the Concordia Lutheran

"The Scripture cannot be broken." John 10:35.

"Thy Word is a Lamp unto my feet, and a Light unto my path" Ps. 119:105.

Vol. XXXVII September--October, 1992 Nos. 9 & 10

A Mighty Fortress Is Our God, A Trusty Shield And Weapon.

OFFICIAL ORGAN
of the
Concordia Lutheran Conference

This publication appears in a monthly or bi-monthly issue at a subscription price of $3.00 per year.

EDITOR:
Rev. E. R. Stallings, Jr.
110 Grasmere Court
San Antonio, Texas 78218

ASSISTANT EDITOR:
Rev. M. L. Natterer
483 Tangent Street
Lebanon, Oregon 97355

LAY MEMBER:
Mr. Lloyd E. Martin
17400 Lockwood Ave.
Tinley Park, IL. 60477

Address all subscriptions, renewals, and remittances to: **Scriptural Publications, 110 Grasmere Court, San Antonio, Tx, 78218.** A special notice of expiration will be inserted in the issue which terminates your subscription.

Officers of the Concordia Lutheran Conference

PRESIDENT:
Rev. Paul R. Bloedel
9658 - 54th Avenue South
Seattle, Washington 98118

VICE-PRESIDENT:
Rev. Mark W. Dierking
P.O. Box 33 Wilmot, S.D. 57279

SECRETARY:
Rev. David T. Mensing
17151 South Central Avenue
Oak Forest, Illinois 60452

TREASURER:
Mr. Victor K. Bloedel
10200 - 62nd Avenue South
Seattle, Washington 98178

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE:

To set forth in simple and plain language the pure doctrine of God's Word as taught by the true Lutheran Church in full accordance with the **Book of Concord of 1580** and the **Brief Statement of 1932.**

To show, **on the basis of Scripture,** what true Christians are to believe and how, out of love for their Savior Jesus Christ, they are to lead godly lives.

To furnish aids for Bible study and articles for Scriptural devotion and meditation.

To demonstrate, by our Scriptural stand, that our **Concordia Lutheran Conference** is not a sect or a false church, but that the congregations which form it confess, teach, and practice the Word of God in its full truth and purity and use the Sacraments according to Christ's institution. All who do this are the true visible Church on earth.

To seek out all who truly share our Scriptural position in doctrine and practice, and to urge the mutual public acknowledgement of such God-given unity. Thus we shall be able thereafter to practice a God-pleasing fellowship with them.

To show that we do not have among us a mixture of divergent teachings but that we are "perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."

To set forth pertinent historical information which has a bearing upon the Church and to expose modern philosophical thought and the so-called scientific theories which contradict the Word of God.

To expose particularly the false teaching and practice of the various so-called "Lutheran" church bodies by comparing their teachings and practices with what is plainly recorded in the Word of God, in the Lutheran Confessions, and in the old orthodox Lutheran writings.

To expose false teaching and practice wherever it makes its appearance and to keep abreast of the current happenings in the church and among the nations as signs of the times.

To be truthful and factual in our reporting and freely to correct any misinformation of which we are not aware and which has been called to our attention. Also to clarify any information or statement of doctrine or practice which may be unclear to our readers or which may create a wrong impression.

The President's Column

"God LOVES you! Jesus LOVES you! We all LOVE you! Amen! Hallelujah!" This is the great sum and substance of **Sectarian** preaching today which is fast permeating so-called Lutheran churches whose members are conditioned to heap up for themselves preachers having itching ears. They want pastors who will pleasurably soothe their ears with good words and fair speeches, and lull them into spiritual lethargy (II Tim. 4:3). They preach so much love that their people begin to think that they are indeed loveable, that they are deserving of God's love—and that is exactly what all people, by nature, according to their sinful flesh, want to think. This is then the way sectarian pastors increase their membership, namely, by making the people feel good about themselves.

Several years ago, a middle-aged woman, who had been a visitor at a Divine Service in one of the congregations of our Conference, never returned. Later she told the pastor, who had visited her in her home to find out the reason why she had never come again to the Divine Service, "In your sermon, you called me a sinner!" This attitude goes hand in hand with the great humanistic dictum of self-esteem which has flooded the public school system of our nation together with the careful omission of civil righteousness and moral integrity. Preaching about sin, Hell, and damnation, as these important subjects are so plainly taught in the Bible, is seldom heard any longer in the so-called Christian churches of our land. These subjects are unpopular because they make people feel uncomfortable about themselves. Today's preachers want their hearers comfortable and carnally secure while they lead them to Hell!

If sin **is** mentioned in sectarian circles (that includes most so-called Lutheran circles today), special care is taken

not to make the people feel as though sin is something that is very bad, that sin is a terrible insult to the great Triune God who has created this earth and universe, that sin answers the question WHY there is a Hell, and that God wants no sinner in heaven. The total corruption of our human nature since the Fall of Adam and our daily sins in thoughts desires, words, and deeds are avoided like the plague. From the pulpits of the vast majority of churches in our country, whose members want to be recognized as Christians, sin is even made the subject of laughter and ridicule, or, in serious cases, excuses as a physical or mental ailment.

WHAT DOES ALL OF THIS HAVE TO DO with the Greatest Blessings in the World? In the light of the gross mixture of Law and Gospel (described above) which permeates external Christendom today, is it no wonder that the Greatest Blessing in the World, the FORGIVENESS OF SINS, is lost sight of and relegated by the majority of churches to a spiritual scrap heap in our miserable world which is obviously approaching, with ever-increasing speed, the fires of the Last Day of which the Apostle Peter speaks in his second epistle, chapter 3, verse 0, and, with a grievous lack of care, bringing upon their deceived hearers the Judgment of Hell spoken of by Jesus in Matthew 25:41! What good does it do to speak of Jesus and His love without a thorough understanding of the true nature and guilt of sin, and its well-deserved punishment, because of which our precious Savior as sent into this world? What good does it do to speak of Jesus as the righteous and holy Son of God who **"did no sin, neither was any guile found in His mouth,"** I Peter 2:22, if, by His perfect obedience, we were not made righteous and holy in the sight of God. What good does it do to speak of Christ's bitter suffering and death on the **"accursed tree of the cross"** if we do not see IN THAT FRIGHTFUL TORMENT (being **forsaken** by God) what we deserve by our sins and what our precious Jesus sustained, without protest or repining, in our place, as our Substitute? What, then, do people, who have been saturated with the "God **loves** you, Jesus **loves** you, we all **love** you" theology, mean, when they say, "I've taken Jesus into my heart"; "Christ has come into my heart and life"; I've made my decision for Christ"; "I'm saved"; "etc.," when they **know**

nothing of the fact that they **"are by nature the children of wrath"** (Eph. 2:3), that they **cannot** by their own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, their Lord, or come to Him (I Cor. 2:14), that of themselves they are **"wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked"** (Rev. 3:17), and have not experienced the terrors of conscience with regard to their own rotten unworthiness and spiritual poverty, and that they daily sin much and indeed deserve nothing but eternal punishment in Hell?

Oh, may we never forget that it is **because of OUR sins** (as they are perfectly reflected with all their filth, rottenness, guilt, and deserved punishment, in God's Holy Law) that the eternal Son of God **"took upon Him the form of a servant"** and **"became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross,"** Phil. 2:7,8, and that God's love, in Christ, extends to us even though, by nature, we are totally unloving and unlovable. Then, and then only, can we truly appreciate as **The Greatest Blessing in this Whole World**, the full and free **Forgiveness of All Our Sins** which Christ, our Savior has earned for us by His perfect obedience to God's Holy Law (in our place), by the shedding of His holy, precious blood (the blood of God Himself) which **"cleanseth us from all sin"** (I John 1:7), and by suffering in His own sinless body and soul, as our Substitute, the eternal punishment of Hell which we deserve by our sins that **"whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life,"** John 3:16.

Your servant in Christ,

Rev. Paul R. Bloedel

****

REMINDER TO ALL OUR READERS.... NOW STILL AVAILABLE...

... through our publishing house, copies of the recently printed **"SKETCH OF THE DOCTRINAL POSITION OF THE CONCORDIA LUTHERAN CONFERENCE"**. This important and useful pamphlet summarizes briefly what we believe and teach on the basis of Scripture in matters covered. A real bargain at only $ 2.50 per copy! Order from:

Scriptural Publications 10200 - 62nd Ave. So. Seattle, WA 98178

****

The Sabotage of the Reformation

Historians tell us that on October 31, 1517, when Martin Luther nailed the Ninety-five Theses on the door of the Castle Church in the city of Wittenberg, those hammer blows literally reverberated throughout all Europe. We can readily understand how those shock-waves were heard and felt. After all, in the Ninety-five Theses Luther attacked the shameful abuses in the selling of indulgences by the **Pope's representative,** John Tetzel. Luther stated that such indulgences issued by the Pope cannot free sinners from all punishments in purgatory and automatically guarantee their entrance into heaven. And what is an indulgence? This is Rome's answer: "An indulgence is the release, either in whole or in part, from the temporal punishment due for sin, granted by the authority of the Church" (A Catechism for Inquirers, page 37). In publishing his Theses Luther was also actually challenging, though that was not his intention at the time, the authority of Pope Leo X. Luther questioned, "Why does not the Pope release all souls from purgatory out of sheer impulse of thrice holy love? Is not this the most righteous of motives?" He further emphasized that men should not place their trust in the merit of indulgences, but in the precious Gospel message of God's grace in Christ in which they receive the forgiveness of their sins if they are truly sorry for them.

Thus the battle had begun and would not end until that valiant soldier of the Cross closed his eyelids in death to enjoy the peace of everlasting life with the Savior whom he had so courageously proclaimed. Unflinchingly Luther upheld the Scriptures as the sole Source and Norm of all teaching in the Church and opposed whatever teaching was contrary to God's Word. Down through the centuries the Bible had lost its authority in the Church being supplanted

by the teachings and traditions of men. In answer to the question: How is a man saved? The Roman Church now answered: Not by grace through faith alone but also by his works. The answer to this fundamental question was diametrically opposed to what the Scriptures so plainly teach, as every sincere Christian knows so well from such passages as Ephesians, chapter 2, verses 8 & 9, **"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."** After all, **"if by grace, then is it no more of works: Otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace: Otherwise work is no more work,"** Rom. 11:6. Having forsaken the Scriptures as the Sole Authority in the Church, it was not surprising that such a fundamental error should fill the void since nothing tickles man's vanity more than the notion that he can be justified by his works!

As flood waters quickly inundate the area so we find one false teaching after another enveloping the church. In 1075 A.D., Pope Gregory VII declared the marriage of priests invalid and that they must be broken. By 1215 A.D. the Roman Church had already invented the teaching that the bread and wine in the Lord's Supper are changed (transubstantiated) into the body and blood of Christ, and by 1226 A.D. the practice of the adoration of the host became prevalent. Then in 1303 A.D. Pope Boniface VIII officially declared, "It is necessary to salvation that every man should submit to the Pope"... "The supremacy of the Pope, even in temporal things is to be enforced" (Unam Sanctam). In 1415, the Council of Constance decreed that the cup in the Lord's Supper should be withheld from laymen. Added to these false teachings was the idolatrous veneration paid to the Virgin Mary and other saints.

These were the errors existing at the time of the Reformation and against which Luther battled courageously and unceasingly! Here was a man of great intelligence and ability who would have been able to lead a comfortable life of luxury had he chosen to use his talents in the pursuit of earthly wealth. But such was not the case with Luther. His aim was to glorify the Savior who had purchased him from sin, death and hell, with His holy precious blood. And this he sought to do with the fruits of his faith. This is plainly

evident throughout every activity of Luther's long career. His self-sacrificing labors, his great devotion and zeal, his faithfulness in carrying out the duties of his calling, was not to glorify himself, but his dear Savior. Listen to his prayer as he lay upon his death-bed: "Oh, my heavenly Father, O God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, O Thou faithful God! I thank Thee for having revealed to me Thy Son, Jesus Christ. I have believed in Him, preached Him, confessed Him, loved Him and praised Him. Him who the old pope and all the godless mock, persecute, and revile. I pray to Thee, Lord Jesus Christ, to take my poor soul into Thy hands. O heavenly Father, if I must now leave this body and withdraw myself from this life, I may yet know that I shall abide with Thee. No one can snatch me out of Thy hand."

How sad that this monumental task which the Lord carried out through his instrument, Martin Luther, has been and is being sabotaged! And here we are not thinking of the Roman Catholic hierarchy. The errors which they held at the time of the Reformation are still held by them with new ones thrown in for good measure. The Council of Trent, which convened between 1545 and 1563, gave its official answer to the Scriptural teachings of the Reformation by condemning them! Listen to what they declared concerning the Scriptural teaching that we are justified by the grace of God through faith in Christ alone! "If anyone saith that justifying faith is nothing else but confidence in the divine mercy which remits sins for Christ's sake or that this confidence alone is that whereby we are justified, let him by accursed" (Council of Trent, Session VI, Canon 12). In 1854, Pope Pius IX added a new false teaching. He proclaimed that "the Virgin Mary was preserved exempt from all stain of original sin" (Ineffabilis Deus, December 8, 1854). Then on November 1, 1950, Pope Pius XII proclaimed the Dogma of the Assumption—the bodily ascension of Mary to heaven--warning that "if anyone, which God forbid, shall willingly dare either to deny or to call into question what has been defined by Us, let him know that he has utterly abandoned divine and Catholic faith" (Apostolic Constitutio Munificentissimus Deus). According to their teaching, this was the privilege of the Pope since he was declared to be the infallible head and teacher "regarding faith and morals, and that, therefore, such definitions of the Roman Pontiff are

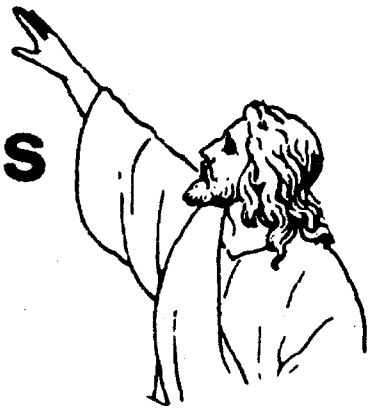
irreformable of themselves. But if anyone—which God may avert—presume to contradict this our definition, let him by accursed" (Fourth chapter Constitutio Dogmatica Prima De Ecclesia Christi; Vatican Council, 1870).

It is not in the Roman hierarchy where we observe the Reformation being sabotaged but in the "Lutheran" camp! The Roman Papacy has been opposed to the Scriptural teachings of the Reformation right from the outset and condemned them ever since. Referring to the Scriptural teachings emphasized by Luther and condemned by the Council of Trent, John J. Mulloy writes in the Catholic paper, **The Wanderer**, July 29, 1989: "Trent reaffirmed those doctrines which Luther had denied." The leopard has not changed its spots! The Roman antichrist described in II Thessalonians chapter 2 will remain until its destruction with the brightness of the Lord's coming (v.8). **Rome has not changed while many of those who erroneously call themselves "Lutheran" certainly have!** Back in 1984 a "U.S. Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogue On Justification By Faith: An Examination" was concluded with the observation that now Lutherans and Roman Catholics were in basic agreement on justification by faith! And what about the joint services, particularly during these last two decades, in which "Lutheran" pastors and Roman Catholic bishops and priests participate? The news media also reports numerous examples to the exchanging of pulpits between Roman Catholic priests and "Lutheran" pastors. **"What a sabotaging of the work of the Reformation!**

How careful we must be in these last evil days lest we, too, be lulled into a spiritual slumber by the insidiously seductive voice of the great harlot (Rev. 17). If we truly appreciate the spiritual blessings which the Lord has granted us through the work of Luther, then we shall strive to be humble believing students of God's Word! For only if we have our faith nourished and fed by the Holy Spirit in the Divine Services and Bible Classes as well as in our own private devotional use of Holy Scripture shall we be preserved, by God's grace, from becoming such "sabotage Lutherans."

M.L.N.

The SIGNS Pointing Us to JUDGMENT DAY



"And as He sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto Him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the world? And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you.!" --Matthew 24:3-4 and following

In Matthew chapter 24, as well as in Mark 13 and Luke 21, the Lord Jesus goes to great lengths to provide His disciples, then and now, with certain "signs" or indications pointing to the nearness of His second visible advent to judge the living and the dead. His purpose is not to frighten us (Luke 21:9), nor to give us clues according to which we might compute or even divine the day and time of His arrival (Mark 13:32-33), but rather **to incite us to perpetual watchfulness** (vs. 33-37) and **spiritual preparedness** (Luke 21:34-36; Matthew 24:44; 25:1-13), that we **look forward** to His second coming **with joyful anticipation** of our redemption drawing nigh (Luke 21:28), the final "pay-off," as it were, of all the blessings which our Savior earned for us.

The "signs of the times" described in Scripture can be divided into three basic categories: Abnormal occurrences and conditions a) in **human society**, b) in the **realm of nature**, and c) in **visible Christendom.** Their very character—the fact that they describe deterioration, destruction and catastrophe—foreshadows the end of the world at Christ's coming to judgment in much the same manner as physical weakness, illness and the aging process remind us that it is only a matter of time before our human frame returns to the dust, and our spirit returns unto God who gave it (Zech. 12:7). Thus we pray with the Psalmist (90:12) that the Lord teach us **"to number our days, that we may apply our hearts**

unto wisdom," the wisdom of His precious Word, so that whichever comes first—our departure from this vale of tears in death or our Savior's Second Coming for judgment—we may, by confident faith in His blood and righteousness **"be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man,"** clothed in the garments of salvation (Luke 21:36; Isaiah 61:10).

In HUMAN SOCIETY we have already witnessed many of the deplorable conditions that constitute "signs of the times," and such conditions are growing worse with every passing day: **1) Great Wickedness** reminiscent of the days of Noah and Lot, coupled with a **general malaise** and **complete indifference** to the warnings of God's Word. People will be "going about their business," "doing their own thing," right up to the very end, oblivious of their impending destruction (Matt. 24:37-39); Luke 17:26-30); and many will actively blaspheme Christ and ridicule **"the promise of His coming,"** as if that promise and all these signs constituted a cruel and transparent hoax perpetrated on the world by Jesus and His apostles (II Peter 3:3-4). **2) Violence** without parallel in the annals of history—personal violence and organized violence. We see it now already in the **runaway crime rate** that ravages our communities with more one-on-one vicious and senseless attacks than ever before, and gang violence of unheard of proportions in which innocent passersby are shot, stabbed, bombed, and driven over simply because there were in the wrong place at the wrong time! There is domestic violence including, besides outright murder, battering of spouses and children, rape and incestuous abuse, disfigurement by burning and slashing, neglect and abandonment of helpless children and babies, and the wanton slaughter of unborn infants in the name of "personal freedom" and "the pursuit of happiness!" **3) Unbridled warfare** and **"distress of nations with perplexity"** (Luke 21:25). The end of the "cold war" seems to be almost insignificant, inasmuch as the "hot" wars continue to rage everywhere, and nations are at one another's throats without letup, demonstrating with undeniable clarity that the humanistic and chiliastic dream of political and temporal **"peace on earth"** is and will continue to be not only elusive but unattainable, as Jesus Himself says in Matthew 10:34, **"I came not to send peace, but a sword."** And finally, **4) Hatred of true Christians** by the world round

about them, including their open persecution by unbelievers. Not only should we expect in the last time to **"be hated of all nations"** for Jesus' sake (Matt. 24:0), but we can also look forward to arrest, trial, conviction and even execution before both ecclesiastical and civil tribunals, not to mention persecution by members of our own families and other relatives! **"Yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service!"** John 16:2.

In the REALM OF NATURE, too, the "signs of the times" are already in evidence. We hear of them, read about them, and, due to "advances" in the visual media, we **SEE** them before our very eyes almost every day: **"Famines, and pestilences** (epidemics of killer diseases), **and earthquakes in divers places"** (Matt. 24:7), **"troubles"** (Mark 13:8), **"and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven,"** Luke 21:11. So-called "natural disasters" are becoming commonplace with ravaging devastation in lives and property -- hurricanes, typhoons, tornadoes, tropical storms, volcanoes, earthquakes and tremors, monsoon floods, avalanches, massive crop failures and resulting famines--**not** really "natural," as if they occurred by pure chance, but the visitation of God's wrath against the wicked and **signs** of our Savior's Second Coming to bestir us to watchfulness and preparedness. Every one of these occurrences; every comet, falling star and plummeting meteor; every cataclysm that gives testimony to the omnipotence of our Savior in His Kingdom of Power, should shake us from the drowsiness of our flesh to soberness and vigilance of the spirit, lest that Day come upon us unawares! (Luke 21:34).

And finally, signs in **VISIBLE CHRISTENDOM,** most of which have already been witnessed and continue to be manifested in our own day and time, in our own experience, even in our own outward fellowship. Since Matthew's account of Jesus' words is our primary focus, we look at it first: **1) False Christs and false prophets** shall arise and shall **deceive many!** (vs. 5, 11 & 23-26). Not only has the Roman Pope, the very **Antichrist** (II Thessalonians 2), succeeded in building up his empire to a staggering size **"after the working of Satan and with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness,"** but many other **"false prophets"** have come on the scene--in much greater

proliferation than at any other time in history—to pervert the saving Word of God and to draw away disciples after them by the insidious **"sheep's clothing,"** Matt. 7:15. So-called "tele-evangelists," for example, the spiritual con-artists of our time, preach their lies, deceive, "heal," and bilk **millions** out of **millions**—all "in the Name of Jesus!" To them Jesus will say when He comes again: **"I never knew you! Depart from Me, ye that work iniquity!"** —And those of Luther's heritage, who **once** preached, taught, held to, and practiced the full truth of Christ's Word, but who sold their spiritual birthright for temporal peace and tranquility to serve their own belly (Rom. 16:18), they too, with all the other **"false prophets in sheep's clothing"** will have a fearful accounting to give for having fed themselves instead of the Savior's flocks (Ezekiel 34:2ff.) and for having done the Lord's work deceitfully (Jeremiah 48:10). Sadly, "many" will have been deceived by false prophets before Christ's coming to take account of those who were **"stewards of the mysteries of God,"** I Cor. 4:1.

2) **Apostasy** (that is, departure from the truth and from the faith) will run rampant, with **offense** being given and taken, **betrayal** of true brethren by defectors from the Savior's Word, and **hatred** of faithful witnesses of the truth by those who reject and resent their testimony (vs. 10). **"And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold,"** (vs. 12). The temptations of the devil, the world, and our own sinful flesh will be so powerfully alluring that many who once professed **love for their Savior,** for His **Word,** for His **Church,** and swore allegiance and diligence and faithfulness to Him "even unto death," will grow **"lukewarm"** (Rev. 3:16) and finally **"cold."** They will have been **"led away with the error of the wicked"** and fallen from their own steadfastness (II Peter 3:17) by not growing in grace and in the knowledge of their Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, as He earnestly exhorted them to do through His apostle (vs. 18). Sadly, we have seen enough of such "falling away" in our own circles to point up the clear and present danger to our souls in "spiritual anorexia" --gradual starvation of the soul on those who **think** they are standing and therefore do not **need** to grow—a sure sign of the times!

And yet, by God's grace, in spite of false prophets and

the defection of false brethren, **3) the Gospel will be preached in all the world** before the end comes (Matt. 24:14). Even though Christ's true Church will be a **"little flock"** (Luke 12:32), persecuted from without, deserted by many who were once within, and heeded by practically no one, the Lord will delay His coming until His precious Gospel has gone forth to the ends of the earth and the Holy Spirit has gathered in every one of His elect; for He is **"longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance,"** II Peter 3:9. Who indeed can then complain that our dear Bridegroom has "tarried" such a seemingly long time (Matt. 25:5), when that has been His blessed, merciful and gracious purpose all along?

What is of **crucial importance** for US who anxiously wait for His return and see all these signs in the meantime is **His admonition** in verse 13, **"But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved,"** and **His comforting assurance** in verse 22, **"For the elect's sake those days shall be shortened."** And so we **watch** and **pray, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus!"** Rev. 22:20.

It is instructive to note at this juncture the "prophetic prospective" through which the Savior sees these signs unfolding, as if looking down a ribbon of highway and beholding both specific events in a series and the picture as a whole. For, beginning with verse 15 and continuing through verse 20, Jesus foretells the **destruction of Jerusalem** "in the same breath," as it were, with the **tribulations and other signs** leading up to His second visible coming. **"The abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet"** in the 9th, 11th, and 12th chapters of his prophecy, is the destruction of Jerusalem and particularly the desecration of the Temple by the Romans under General Titus in the year 70 A.D. Here the terrible tribulations visited upon Jerusalem by God for its steadfast rejection of the Messiah are **presages** or symbols-looking-ahead to the tribulations to be visited upon the world in general before Judgment Day. The disciples of Jesus, the true Christians left in Judea at the time of the Temple's desecration, were directed to leave with all deliberate haste, not pausing even to pack up personal belongings, and to flee to the relative safety of the mountains. Likewise, as the Last Day nears, the tribulations

to be experienced by faithful Christians will be **unparalleled in history**, yea, even the pillaging and destruction of their houses of worship! They must be ready for immediate and precipitous departure, **watchful** and **prepared** to go with the speed of lightening when the **TRUE Christ** suddenly appears in the clouds of heaven. In the meantime, the Christians will gather together like eagles around a carcass to feed on Christ their Savior, wherever His precious Word is still taught in its purity, so that, like the five wise virgins waiting for the Bridegroom, their lamps of faith may be well-supplied with the fuel of the Gospel, in perpetual readiness for His appearing.

Then, at the appointed time known only to God (24:36), the entire universe will begin to come-apart-at-the-seams, as it were, with the stars falling from heaven, the sun and moon darkened (vs. 29), the sea and the waves roaring as with tidal waves out of control (Luke 21:25). The great tribulation will be passed and the end will be at hand. The Creator will suddenly suspend all the "laws" by which He held His creatures to orderliness! And out of the chaos in the skies **"shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven" --"the brightness of His coming"** (II Thess. 2:8), so **unmistakable** and **awesome** a sight that the heathen nations round the globe, seeing it at the very same instant, **"shall mourn"** in despair, knowing full well that the Day of Judgment has come upon them **"unawares!" "And they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory,"** just as He promised. And their blasphemy of that promise (II Peter 3:3ff), the evidence of their unbelief, will condemn them to an **eternity** of **"mourning"** with **"wailing and gnashing of teeth"** (Matt. 13:41-42) in never-ending punishment, contempt and despair!

On the other hand, the **"sign of the Son of Man"** will be a cause for **great rejoicing** among the believers when they see Him **"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"** (vs. 30-31). Having been **justified** by God's grace through faith in the merits of His Son, and having on the robe of **Christ's righteousness** imputed to them by God Himself (Isaiah

61:10; Phil. 3:9; etc.), the believers will have **nothing to fear** when Jesus comes for judgment, although, even **then**, they will steadfastly deny any goodness or merit in themselves as the cause of their justification and glorified resurrection (Matt. 25:37-39). **"I will see you again,"** says our Savior in John 16:22, **"and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you."**

We and all believers in Christ Jesus have much cause for rejoicing **now already** at our **redemption** from sin, death and the devil; at our **justification** by God's grace for Christ's sake through faith; and at our promised **glorification** with the saints in light as the elect children of God and heirs of everlasting life (Rom. 8:30). Yes, **now already**, as we suffer tribulation and persecution for the sake of the Gospel, as we see many of the "signs of the times" having been and being fulfilled, and as we by His grace **"live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present world"** as the fruit of our faith, **"looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior, Jesus Christ,"** let us **rejoice** as the second visible advent of the Lord Jesus draws near! But let us do so, not carelessly and unmindful of His earnest admonition to "watch" (vs. 42)! **Preparedness at all times** is essential if we are not to have that day come upon US unawares! Like the five wise virgins, may our lamps of faith be brightly burning, trimmed by daily contrition and repentance, and perpetually fueled with the oil of the Gospel by daily growth in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior as we continue in His precious Word of Life! For then we can lift up our heads **even now, "for our redemption draweth nigh!"**

—D.T.M.

Understanding WORK in the Light of Scripture

"For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread." II Thessalonians 3:10-12

If you were to take a topical concordance of the Bible and look up the words, work or labor, perhaps you would be surprised at how much the Bible has to say about work. In the Bible we find that God Himself was the first to work. Genesis 2:1-3 says, **"Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had made; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it He had rested from all His work which God created and made."** Here we see that God Himself engaged in work when by the power of His Word He created all things in six days.

Moreover, God is still at work. He is at work preserving and upholding all things by the Word of His power (Heb. 1:3). In addition He is still at work bringing people to faith in Christ through the preaching of the Word and the administration of the Sacraments. Thus, even though God does not need to work, He did and still does work. It is not surprising, therefore, that, when God created man in His own image, He put Adam to work. Genesis 2:15 says, **"And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it."** Adam's job was that of a gardener and vinedresser in the Garden of Eden. Although we cannot comprehend what it was like to work in a sinless

state, we can be sure it was most pleasant! Of course, man's work did not remain so pleasant. After Adam sinned, God said to him, **"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,"** Gen. 3:17-19. This is the answer of Scripture as to why work is hard no matter what one's occupation may be. Every job will have it's share of sorrow and will require the sweat of the brow. It is all the consequence of man's fall into sin.

However, even though sin has affected all things, including work, work itself is not sinful or evil. Even after the Fall, God still had Adam work. Yet it is because of sin that man has lost sight of the proper attitude toward work. Sin has caused man to despise, neglect, and abuse work. Therefore, let us examine further what Scripture says of work.

First, let's see how work is abused by man. While sin has affected work, man the sinner has himself abused work. The most common abuse is that of NOT working! In the context of II Thessalonians 3, we find that the Thessalonian Christians were not working due to a false understanding about Christ's Second Coming. The imminence and certainty of Christ's return made the Thessalonians think they should stop working and just sit and wait for Jesus to come back! Paul's answer to them was this: **"For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat,"** (vs. 10). Here Paul states a principle of Scripture that if a person refused to work, he does not deserve to eat. It is God's will that a person earn his living. How many people ought not to be eating!

Other Scriptures address this very point. Proverbs 13:4 says, **"The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing."** Proverbs 15:19 says, **"The way of the slothful man is as an hedge of thorns."** Proverbs 23:21 says, **"For the**

drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty: and drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags." Ecclesiastes 10:18 says, **"By much slothfulness the building decayeth; and through idleness of the hands the house droppeth through."** Moreover, just beyond our text Paul says: **"And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother,"** (vs. 14,15).

What, then, is to be said about social welfare which is so entrenched in our society? The welfare system in our country and in most countries serves to discourage people from working. No doubt there are legitimate hardship cases where no one would begrudge needy people from getting some assistance. However, it is best, where possible, that family, friends, and church help their own, and that civic groups help the poor and needy. There may arise, of course, an enormous emergency such as caused by recent hurricanes where the government's help is needed. In fact, a case of emergency arose in the Old Testament when Joseph served under the Pharaoh. When a seven-year famine was going to arise, Joseph, being blessed with wisdom from God, advised the Pharaoh to required the people during the seven years of plenty to give a portion of their harvests to the Pharaoh to be stored up so that when the famine arose, the country would have sufficient food. However, this was an emergency measure which did not continue after the emergency was over. Here in our country many emergency measures adopted during the Depression and later during World War II have remained to become the norm where not only the needy, but also the "free-loaders" get a free handout!

And what is a Christian's duty if he lives under a social welfare system? His duty is to work! The principle still stands: **"If any would not work, neither should he eat."** He should not simply "sponge" off a welfare program. Some people actually make their living off of social welfare! This is a two-fold sin: First it is a sin of laziness and a waste of one's God's given capacity to work; and secondly, it is a sin of robbing hard-working people through unnecessary taxation. It is no myth that there are people who drive around in Continentals and Cadillacs who come into grocery stores with food stamps!

God's Word puts the lazy, slothful person to shame by asking him to consult with those most industrious of insects--the ants! Proverbs 6:6-11 says: **"Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise: Which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest. How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep? Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man."**

However, there is another abuse of work that is even more damaging to the soul. When a person works hard, but only for his own glory and selfish gain, then his work becomes his God. We are to work for the glory of God and the welfare of our neighbor as well as for ourselves. The Bible says: **"And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ,"** Col. 3:23-24. When people become self-serving "workaholics" such that church, family, spouse, and one's very own soul are neglected, this is sin. If a man slaves at his job but loses his family and his soul, what has he gained? Jesus says, **"For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"** Matt. 16:26. Yes, even hard work can become vanity. Solomon once wrote: **"For my heart rejoiced in all my labor: and this was my portion of all my labor. Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labor that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun,"** Eccl. 2:10-11. Here Solomon describes the vanity of work apart from Christ.

What, then, is he relationship between work and faith in Christ? The relationship is this: Like any other facet of our lives, work is blessed and brings satisfaction only as it is done out of faith in Christ. How is this so? When a person believes in Christ, his sins are forgiven and he stands justified before God. Being justified through faith, everything a man does he does as a justified man. He is God's man in Christ. His is walking, standing, sitting, working, and resting under the favor of God through faith in Christ.

Everything is covered and sanctified by the blood of Christ. Thus, no matter what one's job or occupation may be, a plumber, a mailman, a mechanic, a teacher or a pupil, what counts is that he is a Christian and on that account his work is blessed of God. Even what men consider to be the lowliest of jobs is still honorable in Christ.

This does not mean a Christian cannot take advantage of his talents and opportunities to advance himself. Even such talents and opportunities are God-given. God does indeed bless His Christians because they are His children in and through His grace. But, if one attains his God-given limits, or is prevented from doing better, he is to be satisfied with his work. Paul says, **"I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content,"** Phil. 4:11.

Now it must be conceded that there are times when a Christian's faith and contentment are sorely tested and challenged. A Christian may be doing his work faithfully and diligently, yet he finds his work is not appreciated or rewarded with fair compensation. He finds he does not get the raise he thinks he deserves. Or, he cannot find a better job which he feels he is qualified to have. What should a Christian do in such cases? First he should pray about it! As we often sing: "Take it to the Lord in prayer." In addition, let us also acknowledge that unfairness and inequalities do and will exist because of sin. This is all a part of the curse upon sin in the world. Yet the Christian should remember that the Lord is mindful of his situation. He knows the very hairs of our head! He knows our downsitting and our uprising (Psalm 139:2). Likewise, **"The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord,"** Psalm 37:23. This is all a part of living by faith. We must learn that our faith does apply to our everyday living and should not be left on the pew at church!

What is more, God promises to bless the labors of His people. Psalm 128:1-2 says, **"Blessed is every one that feareth the Lord; that walketh in His ways. For thou shalt eat the labor of thine hands: happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee."** Often, without our realizing it, the Lord blesses us even beyond what we need. We are able to help our neighbor betimes, and also to support the Lord's

work in our congregation. As the Bible says, **"Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him,"** I Cor. 16:2.

And although it may not strike us as a blessing at first, work keeps us busy such that it keeps us away from many temptations to sin. Too much idel time and becomes the "devil's workshop." In the text Paul says: **"For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies."** Work helps keep this from happening.

It is when we approach work in the light of the Holy Scriptures that we shall accept our work as God-pleasing activity and be reasonably content with it. Keep in mind that God has you where He wants you at all times. It is there that you are to be the **"salt of the earth."** Then, go to work with this resolve from the Bible: **"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might,"** Eccl. 9:10. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

ERS

+ - + - + - + - + - + - +

Around the World

with editorial comment

by M. L. Natterer

"It's been a rough month for Time Warner Inc. The trouble started in May when Dallas Police Officer Glenn White complained about the Warner Bros.- distributed rap song "Cop Killer." White's rage over the scatology-laden release by the rapper actor Ice-T soon spread to law-enforcement organizations nationwide. The officers threatened to boycott Time Warner and pull their pension money out of the company's stock. Then, last week, 60 members of

Congress signed a letter expressing "outrage" toward the conglomerate, and the National Rifle Association said it would battle the company with "full legal and financial resources." But Warner officials have had the last laugh, it seems: Billboard magazine figures that Ice-T's "Body Count" album, which includes the incendiary rap tune, has soared on the charts in the past week. Time Warner's Jeanette Lerman says the company has no plans to pull the album from the shelves. "We stand for encouraging the exchange of ideas and information," she says. "In order to accomplish that, we have to support artistic freedom."

The above article from Newsweek, July 6, 1992, reveals once again the moral depravity which is becoming increasingly more glaring and violent. The Bible describes the days before the Flood as being "filled with violence" **(Gen. 6:11,13). And in the New Testament the Lord Jesus reminds us that** "as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be" **Matt. 24:37. These last days of the world are filled with violence not only against the ordinary citizen, but also against our law enforcement agencies which have been specifically instituted to protect the law-abiding citizen from acts of violence! Instead of appreciating the self-sacrificing protection given by our police officers, there are those who, under the guise of "artistic freedom," enrich themselves by vilifying and even advocating the murder of the officers in such a disgusting rap song as "Cop Killer." Such despisers of the ordinance of God** "shall receive to themselves damnation," **Romans 13:2.**

++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++

WELCOME
TO ALL OLD AND NEW SUBSCRIBERS

We appreciate your concern for true orthodox Lutheranism and are certain that, by God's grace, you will receive rich spiritual benefits from your faithful reading of **CONCORDIA LUTHERAN** articles which are based solidly upon the pure and unerring Word of God.

Only $3.00 per year!

Give a subscription to a relative or friend.

The CONCORDIA LUTHERAN
110 Grasmere Court
San Antonio, TX 78218

Non-Profit Organization
U. S. Postage
P A I D
San Antonio, Texas
Permit No. 322

CONCORDIA LUTHERAN CONFERENCE CHURCH DIRECTORY

GOOD SHEPHERD EV. LUTHERAN CHURCH
4050 South Melpomene Way
Tucson, Arizona 85730
Worship Service..... 10:00 a.m.
Sunday School and
Bible Class..... 11:15 a.m.
REV. DAVID G. REDLIN, Pastor
4050 South Melpomene Way
Tucson, Arizona 85730
Telephone: (602) 721-7618

HOLY SCRIPTURE EV. LUTHERAN CHURCH
San Antonio, Texas 78218
(Currently meeting at Continental Motor Inn, 9735 I-35 North)
Worship Service..... 10:00 a.m.
Sunday School and
Bible Class..... 11:15 a.m.
REV. E. R. STALLINGS, JR., Pastor
110 Grasmere Court
San Antonio, Texas 78218
Telephone: (512) 656-2125

PEACE EV. LUTHERAN CHURCH
Central Avenue at 171st Place
Oak Forest, Illinois 60452
(South Suburban Chicago)
Sunday School and
Bible Class..... 8:30 a.m.
Worship Service..... 10:00 a.m.
REV. DAVID T. MENSING, Pastor
17151 South Central Avenue
Oak Forest, Illinois 60452
Telephones -- Church Office and Pastor's Study: (708) 532-4288
Parsonage: (708) 532-9035

Note: On the 1st & 3rd Sundays of each month, services are held in our Midland, Michigan chapel at 2409 Rodd Street:
Worship Service..... 7:30 p.m.
Sunday School and Bible Class following the service.
(Taped services on other Sundays)

ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH
6th and Tangent
Lebanon, Oregon 97355
Sunday School and
Bible Class..... 10:00 a.m.
Worship Service..... 11:00 a.m.
REV. M. L. NATTERER, Pastor
483 Tangent Street
Lebanon, Oregon 97355
Telephone: (503) 258-2941

ST. LUKE'S LUTHERAN CHURCH
55th Ave. S. & S. Fountain St.
Seattle, Washington 98118
Telephone: (206) 723-1078
Sunday School and
Bible Class..... 9:15 a.m.
Worship Service..... 10:30 a.m.
REV. PAUL R. BLOEDEL, Pastor
9658 - 54th Avenue South
Seattle, Washington 98118
Telephone: (206) 723-7418

Note: Services are also held in Victoria, British Columbia on the 1st and 3rd Sundays. Please call the Pastor for current location.
Sunday School..... 3:00 p.m.
Worship Service..... 3:45 p.m.
Bible Class..... 5:30 p.m.

ST. STEPHEN'S EV. LUTHERAN CHURCH
Wilmot, South Dakota 57279
Worship Service.....
(June 1st thru September 30th)
..... 9:30 a.m.
(October 1st through May 31st)
..... 10:00 a.m.
Sunday School and Bible Class... .....after the service.
REV. MARK W. DIERKING, Pastor
Box 33
Wilmot, South Dakota 57279
Telephone: (605) 938-4710