

ST. LUKE EV. LUTHERAN CHURCH-WELS
SERMON BY PASTOR ANTHONY E. SCHULTZ
NOVEMBER 18, 2012
SAINTS TRIUMPHANT SERIES B.
DANIEL 12:1-3 NIV



12.1 “At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people – everyone whose name is found written in the book – will be delivered. ² Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. ³ Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever.

People of God – rescued from the flaming lake of fire in hell by the innocent blood of the very Lamb of God:

Sgt. Sanchez is a police officer. He was on the way home the other day – when he came upon the scene of a car accident. A car had crashed into some sort of huge pole – and had caught fire. Inside the car were two young people. Sgt. Sanchez reached into that burning car and pulled out one – then the other person trapped in the front seat. If you were to see Sgt. Sanchez today – he’s easy to recognize. He has very thick bandages wrapped around his arm – well up his arm and very thick bandages – taped to the bottom of his one ear from reaching into the car – into the flames – into the burning heat! Sgt. Sanchez is the kind of police officer that understands and puts into practice the motto painted on his squad car – to serve and protect! Again – what a pale picture of Jesus’ forgiving love – as he died on the cross to forgive us! Today as we observe Saints Triumphant – we have this very practical comfort:

We Are Saints Triumphant!

- 1. Near the end times will be terrible**
- 2. But the ultimate victory is ours by grace alone!**

The part of God’s Word we are concentrating on is from the Scroll of the Prophet Daniel! The Book of Daniel is just 12 chapters long. Some time

this afternoon – instead of just watching football – you could take a few minutes and read all 387 verses of Daniel. If you read the People’s Bible Commentary on Daniel – our Prof. Jeske wrote that volume. To understand Daniel you need to understand how the children were in captivity literally a thousand miles from home – in Babylon! One of the things they taught us at **Northwestern College** is ancient history. Empires rise and empires fall. There was Egypt – the mighty Pharaohs – their tombs – their pyramids so huge you can see them from outer space. Today in Cairo there are rats and vermin dead in the streets – the smallest children pitiful beggars – made more pitiful by the unspeakable cruelty of their own parents. The mighty Sphinx with the desert to his back – faces a combination Pizza Hut downstairs Kentucky Fried Chicken upstairs. There was the empire of the Assyrians – their fish hooks in the cheeks of their enemies sold into slavery. Then the Babylonians – the splendor of their hanging gardens. There were the Medes and Persians – once they made a law – they couldn’t change it – no matter what – even if their laws had painful unintended consequences! Imagine! There were the Greeks – Alexander the Great – who moved his army with lightning speed – a light and quick army that conquered almost everyone. But Alexander died young from painful excesses – and so? Then came the Romans. They weren’t the most inventive people – but they did know how to pick and choose the best of everything from those who came before them. They were masters of infrastructure – their roads and bridges still functional 2,000 years later? How long do you think the new tunnels and roads by the Milwaukee Airport will last? 2,000 years? Rome, too, had an army that was greater than any! And yet **The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire** – was not a result of a more powerful armed force. The Vandals and the Visigoths – the “barbarians” toppled Rome because she was already dead – from the dry rot of sin. Marriage and the family had been replaced by sinful and perverted self-indulgence and evil. People replaced the truth with lies – to make money and to secure great earthly power. People replaced justice with bribes and plots. There was violence – in the coliseum and in the streets and in the homes. When the government became a reflection of the wickedness and unbelief in the homes of the people – the empire – as rich and powerful as she was – came crashing down. Does any of this sound familiar?

When the children of Israel drifted from their Heavenly Father – the cup of their wickedness was finally full. Judgment came from God. The

Northern Kingdom – ten tribes of Israel – endured for some 200 years. She had 19 different Kings – 20 if you count the one pretender to the throne. All of them – without exception – all of them were wicked. The LORD finally sent the Assyrian Army – to carry them off to captivity – to oblivion – the captivity in Assyria – from which they never ever returned! The southern Kingdom – the Kingdom of Judah endured 350 years. She too had 19 Kings – again 20 if you count the royal pretender. A minority – just 8 of Judah’s kings were good Kings. *“Over a twenty year period beginning in 605 B.C. the armies of Babylon invaded Judah three times, smashing Judah’s armies, plundering and destroying their cities and leading tens of thousands of Jews, including Daniel into Babylon.”* The last King was named Zedekiah. You can read about him in 2 Kings and again in 2 *Chronicles – chapter 36*. The mercy and the patience of the LORD are wondrous. In spite of the fact that Zedekiah did evil in the eyes of the LORD – still the LORD called him to repentance again and again. When was the last time you did a little reading from 2 Chronicles? 2 Chronicles chapter 36 says, **“The LORD, the God of their ancestors, sent word to them through his messengers again and again, because he had pity of his people and on his dwelling place.** (That would be the Temple – the Ark of the Covenant in the most holy place.) **But they mocked God’s messengers, despised his words and scoffed at his prophets until the wrath of the LORD was aroused against his people and there was no remedy. He brought up against them the king of the Babylonians, who killed their young men with their sword in the sanctuary, and did not spare young men or young women, the elderly or the infirm. God gave them all into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar...**

Imagine pastors and teachers being killed in Church – up by the altar and the pulpit – up by the table with Lord’s Supper on it. In 586 B. C. the walls of the city of Jerusalem were smashed down. All the gold and silver and bronze equipment in the Temple were carried off – the Temple reduced to rubble. The only ones left in Jerusalem and Judah were the old and infirm – the sickest and weakest – those who would never be strong enough to walk all the way to Babylon – and weren’t considered worth an arrow to put them down here and now. These few were left behind to try and pick the grapes and olives – to try and feed the sheep and try to milk the cows. They would be abandoned for the next 70 years – as the judgment – the loving discipline of the LORD came down hard on God’s people. The remnant would be preserved – because the LORD would keep

his promise to send his Son – to save us from our sins. The faithlessness of God’s people cannot spoil the faithfulness of God.

12.1 “At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise.” It is tempting to think of angels as these little Precious Moment figurines – with little tear drop shaped eyes – and little soft blond pigtailed – with little soft wings – in curio cabinets. To think of angels as the people we love who are in Heaven – who look down on us and look out for us – when there is sudden physical danger. To think of angels as the little guy with the harp and halo who sits on one shoulder while this other little guy with long red underwear and horns and a goatee who have this tug of war – when we are tempted to do something we know in our heart of hearts is wrong. God’s Word teaches that angels are literally messengers – announcing, **“Fear not! For behold I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior which is Christ the Lord!”** Or, **“Fear not! For I know that you are looking for Jesus. He is not here. He is risen – just as he said! Come and see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples he is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him. Now I have told you!”** We only know the names of two angels – Michael the Ark angel and Gabriel. Here Michael will protect God’s people. When it might seem we are in terrible danger – we have nothing to fear. God’s holy powerful angels watch over us. They will keep us safe for Jesus’ sake!

There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. *Distress!* That’s what we have today! The leading cause of death in the state of Minnesota? What would you guess? Cancer? Heart attacks? Car accidents? The correct answer is abortion! The most dangerous place to be? Not Afghanistan. Not in the path of a super storm. Not in neighborhoods of high crime and shootings in the big city. The most dangerous place to be is your mommy’s tummy. One out of every three are taken for reasons of selection – we wanted a boy and it’s a girl. Or do you know how much it costs – to raise a child from birth through college? *Distress!* In Haiti people have but tarps like we wrap around our firewood for the winter – for shelter against the wind and rain. Over the last almost 2 years – these tarps have become brittle and broken – because of the hot sun. And in the night – they are torn aside – and unspeakable crimes are committed against helpless people. In Mexico – drug lords and drug rings armed with automatic weapons take the lives of

innocent people and corrupt people – for the sake of the millions of dollars of drug traffic. In the Amazon Rainforest people in the jungle grow coca leaves for making cocaine. They trade bags of leaves for bags of money that they spend on guns and alcohol and people who sell “hugs and kisses.” Every day a body floats down the Amazon. In a week – all the money is gone – all the alcohol is gone – a dozen people have been murdered – and they are just about back where they started! Tell them to stop growing the drugs – and they will say – stop abusing the drugs and creating the market. It was reported repeatedly the last few weeks that 1 in 5 Americans – that would be 20% have no religion *at all*. They have no faith in any God *at all*! Marriages of people gifted and famous – in positions of great public trust in Washington crumble and are on the front page of all the papers. We need to pray that Jesus would keep our marriages strong. That Jesus would help husbands to love their wife like Christ loved the Church. That Jesus would help wives to respect their husbands – cooperating – working together – to make houses homes – warmed by Jesus’ forgiving love. Then Jesus working in the hearts of children – whether they are 2 years old – or 16 years old – will show their parents respect and obey them – without rolling your eyes – without sarcasm – without scorn and mocking! Then there will be less distress in our nation!

But at that time your people – everyone whose name is found written in the book – will be delivered. ² Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. Today we celebrate Saints Triumphant! We are saints – by grace through faith. Sometimes people criticize and complain that the Church is all about guilt! That all we ever do is make people feel guilty and ashamed – with painful consciences that trouble them again and again – as the DVD of their painful mistakes in the past are replayed over and over and over again! The Gospel is quite the opposite. The good news is announced at the beginning of our path of worship week after week – in the stead and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ – I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. All our sins are completely and forever washed away. We are Saints Triumphant – people of God – forgiven entirely and completely because Jesus died and rose again to forgive us!

Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and

ever. Again remember the fundamentals of our faith. God's Word says, **"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom!" Proverbs 9:10.** This is the essential truth – that the Great I AM – the Holy One of Israel promised to send his Son to buy us back from sin, death and the grave. We are redeemed. We are forgiven. It is historical fact that Jesus died and rose again. This is rescue from the forever fires of Hell. This has taken us literally from death to life! People are breakable. Last Sunday night – about 11 at night – local time – there was a terrible explosion – so horrible it could be felt between 2 and 3 miles away. Homes were reduced to splinters – some dozen homes were damaged – some set on fire. Neighbors ran into their neighbors' homes – pulled and pushed piles of rubble off of them – and carried them to safety outside! I wonder all the time – what would we do – if suddenly there was danger like that? Jesus did not hesitate to rescue us from the flames of Hell. Jesus died to save us – so that we are not immortal souls at risk – but Saints Triumphant – because of God's *Amazing Grace!* Amen!

To God alone all glory!

Pastor Anthony E. Schultz