

Rev. Seth D. Bode †† Sermon 449, 11-14-2021 †† Saints Triumphant

“Lord God, you have appointed me as a pastor in your Church, but you see how unsuited I am to meet so great and difficult a task. If I had lacked your help, I would have ruined everything long ago. Therefore, I call upon you: I wish to devote my mouth and my heart to you; I shall teach the people. I myself will learn and ponder diligently upon your Word. Use me as your instrument -- but do not forsake me, for if ever I should be on my own, I would easily wreck it all.”

DANIEL 12

¹Then at that time, Michael, the great prince who stands over your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress that has not happened from the first time that there was a nation until that time. At that time your people will be delivered, everyone who is found written in the book. ²Many who are sleeping in the dusty ground will awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame, to everlasting contempt. ³Those who have insight will shine like the brightness of the sky, and those who bring many to righteousness will shine like the stars forever and ever.



Millions observed Veterans Day this past week. It had me thinking about great, quotable generals. “Every battle is won before it is fought,” said Sun Tzu. “A pint of sweat will save a gallon of blood,” said George Patton. “Never interrupt your enemy while he is making a mistake,” said Napoleon Bonaparte. The quotation of the greatest general, however, is, “*The Lord rebuke you.*” This general was battling the devil over the body of Moses (Jude 9). Have you ever heard of the greatest general? I don’t mean Sun Tzu, Napoleon, or Patton (or Milley). The only archangel mentioned in the Bible, Michael, is fighting the biggest battles.

As surely as the angels shone like stars at creation, Job 38:7 tells us that the stars sang loud songs in unison together, apparently talking about the angels. In Revelation the tail of the dragon wipes 1/3 of the stars from the sky, apparently indicating the rebellion of angels in heaven against God. Since then, whole nations and their armies may be influenced and possessed by enemy angels, now called demons. So Daniel spends chapters telling us about the Prince of the South and the Prince of Persia, against whom the Archangel Michael fights spiritual warfare.

Yet the deeper mystery is the comparing of God’s people to stars. After all, the promise to Abraham was that his descendants would be as numerous as the

stars. We find out later that his descendants are those who believe in the Christ, the Son of God. Today Daniel is told these people of God are written in a book and will sparkle into eternity. How? We consider ...

THE BRIGHTNESS OF BRINGING RIGHTNESS

1. Jesus knows the names in the Book of Life

We are told of a time of tribulation. Many will be surprised that there are no number of years attached to this period of time, not 7, not any number. It is a great tribulation, unprecedented, unlike any that has happened before.

It is a global tribulation. Michael arises for escalated warfare against the great Antichrist. The battle is not with nuclear warheads and chemical weapons. The battle is an attack on what we think and believe. It takes place in the highest spiritual level. Satan works with the weapon of the lie. Demons shape how people see things. They replace reality with delusion. They influence patterns of thought and behavior. They seek to storm the citadel of your soul, to corrupt every good gift of God, to turn right into wrong and order into chaos. It is invisible to the naked eye but obvious to eyes of faith.

The wise—those who have insight—can see it happening. They read about it in the headlines—the headlong human revolt against God’s natural order, violence and rebellion, nature against itself in tumult, increasing ridicule of truth, open hostility to the Church, public loathing for family, and skeptic denial of meaning and values. “*You will be hated by everyone,*” said Jesus to His disciples (Matthew 10:22). Casualties will be high. This is a war for hearts and minds, for the soul and for the will. From some, God will ask the last measure of devotion as they give their lives for the truth.

Even you are unsettled. This isn’t flavor-of-the-month news cycle in our times anymore. We’ve never seen the news move this fast. This is an assault on foundations. This is idolizing of wealth, health, and folly. This is the work of demons who want you sick, weak, lazy, fat, and high on this world and all it has to offer. Why? So that you will stop your fight against temptation. So that you will give up the battle against sin. So that in your pride you will expect to be better than everyone. So that you will go to the grave in despair.

But do not be unsettled. This great tribulation is also a limited tribulation. Michael's great battle is his great victory. Michael wins. He defeats the great Antichrist for good. The name of Michael means, "Who is like God?" It implies that no one is like God. And if God is for us, who can be against us? No one.

The people of faith will be delivered in this time. Their names are written in the Book of Life, and they cannot be erased. For God has a word for all who grew proud, "Repent." God has a word to all who have sinned, "Forgiven." God has a word for all who stopped the fight, "Believe." God has a word for all who lose heart, "Justified." God has a word to all who despair, "Victory."

God has a word for all who felt forgotten, "Aren't you in the Book of Life? Weren't you baptized into my family? Didn't you eat and drink at my table? Wasn't the promise for all for whom I died? Why are you unsettled by the end? The end of this world is only the beginning of new things. Aren't you excited to hear the words, 'Well done, good and faithful servant'?"

2. Jesus is the name of the Book of Life

You may not feel like a warrior when you consider your role in the battle. Imagine the graves giving up their dead bodies, including your body. Scripture teaches both the decomposition of the body and the permanent existence of the body. Jesus repeats Daniel's "multitudes will awake" and clarifies it to, "All will awake." The godless are raised as well as the godly in the end. But the godless are frightfully ugly. They are raised to scorn and shame. This shows us that not only is hell a physical suffering, but a suffering of the mind and soul.

The godly, however, are different. They are raised to beauty. Consider the stars, God told Abraham. Your descendants will be that many, and the sons of Abraham are those who believe. Here they are those who have insight. Honestly, the translation should be "those who bring insight," for they are "those who bring righteousness."

They are those who are written in the Book of Life. God's Book of Life is a book of believers. A book in the ancient world is a permanent record. This Book is a record inscribed in the heart of God Himself. Nothing is more sure and certain than that. He can never forget His people. He loves each one of them with an everlasting love. Before the world began, He knew them. He loved them. He chose them to be His own in Christ Jesus.

How can you be sure your name is written in the Book? First, you were given the Keys to heaven and hell. You know forgiveness. Do you forgive? Then you bring another to righteousness—the righteousness that is not by works, but by faith alone. Do you tell Bible stories? Then you bring righteousness, too. Do you sing songs of your Savior Jesus? Bringer of righteousness! And righteousness makes souls right with God. Do you parent children with lessons of God’s right and wrong, truth and life? You have a bright future in Christ. Young men, do you want to stand before a whole congregation of sinners and share God’s forgiveness? Some of you should think about being pastors some day. There is a heavenly reward for all who bring the good news of being right with God—it is the brightness of bringing rightness. In a world with a media so confused, won’t you tell the good news? Won’t you be considered a great general who fought spiritual battles? Won’t you be a beacon of light for the meantime and a brilliant flame in heaven for the time to come?

Second, you can know that your name is in the Book of Life if you know the most important name. The Lutherans in 1580 wrote the Formula of Concord, one of our confessions of faith. They believed that the Book of Life did not just *contain* names. It *has* a name. The Book of Life is Jesus Christ Himself. And if you know your Scriptures, you know that you can substitute the name of Jesus in every verse that brings up the Book of Life, and it makes sense. If you are in Jesus, you are in the Book of Life. And the “Book of Life” is just another name for Jesus. Your baptism, your communion at the table, and your repentant heart of faith locates you in Jesus. This is being in the Book of Life—to be in Him by faith in His death and resurrection. This is salvation, to be delivered by the likes of angels and the Son of Man. This is triumph and victory of the saints.

Who was among us one year ago and now burns brightly in the heavens? Who among us has triumphed? What names were in the ink of Christ’s blood so recently but now are written in the stars of heaven? They loved to tell the story of Jesus and His glory, of Jesus and His love. So glorious is their victory now, their battle is over, their triumph is told in memories. They will be treated as generals even as we remember their legacy of faith. But more than that, we remember their Substitute, Jesus Christ, who loves us and consoles us. He has gone to battle for us, and in His name we too have already won. The day will soon come when we sweat, battle, and hope no more. God bring that day of eternal rest quickly. Amen.