

Lutheran Confessions

Apology of the Augsburg Confession: Article VII and VIII. The Church

5] But the Church is not only the fellowship of outward objects and rites, as other governments, but it is originally a fellowship of faith and of the Holy Ghost in hearts. [The Christian Church consists not alone in fellowship of outward signs, but it consists especially in **inward communion of eternal blessings in the heart, as of the Holy Ghost, of faith, of the fear and love of God**]; which fellowship nevertheless has outward marks so that it can be **recognized**, namely, the pure doctrine of the Gospel, and the administration of the Sacraments in accordance with the Gospel of Christ. [Namely, where God's Word is pure, and the Sacraments are administered in conformity with the same, there certainly is the Church, and there are Christians.] And this Church alone is called the body of Christ, which Christ renews [Christ is its Head, and] sanctifies and governs by His Spirit, as Paul testifies, Eph. 1, 22 sq.,

9] And this article has been presented for a necessary reason. [The article of the Church Catholic or Universal, which is gathered together from every nation under the sun, is very comforting and highly necessary.] **We see the infinite dangers which threaten the destruction of the Church.** In the Church itself, infinite is the multitude of the wicked who oppress it [despise, bitterly hate, and most violently persecute the Word, as, e.g., the Turks, Mohammedans, other tyrants, heretics, etc. For this reason the true teaching and the Church are often so utterly suppressed and disappear, as if there were no Church, which has happened under the papacy; it often seems that the Church has completely perished]. Therefore, in order that we may not despair, but may know that the Church will nevertheless remain [until the end of the world], likewise that we may know that, however great the multitude of the wicked is, yet the Church [which is Christ's bride] exists, and that Christ affords those gifts which He has promised to the Church, to forgive sins, to hear prayer, to give the Holy Ghost, this article in the Creed presents us these consolations....

13] If we will define the Church only as an outward polity of the good and wicked, men will not understand that the kingdom of Christ is righteousness of heart and the gift of the Holy Ghost [that the kingdom of Christ is spiritual, as nevertheless it is; that therein Christ inwardly rules, strengthens, and comforts hearts, and imparts the Holy Ghost and various spiritual gifts], but they will judge that it is only the outward observance of certain forms of worship and rites....

19] Thus John [Matt. 3, 12: *He will thoroughly purge His floor, and gather His wheat into the garner; but He will burn up the chaff*] speaks **concerning the whole race of the Jews, and says that it will come to pass that the true Church will be separated from that people.** (Bente, F., *Concordia Triglotta*, Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Northwestern Publishing House, 1997).

Put it into Practice

These questions have been put together to help you as you extend and apply tonight's Scripture to your life.

Prayer

Almighty God, we implore You, show Your mercy unto Your humble servants, that we who put no trust in our own merits may not be dealt with after the severity of Your judgment, but according to Your mercy; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **AMEN** (*Collect for 3rd Last Sunday*)

Word of God: Matthew 24:15-28 (on back)

Questions to Ponder in Prayer

- Where is the holy place? (Hebrews 9:1-5, 1 Kings 8:6-11)
- Examine Daniel 11:31 and 12:11 to see where Daniel spoke of "the abomination that causes desolation." (This abomination will leave the Temple desolate of worshippers.) The time of which Daniel prophesies is found in 1 Maccabees 1:20-64. In 168 BC, Antiochus Epiphanes erected a pagan altar on top of the great altar of burnt sacrifice before the Sanctuary.
- Jesus tells that this time will be similar to what Daniel prophesied. Josephus tells how Titus' armies surrounded Jerusalem before her fall and destruction in 70 AD. The Jewish historian Josephus in *War*, book 5-6.
- When the Christians see this abomination of desolation standing in the holy place, what are they to do? (v. 16-18)
- Why the concern for the Sabbath, pregnancy and nursing mothers?
- What are the similarities between the destruction of Jerusalem and the Flood, Sodom and Gemorrah, Babylonian Captivity, etc.?
- Why does God bring this destruction and upon who? (Jn 12:48)
- What does the destruction of Jerusalem (in AD 70) mean for believers who are anticipating an end (death or Christ's Second Coming)? (Mt 24:44) Where are we to flee for a refuge?
- This destruction of Jerusalem will leave these new Jewish believers susceptible to false christs and false prophets. Why? (Rev 22:20)
- Who are the elect, the chosen? Can the elect be deceived? (v.24)
- What keeps the elect from being deceived? (v. 25, 1 Peter 1:5)
- Should we look for signs and miracles? ("counterfeit miracles" 2 Ths 2:9)
- Concerning Christ's return, what does God's Word teach?
 - Jesus Christ will return (Lk 21:27). B. On the Last Day (2 Peter 3:10). C. Seen visibly, not secretly (Mt 24:27), D. To Judge the world (Mt 25:31f), not set up an earthly government (Jn 18:36).
- Why is it inconsistent that we would point to the Christ visibly?
- Verse 28 is a hard verse to understand. The comparison is between the vulture who gorges himself on a dead rotting carcass. Similarly, the false prophets/Christs will stuff themselves on the carcass of the rotting nation.

6:30 PM "Learn by Heart"

Through simple repetition those present will inwardly digest...

Hymn #177, stanza 1
Lord's Prayer, 2nd Petition and
Meaning, p.302
1 Thessalonians 4:14

7:00 PM "Catechesis"

+ Opening Verses
"O Lord, open my lips..." p.224

+ Ascription of Praise
"Praise to you, O Christ. Alleluia." p.225

Reading

St. Matthew 24:15-28 (back)

Hymn

"Wake, Awake, For Night is Flying" #177

Catechesis on... (back)

St. Matthew 24:15-28

Liturgy

Catechism

--prayer based on reading

+ Recite Word by Word insert

Ten Commandments
Lord's Prayer
Apostles' Creed
Sacrament of Holy Baptism
Matthew 28:19
Mark 16:16
Confession & Absolution
John 20:22-23
Sacrament of the Altar
Words of Institution

Collect of the Day
--prayer based on reading

R. AMEN

Benediction

R. AMEN

Catechesis on St. Matthew 24:15-28

15“Therefore when you see the ‘abomination of desolation,’ spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place” (whoever reads, let him understand),
16“then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.
17“Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house. 18“And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes. 19“But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! 20“And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath. 21“For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. 22“And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect’s sake those days will be shortened. 23“Then if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or ‘There!’ do not believe it. 24“For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. 25“See, I have told you beforehand. 26“Therefore if they say to you, ‘Look, He is in the desert!’ do not go out; or ‘Look, He is in the inner rooms!’ do not believe it. 27“For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. 28“For wherever the carcass is, there the eagles will be gathered together. (NKJV)

The Return of Christ

“It is also taught among us that our Lord Jesus Christ will return on the last day for judgment and will raise up all the dead, to give eternal life and everlasting joy to believers and the elect but to condemn ungodly men and the devil to hell and eternal punishment.

4 Rejected, therefore, are the Anabaptists who teach that the devil and condemned men will not suffer eternal pain and torment. 5 Rejected, too, are certain Jewish opinions which are even now making an appearance and which teach that, before the resurrection of the dead, saints and godly men will possess a worldly kingdom and annihilate all the godless. (AC XVII)

Millennialism: Definition of terms:

millennialism (or Chiliasm) = the doctrine that Christ will reign on earth for a thousand years, presumably taken from Revelation 20:1-7. (Note: In Latin, mille=1000; and in Greek chilioi=1000)

dispensationalism = divides the history of man into periods of time, usually seven. The last being the millennial reign of Christ on earth.

rapture = The removing of believers from the earth

There are primarily THREE VIEWS:

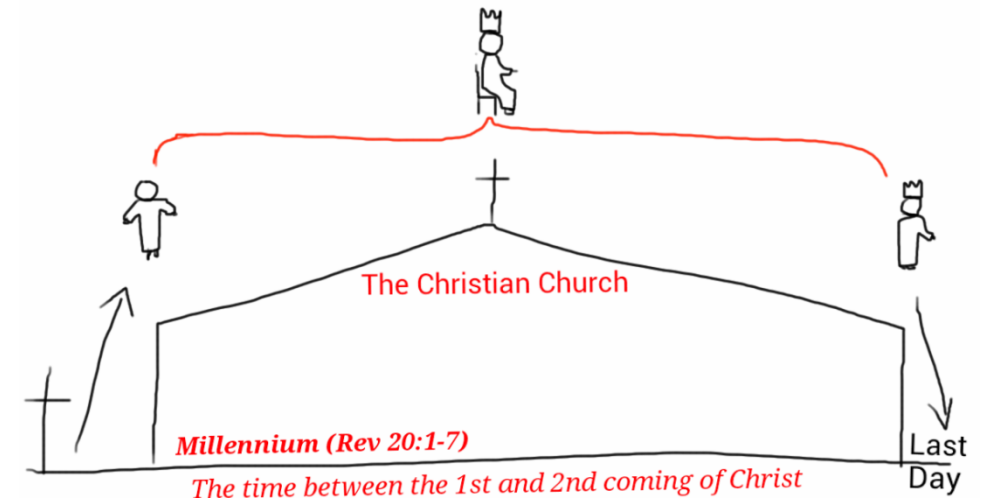
1. **Pre-millennialism** = Christ will come to this earth **before or at the beginning** of the Millennium (1000 year reign). When Christ visibly returns he will remove(rapture) believers from this earth. Dead believers will be resurrected and living believers transfigured and taken to heaven. Many will be saved and world-wide righteousness ensues. Some premillennialists are **dispensational**, dividing the history of man into seven periods of time, the 7th being Christ’s millennial reign on earth.

2. **Post-millennialism** = The Gospel will gradually permeate the world and this condition(the universal acceptance of the Gospel) will remain for 1000 years. At the end there is a falling away, then Christ will return visibly **after** the Millennium.

3. **Amillennialism** = literally means "no millennium." Amillennialism is an unfortunate term since the question is not really whether there is or is not a millennium but what is it and when is it. **Historic Christianity** teaches a millennium based on Rev. 20:1-7, but without the hyperliteralism forced on the passage by pre- and post-millennialists. The millennium is the period of time between the first coming (as a humble man) and second coming of Christ(at the end of the world as king). **We live in the millennium.**

These false teachings have led to confusion and doubt so that rather than believers looking forward to heaven(AC 14:2, Mt 5:12, Phil 3:20-21), their sights are set on an earthly kingdom. It has also led believers to either spiritual laxity since Christ is no longer imminent or to a feverish preoccupation with the "signs of the times."

CATECHESIS ON ST. MATTHEW 24:15-28



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The Lord's Prayer, Second Petition

“...yet we pray nevertheless that it may come to us, that is, prevail among us and with us, so that we may be a part of those among whom His name is hallowed and His kingdom prospers” (LC III 50).

Kingdom of God=the Holy Church

“But what is the kingdom of God? Answer: Nothing else than what we learned in the Creed, that God sent His Son Jesus Christ, our Lord, into the world to redeem and deliver us from the power of the devil, and to bring us to Himself, and to govern us as a King of righteousness, life, and salvation against sin, death, and an evil conscience, for which end He has also bestowed His Holy Ghost, who is to bring these things home to us by His holy Word, and to illumine and strengthen us in the faith by His power” (LC III 52).

“For, thank God, a seven-year-old child knows what the church is, namely, **holy believers and sheep who hear the voice of their Shepherd**. So children pray, “I believe in one holy Christian church.” Its holiness does not consist of surplices, tonsures, albs, or other ceremonies of theirs which they have invented over and above the Holy Scriptures, but **it consists of the Word of God and true faith**” (SA III, XII 2-3)

John 3:5-8, “Jesus answered, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, **unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God**. 6That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ 8The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.’”

Matthew 19:14, “But Jesus said, ‘Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is **the kingdom of heaven**.’”

How Does the Kingdom Come?

1. God provides the Word (and Sacraments).

“All this is nothing else than saying: Dear Father, we pray, **give us first Thy Word**, that the Gospel be preached properly throughout the world; and....”

Matthew 28:19-20, “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, **baptizing them** in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **teaching them** to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen.

Romans 1:16, “For I am not ashamed of **the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes**, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.”

2 Thessalonians 2:13b-14, “...God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, to which **He called you by our gospel**, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

2. The Word(and Sacraments) create faith, which receives Christ for our justification and begins to sanctify us.

“...**secondly, that it be received in faith, and work and live in us**, so that through the Word and the power of the Holy Ghost Thy kingdom may prevail among us, and the kingdom of the devil be put down, that he may have no right or power over us, until at last it shall be utterly destroyed, and sin, death, and hell shall be exterminated, that we may live forever in perfect righteousness and blessedness” (LC III, 54b).

Colossians 1:5-6, “because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in **the word of the truth of the gospel, which has come to you**, as it has also in all the world, and **is bringing forth fruit**, as it is also among you since the day you heard and knew the grace of God in truth.”

Ephesians 2:10, “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”

The Kingdom For Ourselves...

Acts 2:42, “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.”

Galatians 5:22-23, “But **the fruit of the Spirit** is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.”

Ephesians 5:18-20, “And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, 19speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, 20giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,”

... and the Kingdom For Others

“Now we pray for both these things, that it may come to **those who are not yet in it**, and, **by daily increase, to us who have received the same**, and hereafter in eternal life” (LC III 53).

Acts 26:28-29, “Then Agrippa said to Paul, “You almost persuade me to become a Christian.” And Paul said, “I would to God that not only you, but also **all who hear me today, might become both almost and altogether such as I am**, except for these chains.”

1 Timothy 2:3-4, “For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, **who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth**.”

The Heavenly Kingdom to Come

“For the coming of God’s Kingdom to us occurs in two ways; first, here in time through the Word and faith; and secondly, **in eternity forever through revelation**.

2 Corinthians 5:7, “For we walk by faith, not by sight.” (Also Phil 3:20)

2 Timothy 4:18, “And the Lord will deliver me from every evil work and preserve me for **His heavenly kingdom**. To Him be glory forever and ever. Amen!”