4 “But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end; many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase.”

v 4 **Shut up the words, and seal the book:** To **shut up the words** implied that the words should be kept safely until the time when they were needed. **Seal the book** has the double sense of authenticating the message and preserving it.

v 4 **Until the time of the end:** Daniel’s prophecy certainly was of some value in his own day. But there would come a day, **the time of the end**, when his prophecy would be even more important. Therefore, it was important to **shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end**.

v 4 **Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase:** Here, Daniel describes a characteristic of **the time of the end**. Many take this prediction as being fulfilled in the travel (**run to and fro**) and information explosions (**knowledge shall increase**) of our modern age. However, there is another way of looking at the phrase: **“Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase.”** The idea is that people would run about trying to find answers to important questions, especially in reference to future events. Whether or not physical wandering and travel is involved, the implication is that attempts to understand the truth will require considerable effort.

v 4 **Shut up the words, and seal the book:** Daniel has revealed enough to us so that the book really can be sealed. From Daniel 11:36 to Daniel 12:3, we see:

- A world ruler, utterly opposed to God
- A world religion, based on the abomination of desolation
- A world war, which defeats the ruler
- A time of great tribulation for Israel lasting three and one-half years
- Deliverance for the people of God after the tribulation
- Resurrection and judgment
- The reward of the righteous

2. How long will the time of trouble be? (5–7)

5 Then I, Daniel, looked; and there stood two others, one on this riverbank and the other on that riverbank. 6 And one said to the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, “How long shall the fulfillment of these wonders be?”

7 Then I heard the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand to heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever, that it shall be for a time, times, and half a time; and when the power of the holy people has been completely shattered, all these things shall be finished.

v 5 **Two others, one on this riverbank and the other on that riverbank:** Daniel is back to the **riverbank** first mentioned in Daniel 10:4. The visions of Daniel 10 through 12 all took place as Daniel stood at this **riverbank**.

v 6 **One said to the man clothed in linen ... “How long shall the fulfillment of these wonders be?”** Most likely, these other men on the riverbank were angels. One angel asked the other, not for the benefit of the angel, but for Daniel’s benefit and our benefit.

v 7 **Held up his right hand and his left hand to heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever:** In a solemn oath, one angel announced that the time of trouble would last three and one-half years (**a time, times, and half a time**).

The prediction was *emphasised* by the solemn oath, and by the miracle that accompanied the words: **who was above the waters in the river**. The angel “walked on water” when he told the other angel and Daniel that these things would happen within a three and one half year period.

v 7 **A time, times, and half a time:** This three and one-half year period is well known in other passages of Biblical prophecy.

- Daniel 7:25 described it as the period that saints are given into Antichrist's hands.
- Daniel 9:27 described it as the period between the breaking of Antichrist's covenant with Israel, the erection of the abomination of desolation, and the establishment of Jesus' kingdom.
- Daniel 12:7 described it as the duration of "the time of trouble" for Israel.
- Revelation 11:2 described it as the period that the holy city will be tread underfoot by Gentiles.
- Revelation 11:3 described it as the period of ministry for the two witnesses (first half of the seven years).
- Revelation 12:6 and 12:14 described it as the period that Israel (perhaps only its remnant) is preserved by God in the wilderness.
- Revelation 13:5 describe it as the duration of Antichrist's authority to rule, persecute and blaspheme.

Taking all these together, we are obviously dealing with the last half of Daniel's seventieth week (the Great Tribulation).

v 7 **When the power of the holy people has been completely shattered, all these things shall be finished:** The people of Israel will seem completely crushed as these things end, but at that time, the Messiah—upon whom they will trust before He returns—will return to rescue them.

3. Daniel's last question: how will it all turn out? (8)

⁸ Although I heard, I did not understand. Then I said, "My lord, what shall be the end of these things?"

a. **Although I heard, I did not understand:** This comforts us. Daniel didn't understand it all either, even though he heard it first hand.

b. **What shall be the end of these things?** Perhaps Daniel asked this question because he was anxious, as he understood just how terrible the time of trouble would be.

4. Answer: God will purify and preserve His people, and has set a limit of days to the time of trouble (9–13)

⁹ And he said, "Go your way, Daniel, for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end. ¹⁰ Many shall be purified, made white, and refined, but the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand. ¹¹ "And from the time that the daily sacrifice is taken away, and the abomination of desolation is set up, there shall be one thousand two hundred and ninety days. ¹² Blessed is he who waits, and comes to the one thousand three hundred and thirty-five days.

¹³ "But you, go your way till the end; for you shall rest, and will arise to your inheritance at the end of the days.

v 9 **Go your way, Daniel:** The command to **go your way** is literally merely "to go" but it is not meant physically. The angel told Daniel to make a mental departure from the questioning. More details would be revealed later; but Daniel must be content with what God has revealed so far.

v 9 **For the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end:** Daniel must make a *mental* departure from his questioning, because the revealing of these things will not come **till the time of the end**. Until then, there is a sense in which these prophecies **are closed up and sealed**.

We shouldn't think there was no instruction, no blessing, or no benefit in these words for any generation until the **time of the end**. But the meaning of these prophecies would be *less* mysterious or more easily understood at **the time of the end**.

"Daniel, go your way. Seal up this prophecy. The wicked will keep on behaving wickedly. The righteous will behave rightly. And the wise will understand at the right time. But Daniel, shut the book. It's not for your day," the angel said.

Now, compare this with what John was told concerning the revelation he received...

Revelation 22:10 - And he said to me, "Do not seal the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand, (or the time is near)."

Daniel was told to seal the book while John was told not to seal the book. Why? We live in a day when Daniel is no longer an impossible book to understand because so much of it has already come to pass — the first coming of Christ is history and the second coming of Christ is imminent. As I was saying previously, the fulfilment of so many of the prophecies gives us much greater understanding of prophecy.

This is important: the Book of Revelation is opened to us because the Book of Daniel provides the key. Without the seventy sevens prophecy, Revelation would be very hard to understand. Why seven years, why all the judgements? But Daniel sets the stage and gives us the big picture or framework that the information given in Revelation fits into. Now we are encouraged to study prophecy with our motive being that we are seeking our Lord's return, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ (Titus 2:13)

v 10 **Many shall be purified, made white, and refined:** This is another prediction for what was future to Daniel, because this degree of purification is only possible *after* the finished work of Jesus on the cross.

v 10 **But the wicked shall do wickedly:** Most specifically, we would say that this prediction has to do with the end times, when wickedness will abound more than ever (as in the Antichrist and his government), but an innumerable multitude will also be saved (as is seen in Revelation 7:9–10).

v 11 **And from the time that the daily sacrifice is taken away, and the abomination of desolation is set up, there shall be one thousand two hundred and ninety days:** This was an amazingly specific prophecy. Daniel said that from the time of the **abomination of desolation**, you can simply start marking off your calendar to the final consummation of all things, 1,290 days later. This is why Jesus pointed to Daniel's prophecy of the abomination of desolation as *the sign* that would mark the immediacy of His return (Matthew 24:15).

v 12 **Blessed is he who waits, and comes to the one thousand three hundred and thirty-five days:**

So why these different number of days. The second half of the tribulation is only 1260 days, or three and a half years. So what is the extra time for.

We could say that at the end of the 1,260 days (3 1/2 years) is when Jesus returns and steps down on the mount of Olives which splits in two (Zechariah 13:4).

At the end of the 1,290 days (30 days later), Jesus' government is officially installed, the Millennial Temple built and dedicated, and the world's remaining population gathered to Israel.

At the end of the 1,335 days (another 45 days later) the nations are judged (Matthew 25:31–46 - sheep and goat judgement).

Matthew 25:31-46

³¹ “When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. ³² All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. ³³ And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. ³⁴ Then the King will say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: ³⁵ for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; ³⁶ I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.’

³⁷ “Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? ³⁸ When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? ³⁹ Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’ ⁴⁰ And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.’

⁴¹ “Then He will also say to those on the left hand, ‘Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: ⁴² for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; ⁴³ I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.’

⁴⁴ “Then they also will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?’ ⁴⁵ Then He will answer them, saying, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.’ ⁴⁶ And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

So it seems that this 45 day period (from 1290 days to 1335 days) is a time of judgment of those that have lived through or survived the tribulation period. Those who put their faith in God will live on into the 1,000 year Millennial reign of Jesus, while the unbelievers, especially those who took the mark of the beast in the second half of the tribulation period, will be cast into hell to await their final judgement at the Great white throne Judgement, which will take place at the end of the 1,000 year millennial reign of Jesus Christ.

v 13 “But you, go your way till the end; for you shall rest, and will arise to your inheritance at the end of the days.

v 13 But you, go your way till the end: We can draw the following points from Daniel 12:13:

- Every man has his **way** to go.
- Every man has an **end**.
- There is a **rest** provided for the people of God.
- There is an **inheritance** for the people of God.

Why study prophecy? We must study to show ourselves approved by God, a workman that does not need to be ashamed, who can rightly divide the word of truth, and give an answer to those who ask about the reason why we have hope — especially in these last days. But there must be balance. Study the whole word of God, not just prophecy.

v 13 “But you, go your way till the end; for you shall rest, and will arise to your inheritance at the end of the days.

This seems to indicate that the OT saints will not resurrect until the end of the 7 year tribulation period. This fits the Jewish marriage feast scenario we read about in John 14:1-4. According to the tradition, the bride is not revealed to the friends of the bridegroom until the end of the 7 days, in this case the church, the bride of Christ, is in heaven with Jesus for 7 years during the tribulation period and then share the wedding feast with all who come through the tribulation and with all the OT saints.

Concluding exhortation and encouragement:

Daniel 12:3 - Those who are wise shall shine Like the brightness of the firmament,
And those who turn many to righteousness Like the stars forever and ever.

The true stars that will shine forever and ever are not Oscar winners or Brownlow Medal winners but soul winners. Here, an angel came from heaven and told Daniel that he who desires to shine as the stars forever and ever will commit himself to winning souls, to sharing the truth of the gospel with others.

The apostle Paul used the same analogy...

1 Corinthians 15:40–42 (a)

⁴⁰ There are also bodies in the heavens and bodies on the earth. The glory of the heavenly bodies is different from the glory of the earthly bodies. ⁴¹ The sun has one kind of glory, while the moon and stars each have another kind. And even the stars differ from each other in their glory.

⁴² **It is the same way with the resurrection of the dead...**

Inspired by the Holy Spirit, Paul talks about the bodies we're going to be given in eternity.

We're going to have bodies designed for heaven. But Paul also points out that the glory of one star differs from another star. In this context, the word, "glory," simply means "outshining." In other words, there will be varying degrees of brightness. If you know Jesus as your Saviour, you're going to heaven. But when we get to heaven, the Bible says that crowns will be given for the service we've rendered to the Lord on earth.

You might say, "I have no desire to walk around with a crown on my head in heaven, so what's the big deal?"

But these crowns are not something we'll wear. Revelation 4:10 declares that we'll cast these crowns at the feet of Jesus, the One who did so much for us. In and of itself, that should be enough motivation to serve Him here—so that we might be able to show our appreciation for all He has done for us when we see Him face to face.

But it's more than that. These crowns will determine what kind of star we are in heaven. Paul here is saying that there will be different intensities. Again, you might say, "I don't care if I'm a star or not." But the glory, or "outshining," speaks of your capacity to enjoy eternity.

When my kids were babies, whenever they banged on pots and pans with a wooden spoon, they'd giggle and have the time of their lives. Yet if I played those pots and pans with a wooden spoon, I wouldn't feel a thing because I'm no longer one year old. My capacity to understand and enjoy life is far beyond beating pots and pans. My world is bigger. My experience is greater.

So too, in heaven, we're all going to be happy. Everyone will be elated. But our capacities will differ. Everyone will be filled to the brim, but the size of the cups will differ greatly. Some will be great big barrels filled to the top. Some will be tiny teacups, also full

to the brim. Some will be in heaven with a limited capacity to enjoy and experience eternity. Sure, they're saved. But they did nothing with their walks. They rendered no real service to the Lord. They just cruised through life—watching television and waiting to move on to eternity. And we'll see them banging pots and pans in heaven.

But others, because they were wise on earth, because they were faithful, because they abided in Jesus, because they were soul winners, will have greater capacities in heaven, pictured by greater responsibilities (Luke 19:11-27 - Parable of the 10 Minas or 10 silver coins - explain the servant who earned 10 minas would be given 10 cities to rule, same for 5 minas). Therefore, don't miss the big picture. Don't just make it to heaven by the skin of your teeth, or saved, as though through fire (1 Cor 3:12-15 - Bema seat judgement). Be wise. Enlarge your capacity to experience eternity by winning souls, by sharing the gospel.

1 Corinthians 3:5-15

⁵ We are only God's servants through whom you believed the Good News. Each of us did the work the Lord gave us. ⁶ I planted the seed in your hearts, and Apollos watered it, but it was God who made it grow. ⁷ It's not important who does the planting, or who does the watering. What's important is that God makes the seed grow. ⁸ The one who plants and the one who waters work together with the same purpose. And both will be rewarded for their own hard work. ⁹ For we are both God's workers. And you are God's field. You are God's building.

¹⁰ Because of God's grace to me, I have laid the foundation like an expert builder. Now others are building on it. But whoever is building on this foundation must be very careful.

¹¹ For no one can lay any foundation other than the one we already have—Jesus Christ.

¹² Anyone who builds on that foundation may use a variety of materials—gold, silver, jewels, wood, hay, or straw. ¹³ But on the judgment day, fire will reveal what kind of work each builder has done. The fire will show if a person's work has any value. ¹⁴ If the work survives, that builder will receive a reward. ¹⁵ But if the work is burned up, the builder will suffer great loss. The builder will be saved, but like someone barely escaping through a wall of flames.

The Bema seat judgement is a judgment of reward, not condemnation. Christians will be rewarded for what they did that was motivated by love, that is done through the power and leading of the Holy Spirit. In other words, what we did when we were controlled by the Holy Spirit and not dominated by our sinful nature (Romans 8:5-6).

Notice also that the work that we are rewarded for is primarily evangelism. The foundation referred to in 1 Corinthians 3:10 is the gospel of grace. Beware of the other false gospels out there. The "legalism gospel" which tells people that they are saved by what they do, by their own deeds or righteousness. They must do certain things and keep certain rules and rituals. Or, the "God will make your life better" gospel — come to Jesus and He will bless your socks off. Both lack repentance and generally produce false converts because people are not sorry for their sin — they don't see themselves as sinners and therefore don't realise their need for salvation.

There is a great song that captures the essence of what the Bema seat judgement will be like.

Bema Seat by Bob Hartman

When our labor all retire
There will be a trial by fire
Will your treasure pass the test
Or will it burn up with the rest

You may build upon a sure foundation
With your building in dilapidation
When it all comes down to rubble
Will it be wood, hay, or stubble
Or precious stones, gold and silver
Are you really sure?

And we all will stand at the Bema Seat
All will be revealed, it will be complete
Will there be reward in the fiery heat
When we see our lives at the Bema Seat

Every talent will be sure counted
Every word will have to be accounted
Not a story will be left untold
We will stand watch the truth unfold
Every score, will be evened, nothing to defend

Every building will be shaken
Every motive will be tried
He'll give reward to the faithful
Will you receive or be denied?

The Gospel of Grace

We have been given the matchless opportunity of sharing the gospel with people. The gospel is the *good* news. The whole bible is simply a love letter written to us describing how God our Saviour came to earth to live a perfect life and die in my place so that I don't have to — if — I choose to accept His payment for my sins on my behalf.

1 John 1:9 - If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

1 John 2:1, 2 - My dear children, I am writing this to you so that you will not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate who pleads our case before the Father. He is Jesus Christ, the one who is truly righteous. ² He himself is the sacrifice that atones for our sins—and not only our sins but the sins of all the world.

2 Corinthians 5:17-21 - ¹⁷ This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun! ¹⁸ And all of this is a gift from God, who brought us back to himself through Christ. And God has given us this task of reconciling people to him. ¹⁹ For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people's sins against them. And he gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation. ²⁰ So we are Christ's ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, "Come back to God!" ²¹ For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin (or be sin for us), so that we could be made right with God through Christ.

So my sin has been forgiven and I am living a new life. But what does that new life look like?

Galatians 5:19-20 - ¹⁹ For when I tried to keep the law, it condemned me. So I died to the law—I stopped trying to meet all its requirements—so that I might live for God. ²⁰ My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

In other words, being successful in the Christian life is not about trying harder to be good, but rather loving more. Why? The more I love God, the more I will trust Him and therefore surrender to His will, and allow Jesus to live His life through me. What I will be rewarded for in Heaven is simply the fruit of loving or abiding in Christ — it's a work that God does in me, not that I do myself. I am literally led and controlled and empowered by the Spirit, and the fruit of the Spirit is love.

So after a very interesting and eventful journey through the book of Daniel, I come back to what I said was the key verse for the entire book:

Daniel 6:10 - But when Daniel learned that the law had been signed, he went home and knelt down as usual in his upstairs room, with its windows open toward Jerusalem. He prayed three times a day, just as he had always done, giving thanks to his God.

Because Daniel loved God, He was able to be used by God to bear much fruit for God and therefore bring much glory to God.

So to conclude, what are the three most important factors in our Christian walk?

1. My relationship with God
2. My relationship with God
3. My relationship with God

Why? Because...

If I am not abiding in Christ, which means; walking with God, listening to God by reading His love letter to me, keeping myself in the love of God, keeping in step with God and remaining pure — then God cannot work through me, because my life is dominated by my sinful nature.

My life becomes a waste. Yes I'm saved, forgiven, but there is so much more potential for us.

Think about it. The book of Daniel was made possible by a man and his three friends who were willing to forsake all and commit themselves into God's care, and to put their relationship with Him above everything else. They made God the most important part of their lives, which means that their entire lives were about loving God, which meant spending time with God in prayer and in the word, and remaining pure. The result — over about an 80 year time period the entire known world repeatedly heard the truth about the Glorious and Majestic True God and were given the opportunity put their faith in Him and to worship Him. Wow, won't they be shining bright when we see them when they are resurrected.

Remember that we don't spend time with God and do the right thing because we have to, rather because we want to. What's my motive? Well, if I don't spend time with God, read His word and keep myself unspotted from the world, then my relationship with God will suffer and I will grieve God (Ephesians 4:30). Because I choose to make my love relationship with God the most important part of my life, I do only those things which cause me to grow in my love for God, which means I want to spend time with Him and in His word and keep myself pure.

John 15:5 - "I am the vine, you *are* the branches. **He who abides in Me, and I in him (committed to their relationship with God), bears much fruit;** for without Me you can do nothing.

Remember the fruit that we bear in Christ will last for eternity. Let us focus on this one thing:

¹³ Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴ I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us. (Phil 3:13-14)