

ILLINOIS LUTHERAN CONFERENCE

Topical Bulletin, May 2020

With the current world-wide Covid-19 pandemic, this month's topic for consideration is appropriately the question: **Why do sicknesses, diseases, and plagues occur upon earth?** We will consider what the Holy Bible says in response to the question since God's Word is 100% truth and the ultimate authority on all subjects. [All Scripture quotes taken from the Holy Bible, King James Version]

For the answer as to why sicknesses, diseases, and plagues are upon earth we must look back at what happened after God created the earth and man to dwell thereon, for we read in Genesis 1:27-31, "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth. And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat. And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat: and it was so. And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day."

Comment: Observe that everything that God made was originally very good, without evil and the effects of evil. Hence, in the beginning there were NO sicknesses, diseases, and plagues— there was no death.

Man was created perfect by God and was given one commandment by God that he was to keep, for we read in Genesis 2:15-25 and 3:20, "And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die. And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him. And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof. And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him. And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed. And Adam called his wife's name Eve; because she was the mother of all living."

Comment: The first man and woman, our first parents, were named Adam and Eve. Unfortunately, our first parents broke God's command and sinned, as we read in Genesis 3:1-19, "Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God

hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat. And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons. And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden. And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou? And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself. And he said, Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat? And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat. And the LORD God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat. And the LORD God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel. Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee. And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.”

Comment: Note well that because man sinned, sorrows and death came upon man. Hence, the sorrows of sicknesses, diseases, and plagues are certainly included as results of sin since such sorrows can lead to dying. What is more, the never-ending death of man in hell according to body and soul is far worse than temporal death because Holy Writ reports: “The soul that sinneth, it shall die.” (Ezekiel 18:20) And, hell is the place, “Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.” (Mark 9:44)

However, look back at the quotation from Genesis chapter three and notice God graciously promised a Savior, for God said to the serpent, the devil, “I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.” (Genesis 3:15) Yes, the SEED of the woman would bruise the devil’s head, and that SEED is JESUS CHRIST! “For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. [For] when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.” (Romans 6:23; 1 John 3:8; Galatians 4:4-7)

Accordingly, even though sicknesses, diseases, and temporal death must be endured by us sinful human beings in this world, there is hope— the hope of eternal life according to soul and body for all those who sincerely repent of their sins and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, God’s only begotten Son, “For all have

sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. 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. 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.” (Romans 3:23-26; John 3:16-18, 36)

Now, some folks may wonder why a plague like COVID-19 has struck so many people in the world. The reason is that sin continues to run rampant in this world— a world that has for the most part rejected the Redeemer, Jesus Christ, whom God graciously sent to save the world. Indeed, when people ignore the Lord and His Word they bring His just punishments upon themselves, as happened to the Israelites of old, for we read in Leviticus 26:13-18, “I am the LORD your God, which brought you forth out of the land of Egypt, that ye should not be their bondmen; and I have broken the bands of your yoke, and made you go upright. But if ye will not hearken unto me, and will not do all these commandments; And if ye shall despise my statutes, or if your soul abhor my judgments, so that ye will not do all my commandments, but that ye break my covenant: I also will do this unto you; I will even appoint over you terror, consumption, and the burning ague, that shall consume the eyes, and cause sorrow of heart: and ye shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it. And I will set my face against you, and ye shall be slain before your enemies: they that hate you shall reign over you; and ye shall flee when none pursueth you. And if ye will not yet for all this hearken unto me, then I will punish you seven times more for your sins.”

Thus, it behooves us to regularly pray for widespread repentance— that people would be truly sorry for their sins, turn from their sins, and turn to God’s only begotten Son Jesus Christ in sincere heart-deep faith as their personal Savior and Lord, for it is written: “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.” (1 John 1:9; Acts 16:31)

God grant that people everywhere would turn to the Lord and pray as did David the sweet psalmist of Israel, “Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies; Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle’s.” (Psalm 103:1-5)

We Christians know our sins are forgiven us for Jesus’ sake, and yet some of us wonder why we are still subject to sicknesses, diseases, and plagues in this world. The answers are provided in the Holy Bible, for every Christian must in truth confess as did the Apostle Paul, “I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.” (Romans 7:18-19) Hence, we Christians still dwell in sinful flesh and we fall into sin daily while we yet live in this world. Consequently, God needs to correct us and point us again and again to our Savior, Jesus Christ, for we read in Hebrews 12:6-11, “whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if

ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." *Thus, God sometimes uses painful things to make us look up and pray to Him that we may more tenaciously cling to Jesus Christ our Savior.*

Yes, think of the example supplied to us by the Apostle Paul, who by inspiration of God wrote, "It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter. Of such an one will I glory: yet of myself I will not glory, but in mine infirmities. For though I would desire to glory, I shall not be a fool; for I will say the truth: but now I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me to be, or that he heareth of me. And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong." (2 Corinthians 12:1-10) So, in the Apostle Paul's case God used painful problems to keep the man looking up, praying, and clinging to Christ Jesus in heart-deep faith as his personal Savior and Lord.

Therefore, let us remember that no matter what comes upon us in this world – even sicknesses, diseases, and plagues – “we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. 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.” (Romans 8:28; 1 Corinthians 15:50-57)

So, let us hold fast in heart-deep faith to Jesus Christ as our personal Savior and Lord, for then we can be sure that never-ending bliss awaits us, for Revelation 21:3-4 reports in regards to the future for Christians, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.”

m.e.l.