

ILLINOIS LUTHERAN CONFERENCE

Topical Bulletin, February 2022

As we continue to see the COVID plague and various major weather events taking place, it is evident that Holy Scripture is being fulfilled before our eyes, for Luke 21:25-26 plainly states: "And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken." Think about it. Folks throughout the world are quite fearful and perplexed as new variants of COVID appear and infect people, killing some, despite man's vaccines being touted as a cure-all. Fires rage, wind and wave crash mightily on numerous beachfront areas, massive snowstorms and tornados increase; and, as a result, many folks are freaking-out, as the saying goes. Sadly, the number of people are relatively few who see the historic events occurring as punishments from the Lord and signs of His approaching return to judge the world. Indeed, people by-and-large are not turning from their sins and are not turning to Jesus Christ in sincere faith. Therefore, the pertinent and timely subject for this month's topical bulletin is: **What impenitence is and why it is dangerous.**

The term "impenitence" is defined as: absence of contrition or sorrow for one's own sinfulness; hardness of heart coupled with failure to desist from one's sins and failure to turn from sin to Jesus Christ as one's personal Savior and Lord who alone provides the forgiveness of sins and eternal life.

"But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; Who will render to every man according to his deeds." (Romans 2:5-6)

Comment: Observe the word "impenitent" in the above Scripture passage and note how its use accords with the definition given earlier. Impenitence is definitely dangerous! Impenitence earns one God's wrath and displeasure, temporal and eternal death and damnation.

"Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the LORD: They would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices." (Proverbs 1:24-31)

"He, that being often reproveth hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." (Proverbs 29:1)

Comment: Note well that impenitence leads to destruction. Thus, impenitence is indeed dangerous, for hell is the ultimate place of destruction, "Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." (Mark 9:44)

“Harden not your heart, as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness: When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my work. Forty years long was I grieved with this generation, and said, It is a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known my ways: Unto whom I swear in my wrath that they should not enter into my rest.” (Psalm 95:8-11)

Comment: Consider the example with the children of Israel. When they hardened their hearts and remained impenitent, they suffered for it because they failed to believe in the Lord and failed to trust Him to bring them into the Promised Land. The people murmured and complained; “And the LORD’S anger was kindled against Israel, and he made them wander in the wilderness forty years, until all the generation, that had done evil in the sight of the LORD, was consumed.” (Numbers 32:13)

“Behold, ye trust in lying words, that cannot profit. Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not; And come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations? Is this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, even I have seen it, saith the LORD. But go ye now unto my place which was in Shiloh, where I set my name at the first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of my people Israel. And now, because ye have done all these works, saith the LORD, and I spake unto you, rising up early and speaking, but ye heard not; and I called you, but ye answered not; Therefore will I do unto this house, which is called by my name, wherein ye trust, and unto the place which I gave to you and to your fathers, as I have done to Shiloh. And I will cast you out of my sight, as I have cast out all your brethren, even the whole seed of Ephraim. Therefore pray not thou for this people, neither lift up cry nor prayer for them, neither make intercession to me: for I will not hear thee. Seest thou not what they do in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem? The children gather wood, and the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead their dough, to make cakes to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto other gods, that they may provoke me to anger. Do they provoke me to anger? saith the LORD: do they not provoke themselves to the confusion of their own faces? Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, mine anger and my fury shall be poured out upon this place, upon man, and upon beast, and upon the trees of the field, and upon the fruit of the ground; and it shall burn, and shall not be quenched.” (Jeremiah 7:8-20)

Comment: The prophet Jeremiah, by inspiration of God, supplies us with another example of impenitence from the history of the Israelites. This occurred long after the children of those, who had perished during the wandering in the wilderness for forty years, had entered the Promised Land. The people – for the most part – turned to idolatry and other abominable wickedness and remained impenitent. Subsequently, the Lord punished the people (as He said He would do) for Holy Writ relates that the Lord said to Jeremiah: “Therefore thou shalt speak all these words unto them; but they will not hearken to thee: thou shalt also call unto them; but they will not answer thee. But thou shalt say unto them, This is a nation that obeyeth not the voice of the LORD their God, nor receiveth correction: truth is perished, and is cut off from their mouth. Cut off thine hair, O Jerusalem, and cast it away, and take up a lamentation on high places; for the LORD hath rejected and forsaken the generation of his wrath. For the children of Judah have done evil in my sight, saith the LORD: they have set their abominations in the house which is called by my name, to pollute it. And they have built the high places of Tophet, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire; which I commanded them not, neither came it into my heart. Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that it shall no more be called Tophet, nor the valley of the son of Hinnom, but the valley of slaughter: for they shall bury in Tophet, till there be no place. And the carcasses of this people shall be

meat for the fowls of the heaven, and for the beasts of the earth; and none shall fray them away. Then will I cause to cease from the cities of Judah, and from the streets of Jerusalem, the voice of mirth, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride: for the land shall be desolate.” (Jeremiah 7:27-34) *So abominably sinful and impenitent were the Israelites of Judah that they burned their own children as sacrifices to false gods. Hence, the Lord slaughtered them— which definitely shows that impenitence is dangerous.*

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!” (Luke 13:34)

“Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not: Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee.” (Matthew 11:20-24)

Comment: Observe that the Lord truly desires people to repent, as He did the Jews when He visibly walked upon this earth. Nevertheless, failure to repent will finally bring big-time punishment. “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.” (Galatians 6:7-8) It is so very sad that people remain impenitent even after knowing the Savior, Jesus Christ, has been here and has fulfilled all righteousness and has paid for the sins of the whole world with His own holy and precious blood that He shed while nailed to the cross of Calvary!

“At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight. All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him. Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” (Matthew 11:25-30)

Comment: Jesus truly desires people to repent of their sins and believe on Him. A pride-filled heart, in a sinner stuck in self-righteousness, leaves that person in impenitence. Jesus wants folks to acknowledge their sinfulness as they realize they are burdened with their sins and then turn from their sins and turn to Him in heart-deep faith as their personal Savior and Lord, for then He will give them soul-rest.

“He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy. Happy is the man that feareth alway: but he that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief.” (Proverbs 28:13-14)

Comment: There is hope! Don’t be impenitent, be penitent! “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9) The Lord is merciful!

“And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into his lodging; to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening. And some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not. And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed, after that Paul had spoken one word, Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers, Saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive: For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it. And when he had said these words, the Jews departed, and had great reasoning among themselves. And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him.” (Acts 28:23-31)

Comment: Although many remain impenitent and unbelieving after having heard the Word of God, yet by God’s grace and power working through His Word some do repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, “For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men.” (1 Corinthians 1:21-25) “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith. So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” (Romans 1:16-17; 10:17) “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.” (Ephesians 2:8-9) Praise and thanks be to God for His grace, mercy and power shown to sinners as He works through His Holy Word.

“Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.” (Mark 1:14-15)

Comment: Sincere repentance of one’s sins coupled with personal faith in Jesus Christ as one’s Savior is vital. “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. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” (John 3:16-18) “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.” (Mark 16:16)

“Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.” (Acts 3:19-21)

Comment: Impenitence must NOT be prolonged. Jesus will visibly return in glory to judge the world on the Last Day, which is Judgment Day. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." (2 Corinthians 5:10) Impenitence is dangerous because ALL, who remain stuck in their sins by unbelief and lack of contrition, will be sentenced to never-ending death in hell; while ONLY THOSE, who sincerely repent of their sins and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, will be saved. Yes, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." (John 3:36) Therefore, let each and every one of us daily and sincerely repent of our sins; let us continue to cling to Christ Jesus, in heart-deep faith, as our personal Savior and Lord, trusting and confiding in Him to bring us safely to heaven; and, let us point other folks toward the true God and His true Word.

*God grant that we never forget: **What impenitence is and why it is dangerous.***

m.e.l.