

26th Sunday after Pentecost / 25th Sunday after Trinity – 2024

Bethlehem's 120th Church Anniversary (Observed)

Saturday, 11/16 at 4:00 & Sunday, 11/17 at 9:00

God's Purpose for the Church being in the World

Text: Daniel 12:1-3 NAS 1995

Introduction: Dear friends in Christ: Today, *as we celebrate our 120th church anniversary (1904-2024)*, let us focus on: **GOD'S PURPOSE FOR THE CHURCH BEING IN THE WORLD**

1. **Since 1904:** *When our first building was constructed:*

a. What has changed?

i. World population: 1.6 to 8.2 billion (5x)!

ii. Parma population: 2k to 80k (40x)!

b. What is the same?

i. Everyone has inherited sin ([Rom. 5:12](#)).

ii. Everyone is helpless to save himself ([Rom. 3:20](#)).

iii. Everyone needs to know Jesus ([John 17:3](#)).

2. **The BIG Picture:**

a. The Church: It includes the people in the world who, *by the Holy Spirit*, ✦know of their helplessness and ✦trust in Jesus alone as their Savior. Jesus referred to such people as **salt** and **light** ([Matt. 5:13-16](#)). As **salt** and **light** make a significant difference, *so God wants to use every believer to make a significant difference by ✦telling God's truth and ✦pointing people to Jesus!*

- b. Bethlehem Parma: Jesus established this congregation to be **salt** and **light** in our community!
- c. Now: In Daniel 12, let us see our **URGENT NEED** to be **salt** and **light** in the lives of all who will listen!
3. **Great Distress**: ¹ “Now at that time Michael [that is, **our Lord Jesus Christ**], the great prince who stands guard over the sons of your people, will arise. And there will be a time of **distress** such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time....”
- a. Great Distress in the Past – the Worldwide Flood: About 4,300 years ago, **when** ▶no “nations” existed (Gen. 10:5), ▶“the wickedness of man was great” (Gen. 6:5), and ▶the earth’s population was significant (**between 750 million and 4 billion**),¹ the LORD ended the lives of all people – *except for 8* (Gen. 7:21-23)!
- b. Great Distress in the Future – Jesus’ Return: If Jesus came today, a “few” of the 8.2 billion would be welcomed in – *those who know Jesus as Savior and Lord*, but “many” would be cast out (Matt. 7:13-14).
4. **Life or Disgrace**: “...and at that time [when Jesus returns] your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued.² Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting **life**, but the others to **disgrace** [shame] and everlasting **contempt** [disapproval].”
- a. Rescued: **Knowing Jesus IS EVERYTHING!** ▶**God** has saved us, ▶**God** has kept us saved, and ▶**God** has written our names “in the book.”

¹ <https://answersingenesis.org/noahs-ark/pre-flood-population/?srsltid=AfmBOop9JagU-792SzBL82dYTkew-8fGn69fuPRsQI2tQtEuUXSSq51>

- b. The Book: The Bible says that “...nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination [*things extremely disgusting*] and lying, shall ever come into [the new Jerusalem], but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life” (Revelation 21:27). // Left to ourselves, we are **filthy**, but, **through Jesus’ precious blood**, God has washed us clean!
- c. Sleep: All who have died are sleeping “in the dust of the ground” but Jesus will wake everyone up when He returns: “...there shall certainly be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked” (Acts 24:15).
- d. Who will be Raised to Life? All who continued in Christ to the end. We will finally experience *the amazing fullness* of all God has prepared for us!
- e. Who will be Raised to Disgrace? All who persistently refused to repent! “This idea goes down hard for many people who picture God as a lovable but spineless being who wouldn’t do anything worse to a person than a slap on the wrist. But that is not the picture the Bible paints of God. The same God who at the time of Noah threw oceans of water over the mountain tops, drowning a whole world of screaming people, the same God who once scorched Sodom and Gomorrah in a hurricane of fire, the same God who fed wicked Queen Jezebel to the dogs—that same God still reigns in heaven. And he has told us that what He has done before, he will do again.”²

² John C. Jeske, *People’s Bible Commentary, Daniel* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1992, 2005), 218.

5. **Eternal Blessings:** ³ “Those who have insight [understanding] will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.” // What does that mean? This is the answer given in the Keil and Delitzsch commentary: “Then shall they who in the times of tribulation have led many to the knowledge of salvation receive the glorious reward of their faithfulness.”
- Why a Reward? God is **encouraging each of us to care about others to the extent that we share the knowledge of salvation with them.**
 - What Is the Knowledge of Salvation? ♦ We have all inherited sin, ♦ we are helpless to save ourselves, and ♦ salvation is available to everyone through Jesus!

6. **How Should We Go Forward?**

- As a Congregation: ♦ Stay true to the Bible, ♦ keep “equipping... the saints for the work of service” (Eph. 4:12), and ♦ keep inviting others to come and receive!
- As Individual Believers: ♦ Be open to be equipped, ♦ benefit from the Bible every day, ♦ memorize some key verses, ♦ write a list (family, friends, neighbors, coworkers), ♦ pray, and ♦ take advantage of each opportunity to *share the knowledge of salvation!*

Let Us Pray: Dear Jesus, **TYSM** for using the pastors and members of Bethlehem over the past 120 years to share the knowledge of salvation! Help each of us to be more open and more determined to ♦ *grow in Bible* and ♦ *care about others!*

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