

ILLINOIS LUTHERAN CONFERENCE

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As mentioned in last month's Topical Bulletin, we will continue in our consideration of: **The Apostles' Creed; the second Article.**

To review the entire second Article, Luther's Small Catechism puts it thus:

THE SECOND ARTICLE

REDEMPTION

I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

What does this mean?

I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord, who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil; not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death, that I may be His own and live under Him in His kingdom, and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, even as He is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity. This is most certainly true.

In the light of the Holy Scriptures, we will now ponder the following words in particular from the second Article of the Apostles' Creed— the words which deal with Christ in His state of exaltation:

He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

Subsequent to Jesus suffering and dying on the cross for the sins of the whole world and then being buried, He entered His state of exaltation, for Holy Writ relates, **"Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."** (Philippians 2:9-11)

Comment: From the moment Jesus was resurrected in the tomb, He entered His state of exaltation in which He always and fully uses ALL of His divine attributes communicated to His human nature, because JESUS IS FOREVER TRUE GOD AND TRUE MAN, BUT ONE CHRIST, OUR LIVING LORD AND KING!

"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.” (1 Peter 3:18-20)

“And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.” (Colossians 2:15)

Comment: Jesus Christ did not descend into hell to suffer, for His suffering for our sins was already completed on the accursed tree of the cross when He said, “It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.” (John 19:30) Hence, Jesus Christ descended into hell – the prison of the unbelieving departed spirits and devils – to proclaim his victory over sin, death, the devil and hell! Hell is the prison place, “Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.” (Mark 9:44) JESUS CHRIST IS THE TRIUMPHANT KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS, WHO FOREVER REIGNS ACCORDING TO BOTH HIS DIVINE AND HUMAN NATURES: TWO NATURES, BUT ONE LORD JESUS CHRIST!

“In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre. And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men. And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you. And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy; and did run to bring his disciples word. And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him. Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.” (Matthew 28:1-10)

“And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him. And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun. And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre? And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great. And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted. And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him. But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you. And they went out quickly, and fled from the sepulchre; for they trembled and were amazed: neither said they any thing to any man; for they were afraid.” (Mark 16:1-8)

“Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them. And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre. And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus. And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments: And as they were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto

you when he was yet in Galilee, Saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again. And they remembered his words, And returned from the sepulchre, and told all these things unto the eleven, and to all the rest.” (Luke 24:1-9)

“Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him. The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (he is Lord of all:) That word, I say, ye know, which was published throughout all Judaea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached; How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him. And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree: Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly; Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead. And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead. To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.” (Acts 10:34-43)

“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. And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time. For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. Therefore whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed.” (1 Corinthians 15:1-11)

Comment: THE HOLY BIBLE CLEARLY AND REPEATEDLY TEACHES THAT JESUS CHRIST VICTORIOUSLY AND BODILY ROSE FROM THE DEAD AFTER THREE DAYS IN THE GRAVE. Jesus showed Himself alive many times to His followers— over 500 of them at one time! The tomb was NOT opened to let Jesus out, for He was already out, when the women came to anoint His corpse with the sweet spices they had prepared. The holy angel opened the tomb to show the ladies it was empty— that Jesus Christ was risen from the dead, exactly as He said He would. When Mary Magdalene and the other Mary departed from the tomb, Jesus visibly appeared to them as they went to bring the disciples word. Interestingly, the hate-filled enemies of Jesus had requested the tomb be guarded as soon as Jesus’ dead body had been placed therein, for we read in Matthew 27:62-66, “Now the next day, that followed the day of the preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate, Saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again. Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first. Pilate said unto them, Ye have a watch: go your way, make it as sure as ye can. So they went, and made the sepulchre sure,

sealing the stone, and setting a watch." *Then, after the tomb was shown to be empty on Easter morn and the ladies were on their way to tell the disciples, "behold, some of the watch came into the city, and shewed unto the chief priests all the things that were done. And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers, Saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept. And if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you. So they took the money, and did as they were taught: and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day."* (Matthew 28:11-15) *Nevertheless, despite the bribes by Jesus' enemies, the amazing fact of Jesus' bodily resurrection was and is powerfully and well established; so, His enemies' lies could not stifle the truth of the matter. JESUS LIVES!*

Early in Jesus' public ministry, "the Jews' passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem, And found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting: And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables; And said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise. And his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up. Then answered the Jews and said unto him, What sign shewest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things? Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days? But he spake of the temple of his body. When therefore he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them; and they believed the scripture, and the word which Jesus had said." (John 2:13-22)

"Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?" (John 11:25-26)

During Jesus' visible sojourn on earth, He said: "Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also." (John 14:19)

"Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God, (Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures,) Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." (Romans 1:1-4)

"Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." (1 Corinthians 15:12-22)

**“When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.”
(Colossians 3:4)**

Comment: Jesus said He would rise from the dead; so, He did rise from the dead! Jesus ALWAYS keeps His Word, His promises, for JESUS IS TRUTH personified! “Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” (John 14:6) Fellow Christians, Jesus’ bodily resurrection is positive proof of our own future bodily resurrection! “For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.” (Philippians 3:20-21) Furthermore, Jesus’ resurrection proves that we are justified in God’s sight, for Jesus, our Lord, is He, “Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.” (Romans 4:25) Yes, Jesus’ resurrection proves that God the Father has accepted the sacrifice of His only begotten Son for the reconciliation of the world, “To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.” (2 Corinthians 5:19)

**“But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.)”
(Ephesians 4:7-10)**

“So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God.” (Mark 16:19)

**“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.”
(Luke 24:50-51)**

“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 1:9-11)

Comment: JESUS CHRIST, forty days after His bodily resurrection, visibly ascended into heaven, where HE FOREVER RULES ALL THINGS ACCORDING TO BOTH HIS DIVINE AND HUMAN NATURES, at the right hand of the power of God the Father. ALL true believers in Jesus Christ will one day be with Him in glory, for after Jesus visibly returns to earth to judge the world, He will take His followers home to heaven in glorified bodies, since He once prayed, “Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.” (John 17:24) Fellow Christians, a wonderful future awaits us, thanks to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

“[God] raised him [Christ] from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.” (Ephesians 1:20-23)

Comment: Note well that Christ, since His resurrection – not only according to His divine nature, but also according to His human nature – rules over ALL things and fills ALL things with divine power and majesty!

“And he [the Lord] gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.” (Ephesians 4:11-12)

Jesus once said to His disciples, upon sending them forth to preach, **“He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me.” (Luke 10:16)**

Comment: JESUS CHRIST, OUR GREAT PROPHET, sends forth men to preach His Word, Law and Gospel, “for by the law is the knowledge of sin.” (Romans 3:20) [And] “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.” (Romans 1:16-17) “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.” (1 Corinthians 1:21) What a blessing for all of us Christians!

“My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” (1 John 2:1)

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

“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 an 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, w hen 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 7:24-28)

Comment: JESUS CHRIST, OUR GREAT HIGH PRIEST, intercedes for us before God the Father, “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.” (Hebrews 9:24) What a blessing for all of us Christians!

“And Jesus answered and said, while he taught in the temple, How say the scribes that Christ is the Son of David? For David himself said by the Holy Ghost, The LORD said to my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool.” (Mark 12:35-36)

“The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.” (Psalm 110:1)

Comment: JESUS CHRIST IS LORD, OUR GREAT KING, who governs and protects His Church; and, as Head of the Church, Jesus Christ rules the whole world in interest of the Church, “Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.” (Ephesians 1:23) What a blessing for all of us Christians!

“When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory.” (Matthew 25:31)

“Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.” (Revelation 1:7-8)

“For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works.” (Matthew 16:27)

Comment: When Jesus Christ visibly returns to earth, He will not come in humility, as at the first; rather, JESUS CHRIST WILL COME IN POWER AND GREAT GLORY, accompanied by numerous holy angels!

“Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device. And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.” (Acts 17:29-31)

“And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.” (Matthew 25:32-34, 41)

“Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.” (John 5:28-29)

“And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.” (Daniel 12:2)

“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)

Jesus says: **“He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.” (John 12:48)**

“The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.” (2 Peter 3:9-10)

“For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together. Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.” (Matthew 24:27-31)

Comment: The Lord Jesus Christ will come on the Last Day, which is appointed by God, but unknown to all sinful human beings. The Lord Jesus Christ shall judge ALL people— both those still living at His return and those who are dead, whom He will raise back to life from the dust. THE LORD JESUS CHRIST WILL JUDGE THE ENTIRE WORLD IN RIGHTEOUSNESS BY HIS HOLY WORD!

“What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.” (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)

Jesus Christ is He, **“In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.” (Ephesians 1:7)**

Comment: Jesus Christ's infinitely valuable and gracious work of redemption was accomplished for a purpose— THAT WE MAY BE HIS OWN, ACCOUNTED RIGHTEOUS AND BLAMELESS IN GOD'S SIGHT FOR JESUS' SAKE!

“For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.” (2 Corinthians 5:14-15)

Every Christian can and should, in honesty, confess with the Apostle Paul, **“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.” (Galatians 2:20)**

“That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, In holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life.” (Luke 1:74-75)

“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. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” (Ephesians 2:8-10)

Comment: JESUS CHRIST’S AMAZING AND PERFECT WORK OF REDEMPTION WAS ACCOMPLISHED SO THAT EACH OF US MAY LIVE UNDER HIM IN HIS KINGDOM, AND SERVE HIM IN EVERLASTING RIGHTEOUSNESS, INNOCENCE, AND BLESSEDNESS! Yes, Jesus Christ’s amazing and perfect work of redemption was accomplished so that each of us, now, willingly serves Him, our only Savior, by an active Christian life; enjoying His blessings now, on earth, and hereafter, in heavenly glory!

Fellow Christians, we can indeed be certain of our redemption, since Jesus Christ is surely risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity! This is most certainly true; for, we have noted the facts are plainly taught in the Holy Bible. Therefore, God grant that each and every one of us firmly believes the facts we’ve seen from Holy Scripture. Let us, by God’s grace and power, continue in the faith of Jesus Christ unto life everlasting.

m.e.l.