

# **ILLINOIS LUTHERAN CONFERENCE**

## ***Topical Bulletin, May 2023***

It was just a few weeks ago that we celebrated Easter, the feast of the resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Accordingly, this month's subject for consideration is fitting as we take a closer look at the fact: **Jesus lives!**

Let's see what the Holy Bible has to report about the reality that **Jesus lives!**

On the first Easter day, the risen Lord Jesus appeared to two disciples as they were on their way, **"to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about threescore furlongs. And they talked together of all these things which had happened. And it came to pass, that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them. But their eyes were holden that they should not know him. And he said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad? And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering said unto him, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days? And he said unto them, What things? And they said unto him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people: And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him. But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, to day is the third day since these things were done. Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre; And when they found not his body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive. And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulchre, and found it even so as the women had said: but him they saw not. Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. And they drew nigh unto the village, whither they went: and he made as though he would have gone further. But they constrained him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And he went in to tarry with them. And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight. And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures? And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them, Saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon. And they told what things were done in the way, and how he was known of them in breaking of bread. And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have. And when he had thus spoken, he shewed them his hands and his feet. And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, Have ye here any meat? And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. And he took it, and did eat before them."** (Luke 24:13-43)

*Comment: Note that Jesus' disciples were NOT expecting Him to rise from the dead, even though He had told them well before the event that it would happen. For example, months before Jesus' bitter sufferings, death and resurrection, "he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. And he spake that saying openly. And Peter took him, and began to rebuke him. But when he had turned about and looked on his disciples, he rebuked Peter, saying, Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men." (Mark 8:31-33) Hence, the disciples – including bold Peter – failed to take Jesus' words to heart, regarding His death and resurrection. Nevertheless, Jesus did bodily rise from the dead after three days in the grave! The fact that Jesus ate, drank, showed his disciples His nail-pierced hands and feet, and had His disciples touch him, clearly demonstrates the reality that JESUS LIVES!*

**"Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles." (1 Corinthians 15:1-7)**

*Comment: Note well that the Gospel is the good-news of Jesus dying for our sins, being buried, and subsequently rising again from the dead, after three days in the grave— in full accord with the prophecies found in the Old Testament Holy Scriptures. Jesus was seen by hundreds of people after his bodily resurrection, which is positive proof that JESUS LIVES! Jesus truly bodily rose from the dead after three days in the tomb! The living Lord Jesus Christ is not a phantom or mere figment of people's imagination! JESUS LIVES!*

**"The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen: To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God: And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." (Acts 1:1-11)**

**“And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven. And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy: And were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. Amen.” (Luke 24:50-53)**

**“So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.” (Mark 16:19-20)**

*Comment: Jesus was repeatedly seen of His followers for 40 days after His bodily resurrection, supplying them with sure proofs that it was truly Him, whom they beheld. Then, the living Lord Jesus visibly ascended into heaven, where He sits on the right hand of the power of God! JESUS LIVES!*

**“For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ: Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him.” (1 Peter 3:18-22)**

*Comment: Jesus conquered sin, death and the devil; and, Jesus proclaimed that fact to the spirits in hell! Jesus is gone into heaven, having visibly ascended thereto, where He is on the right hand of God, ruling over all! JESUS LIVES!*

**“By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament. And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death: But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. For such a high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself. For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore.” (Hebrews 7:22-28)**

**“For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.” (Hebrews 9:24-28)**

**“Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.” (Romans 8:34)**

*Comment: The Lord Jesus Christ was Himself the supreme Sacrifice for our sins, who died for us and rose again in triumph! The Lord Jesus Christ is our great High Priest, who forever intercedes for us at the throne of God in heaven! JESUS LIVES!*

Jesus Christ is He, **“Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.” (Romans 4:25)**

**“But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.” (Romans 10:6-11)**

*Comment: By faith in Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord, we are justified in God’s sight— declared righteous by God Himself, for Jesus’ sake. Fellow Christians, from our heart we confess with our mouth the Lord Jesus and the fact that He lives. Consequently, we Christians will not suffer the never-ending shame of hell, “Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.” (Mark 9:44) “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16) *Let us be grateful to God for Jesus Christ and the faith we have in Him! And, let us be grateful that JESUS LIVES!**

Jesus promises His followers: **“because I live, ye shall live also.” (John 14:19)**

**“For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me.” (Job 19:25-27)**

*Comment: A wonderful future awaits all true Christians, for we shall be raised again on the Last Day – Judgment Day – at which time our bodies shall be glorified; and, we shall live with the Lord Jesus Christ in glory forever! “For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Corinthians 15:53-57)*

*Let us regularly thank and praise our gracious and almighty Lord and God! JESUS LIVES!*

m.e.l.