

Lent Vespers 3
25 March 2012
Concordia Lutheran Mission
Terrebonne, Oregon

“Through the Gospel, Christ Builds Zion, His Church.”

“For God will save Zion, and will build the cities of Judah:
that they may dwell there, and have it in possession.”

Psalm 69:35

Introduction

How does Christ build His Church? Christ builds His Church through His Word and Sacraments.¹ For through His Word and Sacraments He bequeaths to men the remission of sins, which gives men life eternal. Through and on the basis of this salvation, Christ’s Church is built and, therefore, gathered. That salvation through the Word and the Sacraments is the foundation of Christ’s Church.

For this reason, God calls His Church Zion, i.e. Mt. Calvary, where our Lord and Savior was crucified for our sins and the sins of all men. For wherever God’s Word and Sacraments are, there is Zion, for Christ’s Word and Sacraments deliver to men the benefits of the Cross. Hence, the Church is called Zion because the Church is the offspring of Christ and Him Crucified on Mt. Zion.²

¹“... He [Christ] builds up, maintains, and governs His Church exclusively through His Word and the Sacraments, by which He creates and preserves faith in the Gospel through the Holy Ghost and for the administration of which He gives His gifts to the Church and has, particularly, instituted the office of the public ministry. ... Those who resort to other means than the Word and the Sacraments to build the Church are disobedient to Christ’s instructions. And they are acting the part of fools; means selected by human wisdom do not build, but only destroy the Church.” The Rev. Dr. Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, Vol. II, p. 388. Dr. Pieper was President of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod from 1899-1911.

²“Many people to-day entertain strange ideas indeed as to the manner in which a person enters the kingdom of God; they think of pilgrimages to Palestine, to Jerusalem, and to Mount Zion. Contrary to such false views, however, we must firmly maintain that no pilgrimages or changes of location are required to come to Jerusalem or to Mount Zion in the New Testament sense. Of all those who believe in Christ Holy Scripture declares: ‘Ye are come unto Mount

Christ, then, builds His Church, Zion, through His Word and Sacraments, the Gospel, bequeathing to men in His Last Will and Testament the remission of sin.

I. The Dreadful Judgment upon Unbelief.

A. Judah's unbelief ends in dreadful judgment.

The Jews of Jesus' time give us a good lesson on how *not* to build the Church: Reject the Gospel. Because the Jews persistently and interminably rejected the Gospel, they perished, the dreadful judgment coming upon them finally in the end not only spiritually, but physically, with the dreadful destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman General Titus in A.D. 70.³

Christ had warned the Jews a thousand years earlier of the dreadful judgment carried out because of rejecting the Gospel and God's forgiveness. That warning came as Christ foretold

Zion and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels; To the general assembly and Church of the First-born, which are written in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the just men made perfect, And to Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel,' Heb. 12, 22-24. ... We who are assembled here in the auditorium of Concordia College, Fort Wayne, Indiana, and by God's grace believe in Christ, that is to say, believe that only the blood of Christ, the Son of God, cleanses us from all sin, are actually on Mount Zion right here." **The Christian World View**, *What is Christianity? and Other Essays*, pp. 40, 41.

³"Now the number {editor's footnote: the whole multitude of the Jews that were destroyed during the entire seven years before this time amounts to 1,337,490} of those that were carried captive during this whole war was collected to be ninety-seven thousand; as was the number of those that perished during the whole siege, eleven hundred thousand, the greater part of whom were indeed of the same nation, [with the citizens of Jerusalem,] but not belonging to the city itself; for they were come up from all the country to the feast of unleavened bread, and were on a sudden shut up by an army, which, at the very first, occasioned so great a straitness among them, that there came a pestilential destruction, and soon afterward such famine as destroyed them more suddenly." *Josephus: Complete Works*, **The Wars of the Jews, Book VI, Chapter IX.3**, pp. 587, 588, underscore added.

The Roman general Titus claimed victory only because the Jews' God had deserted them. "We have certainly had God for our assistant in this war, and it was no other than God that ejected the Jews out of these fortifications; for what could the hands of men, or any machines, do towards overthrowing these towers!' ... To conclude, when he entirely demolished the rest of the city, and overthrew its walls, he left these towers as a monument of his good fortune, which had proved his auxiliaries, and enabled him to take what he could not otherwise have been taken by him." *Josephus: Complete Works*, **The Wars of the Jews, Book VI, Chapter IX.1**, p. 587

His Passion in **Psalm 69**.⁴ Therein Christ, we must remember, is in the midst of His Passion, suffering for the sins of the Jews, including His tormenters and executioners, for us, and for all men. Jesus says in **Psalm 69**:

Reproach hath broken my heart; and I am full of heaviness: and I looked *for some* to take pity, but *there was* none; and for comforters, but I found none.⁵

The Rev. Dr. John Gerhard writes:

The question arises: *In Zech. 9:9, why is the Messiah not called [Savior] in the active sense, but ... "saved," in the passive sense?* We respond: ... Christ is not only "Savior" but is also Himself "saved." That is, because He wished to redeem us with His suffering and death, and descended into the depths of our wretchedness, therefore it was necessary that he be saved first, so that, having been saved, he might be able to save us too. "I looked around, but there was no helper⁶; I was in anxiety, and there was no one to help" (namely, among men). "My own arm" (the power of My divinity) "has saved Me, and My anger" (or zeal) "has helped Me" (Isa. 63:5).⁷

Christ suffers for us, yet, no one helps or even comforts him. Luther writes:

As Christ is hanging on the cross, He calls out and says, "I thirst" (John 19:28). Then His crucifers do not give Him a drink of water. In their great envy and hate,

⁴"Thus God's wrath is now kindled against them, and what is written in Psa. 69 is fulfilled: **Pour Your displeasure upon them, and seize them with Your ferocious wrath. Their dwelling place must become a wasteland, and there is none who will live in their huts (dwellings).** And as St. Paul says in 1 Thes. 2: **God's wrath is already finally come over [them] or: until the end come upon them, [i.e.] because they have killed the Lord Christ.** This has been stated as a warning for us, so that we indeed do not, in keeping with the example of these Jews, cast this King aside and push Him away from us." The Rev. Dr. John Gerhard, *An Explanation of the History of the Suffering and Death of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to the four evangelists, presented so that we may be awakened in the knowledge of the love of Christ and may blessedly grow according to the inner man*, tr. Elmer M. Hohle, ed. David O. Berger, Malone, TX: Repristination Press, 1999, p. 213.

⁵**Psalm 69:20.**

⁶Compare also **Psalm 22:11**: "Be not far from me; for trouble *is* near; for *there is* none to help."

⁷*Loci Theologici ... On the Person and Office of Christ*, tr. Richard J. Dinda, ed. Benjamin T. G. Mayes, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009 p. 11

vexation, and vengeance they give Him gall and vinegar, Psalm 69:21, or as St. Mark writes (15:23), “wine mingled with myrrh” to drink in His great thirst. They do not do this to the other criminals who were crucified on either side of Him. It is the custom through the world to sympathize with criminals when they are being led out and executed; when their soul is troubled and their tongue becomes dry, they are given the best and most refreshing drink, as the wise man commands in Proverbs 31:6. In short, it is unheard of in the world that men should lose all compassion for any robber, murderer, or scoundrel, however evil he might have been. But they lost all compassion for Christ on the cross. This is the devil, who so embitters, incites, and impels the world against Christ.⁸

And, as Luther as already alluded to, Christ recounts their bitterness toward the Savior by offering him gall and vinegar in His agony for their sins:

They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.⁹

Jesus continues:

Let their table become a snare before them: and *that which should have been for their welfare, let it become a trap.*¹⁰

And here begins the dreadful judgment against Israel for rejecting God’s salvation and calling down upon themselves the only alternative: God’s ruinous wrath. All the material and spiritual benefits the Lord provides for men become lethal to men through unbelief. This case was especially true for Jerusalem because the Holy City sprung like a trap and ensnared the people inside awaiting the coup de gras by the Roman General Titus. The Jewish historian Josephus writes:

Now the number {editor’s footnote: the whole multitude of the Jews that were destroyed during the entire seven years before this time amounts to 1,337,490} of those that were carried captive during this whole war was collected to be ninety-seven thousand; as was the number of those that perished during the whole siege, eleven hundred thousand, the greater part of whom were indeed of the same nation, [with the citizens of Jerusalem,] but not belonging to the city itself; for they were come up from all the country to the feast of unleavened bread, and were

⁸*Luther’s Works*, Vol. 12, pp. 115, 116.

⁹**Psalm 69:21.**

¹⁰**Psalm 69:22.**

on a sudden shut up by an army, which, at the very first, occasioned so great a straitness among them, that there came a pestilential destruction, and soon afterward such famine as destroyed them more suddenly.¹¹

Had the Jews not rejected the Gospel, they would not have been shut up in Jerusalem in such numbers and easy pickin's readily destroyed by Titus because each would have been in his own hamlet and village observing Maundy Thursday and Good Friday during Holy Week.

Jesus continues:

Let their eyes be darkened, that they see not; and make their loins continually to shake.¹²

Because they have persisted in rejecting the Gospel, at long last, God's patience runs out and now God darkens their eyes, i.e. they can no longer even perceive the Gospel¹³. Jesus says:

Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: For this people's heart is waxed gross, and *their* ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with *their* eyes, and hear with *their* ears, and should understand with *their* heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.¹⁴

¹¹*Josephus: Complete Works, **The Wars of the Jews, Book VI, Chapter IX.3**, pp. 587, 588, underscore added. The Roman general Titus claimed victory only because the Jews' God had deserted them. "We have certainly had God for our assistant in this war, and it was no other than God that ejected the Jews out of these fortifications; for what could the hands of men, or any machines, do towards overthrowing these towers!' ... To conclude, when he entirely demolished the rest of the city, and overthrew its walls, he left these towers as a monument of his good fortune, which had proved his auxiliaries, and enabled him to take what he could not otherwise have been taken by him." *Josephus: Complete Works, **The Wars of the Jews, Book VI, Chapter IX.1***, p. 587*

¹²**Psalm 69:23.**

¹³"The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great *is* that darkness!" **St. Matthew 6:22-23.**

¹⁴**St. Matthew 13:13-15.**

And because they have rejected the comfort and strength of the Gospel, they are overwhelmed with the dreadful disposition of God's disfavor and, under that disfavor, rocked to the foundation of their being, hence, their loins continually shook.

Jesus continues:

Pour out thine indignation upon them, and let thy wrathful anger take hold of them.¹⁵

Dreadful! But, after all, what remains when someone has rejected God's mercy, but God's indignation and wrath seizing every last fiber of a man's being?

Jesus continues:

Let their habitation be desolate; *and* let none dwell in their tents.¹⁶

Because Israel's civic and physical well-being depended upon their obedience to God's Word under the law of Moses¹⁷, the rejection of God's Messiah prophesied by Moses could only mean Israel's ruin, as Josephus has already recounted for us. St. Augustine writes:

"Let their habitation become forsaken, and in their tabernacles let there not be any one to inhabit." There hath come to pass this thing in the very city Jerusalem,

¹⁵**Psalm 69:24.**

¹⁶**Psalm 69:25.**

¹⁷"If thou wilt not observe to do all the words of this law that are written in this book, that thou mayest fear this glorious and fearful name, THE LORD THY GOD, ... And it shall come to pass *that* as the LORD rejoiced over you to do you good, and to multiply you; so the LORD will rejoice over you to destroy you, and to bring you to nought; and ye shall be plucked from off the land whither thou goest to possess it." **Deuteronomy 28:58, 63.** The Rev. Dr. George Stoeckhardt writes: "Yet a threefold severe curse if they shall fall away. Israel together with their king will be led captive by the heathen, and even if they return to their land they will be miserable, being and remaining slaves of their enemies. An iron yoke will be on their neck. With this Moses was pointing to the Assyrian and Babylonian Captivity and to their return from Babel. ... Furthermore, he speaks of a great and terrible people that will come from afar, tearing down the walls of the cities of Israel, destroying and exterminating this nation. Then there will be a great and unspeakable calamity and terror in the land, so that parents will slaughter their own children for food. This was fulfilled literally, when the Romans besieged and destroyed Jerusalem." *Wisdom for Today, Volume I*, Ft. Wayne: Concordia Theological Seminary Press, tr. the Rev. Arthur E. Beck, 1969, p. 150.

wherein they thought themselves mighty in crying against the Son of God, “Crucify, Crucify;” and in prevailing because they were able to kill Him that raised dead men. How mighty to themselves, how great, they seemed! There followed afterwards the vengeance of the Lord, stormed was the city, utterly conquered the Jews, slain were I know not how many thousands of men. No one of the Jews is permitted to come thither now: where they were able to cry against the Lord, there by the Lord they are not permitted to dwell. They have lost the place of their fury: and O that even now they would know the place of their rest! What profit to them was Caiaphas in saying, “If we shall let go this man thus, there will come the Romans, and take away from us both place and kingdom”? ... Behold, both they did not let Him go alive, and He liveth: and there have come the Romans, and have taken from them both place and kingdom. But now we heard, when the Gospel was being read, “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered together thy sons, as a hen her chickens under her wings, and thou wouldest not? Behold, there is left to you your house forsaken.... Why so? “For Him whom Thou hast smitten they have themselves persecuted, and upon the pain of my wounds they have added” (ver. 27). How then have they sinned if they have persecuted one by God smitten? What sin is ascribed to their mind? Malice. ... So because they were of such sort as that they merited not to be healed, in their very naughtiness in a manner they advanced; as it is said, “But evil men and wicked doers advance for the worse;” ... and “iniquity is laid upon their own iniquity.” “And let them not enter in ... Thy righteousness.” This is a plain thing.¹⁸

Jesus, in the midst of His Passion, continues with the rationale for this horrible judgment: They are persecuting the very Savior from God’s wrath and judgment over sin. Jesus says:

For they persecute *him* which thou hast smitten; and they talk to the grief of those whom thou hast wounded.¹⁹

Consummate malice, as St. Augustine notes, to persecute the very Man who is bearing the consequent punishment for their sins and effecting their salvation. In addition, they don’t stop there, but also persecute that Man’s Church. They move the Church to grief with their slanders, the Church who bears Christ’s Cross and wounds because of that Cross.

Jesus continues with the dreadful judgment of Israel – and, in reality, all those who reject God’s Mercy and Pardon in Christ and Him Crucified for the sins of all:

¹⁸**On The Psalms, Psalm 69**, *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, First Series , Vol. VIII, pp. 308, 309.

¹⁹**Psalm 69:26.**

Add iniquity unto their iniquity: and let them not come into thy righteousness.²⁰

If the pardon for iniquity be rejected, what remains but iniquity upon iniquity and the consequent dreadful judgment?

In addition, because God alone works faith where and when it pleases Him²¹, one ought not to play “chicken” with God, namely, dare Him in a game of determining one’s eternal destiny. Hence, those who have run out God’s string are barred from God’s saving righteousness of God in the Gospel. Jesus says:

That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with *their* eyes, nor understand with *their* heart, and be converted, and I should heal them. These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him.²²

Christ has already shown extreme patience in that men crucified tortured and crucified Him; yet He continued to pray for them and wait for their repentance. The Rev. Dr. John Gerhard writes:

... Christ prayed for His crucifiers: **Father, forgive them**, He says, **for they know what they do**, the first words which Christ spoke on the cross. In the Old Testament, as the sacrifice was being offered, the high priest at the same time had to instruct the people about its true benefit. Christ, the High Priest of the New Testament, also does this; and He teaches that this His sacrifice is intended for the forgiveness of sins. Also, since Christ suffered not for Himself but for us, He does not immediately at the outset lament that He was forsaken by God. Rather, He, as it were, forgets His agony and concerns Himself with us human beings and prays that God would forgive us for what we were doing to Him. He thus here portrays Himself as our true Advocate, 1 John 2, who pleads on our behalf before

²⁰**Psalm 69:27.**

²¹“That we may obtain this faith, *the Ministry of Teaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments was instituted*. For through the Word and Sacraments, as through instruments, the Holy Ghost is given, who works faith, where and when it pleases God, in them that hear the Gospel, to wit, that God, not for our own merits, but for Christ’s sake, justifies those who believe that they are received into grace for Christ’s sake.” *The Augsburg Confession, Article V: Of the Ministry*.1-3, *Triglotta*, p. 45.

²²**St. John 12:38-41.**

the heavenly Father with the power of His sacrifice. He holds before Him, as it were, His wounds and petitions that God would allow His wrath to abate. Just as in those times Christ's petition was so powerful that many of those who helped crucify Him were converted and the remainder were given forty more whole years in which to repent, ... so now Christ's intercession retains its power to this very day. For we should not think that Christ was praying [only] for the Jews and soldiers who at that time [sic] crucified Him. Rather, this prayer applies to us all. He was crucified for the sake of all of our sins, Isa. 53; and with our sins we caused Him pain and effort, Isa. 43. And if we still at a time go forth with confidence (brashness) and don't realize what we are doing – that is, we don't realize the consequence of lying in sin, nor do we consider what a serious matter the wrath of God is – behold, with His intercession Christ presents the very best and obtains so much that God grants time for repentance and does not so quickly destroy with His wrath. Ponder here also the incomprehensible patience of Christ, how He in His distress also prayed for His worst enemies who dealt with him so pitifully and horribly. They had affixed Him with nails so that He could do no other good for them. Only His tongue remained, which even so, because of torture, stuck to the roof of His mouth, Psa. 22. Yet, He used it still to pray for His crucifiers.²³

Finally, Jesus concludes:

Let them be blotted out of the book of the living, and not be written with the righteous.²⁴

Even though God had bequeathed to them life eternal through the death of His Son, now they are disinherited and perish with all the unrighteous.

Of this dreadful judgment on the unbelief of the Jews Jesus speaks in the Gospels:

For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.²⁵

²³*An Explanation of the History of the Suffering and Death of Our Lord Jesus Christ according to the four evangelists, presented so that we may be awakened in the knowledge of the love of Christ and may blessedly grow according to the inner man.* tr. Elmer M. Hohle, ed. David O. Berger, Malone, TX: Repristination Press, 1999, pp. 243, 244.

²⁴**Psalm 69:28.**

²⁵**St. Matthew 24:21.**

B. God's dreadful judgment on unbelief applies to all men.

And this dreadful judgment of unbelief would not apply only to the Jews, but to the Gentiles as well. For Jesus is the Savior not only of the Jews, but also of the Gentiles. And if the Gentiles likewise reject God's pardon of their iniquity, then, all that is left for God to do is add iniquity to their iniquity now and forever.

II. God Builds His Church through the Gospel.

A. God saves men and builds His Church through the Gospel.

Now, contrast the dreadful carnage of unbelief with God's Blessed Work of Salvation through the Gospel. Jesus says in **Psalm 69**:

For God will save Zion, and will build the cities of Judah: that they may dwell there, and have it in possession.²⁶

What Zion is this? Hadn't Zion already been laid waste with the dreadful judgment and destruction of Jerusalem? So, what Zion is this? This Zion is Christ's eternal Church built by His Word and Sacraments. St. Paul the Apostle writes:

But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling; that speaketh better things than *that of Abel*.²⁷

And Jesus' Blood is powerful to save because it bequeaths to us this heavenly Jerusalem by remitting our sins. Jesus says in His Last Will and Testament:

For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.²⁸

²⁶**Psalm 69:35.**

²⁷**Hebrews 12:22-24.**

²⁸**St. Matthew 26:28.**

And where there is remission of sins, there is, obviously, “life and salvation”, as we learned in catechism.²⁹ Because there is life and salvation in the Gospel, the prophet Isaiah calls the Gospel the soaring fortress walls of Zion, i.e. the Church:

In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah; We have a strong city; salvation will *God* appoint *for* walls and bulwarks.³⁰

Notice Isaiah says “salvation” the Lord appoints for walls and bulwarks. In other words, the Gospel, God’s Word and Sacraments, are the Fortress Walls of the Zion, i.e. of the Church, because the Gospel is the Power of God unto Salvation. St. Paul the Apostle writes:

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.³¹

St. Peter the Apostle writes:

The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.³²

Wherever, then, we have God’s Word and Sacraments, there we have Zion because God’s Word and Sacraments communicate the benefits of the Cross of Christ to men.³³ And

²⁹“What is the benefit of such eating and drinking? That is shown us by these words, ‘Given and shed for you for the remission of sin’; namely, that in the Sacrament forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation are given us through these words. For where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation.” *The Small Catechism*, p. 21.

³⁰**Isaiah 26:1.** “Wall and dungeon are well guarded, not with wood and iron, but with salvation and victory and triumph. These are the fortifications of this new city, that is, the church, which is unconquered, whose salvation is Christ, its Fortification.” Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works*, Vol. 16, p. 200.

³¹**Romans 1:16.**

³²**I Peter 3:21.**

³³“For neither you nor I could ever know anything of Christ, or believe on Him, and obtain Him for our Lord, unless it were offered to us and granted to our hearts by the Holy Ghost through the preaching of the gospel. The work is done and accomplished; for Christ has acquired and gained the treasure for us by His suffering, death, and resurrection, etc. But if the work remained concealed so that no one knew of it, then it would be in vain and lost. That this treasure, therefore, might not lie buried, but be appropriated and enjoyed, God has caused the

because we have the benefits of Zion wherever we have God's Word and Sacraments, then, there God builds His Church, namely, builds Zion, so named because she is the offspring of the Cross of Christ on Zion. The Rev. Dr. Francis Pieper writes:

Many people to-day entertain strange ideas indeed as to the manner in which a person enters the kingdom of God; they think of pilgrimages to Palestine, to Jerusalem, and to Mount Zion. Contrary to such false views, however, we must firmly maintain that no pilgrimages or changes of location are required to come to Jerusalem or to Mount Zion in the New Testament sense. Of all those who believe in Christ Holy Scripture declares: "Ye are come unto Mount Zion and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels; to the general assembly and Church of the First-born, which are written in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel," Heb. 12, 22-24. ... We who are assembled here in the auditorium of Concordia College, Fort Wayne, Indiana, and by God's grace believe in Christ, that is to say, believe that only the blood of Christ, the Son of God, cleanses us from all sin, are actually on Mount Zion right here.³⁴

Christ, then, builds Zion, His Church, through His Word and Sacraments.

B. Christ gives life eternal through His Word and Sacraments.

And Christ's Word and Sacraments are manifestly superior to building Christ's Church than the unbelief of men, whether Jew or Gentile; for Christ leads us beside still waters, not the turbulent waters of God's wrath; He lays us down in green pastures, not the barren wasteland of

Word to go forth and be proclaimed, in which He gives the Holy Ghost to bring this treasure home and appropriate it to us. Therefore sanctifying is nothing else than bringing us to Christ to receive this good, to which we could not attain of ourselves." *The Large Catechism, Part Second, Of The Creed, Article III.*38-39, *Triglotta*, 689.

³⁴**The Christian World View**, *What is Christianity? and Other Essays*, pp. 40, 41. "Therefore we do not pray, 'Dear Father, let us come into your kingdom,' as though we might journey toward it. But we do say, 'May thy kingdom come to us.' If we are to receive it at all, God's grace and his kingdom, together with all virtues, must come to us. We will never be able to come into this kingdom. Similarly, Christ came to us from heaven to earth; we did not ascend from earth into heaven to him." Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, Vol. 42, p. 41.

sin.³⁵ Through His Word and Sacraments Christ builds for Himself an eternal and glorious Church. St. John the Apostle writes:

And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, 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.³⁶

Conclusion

Because the Word and the Sacraments are the salvation of men, Christ builds His Church through them. They are the foundation of His Church.

Anything else besides Christ's Word and Sacraments does not build the Church but, as we've seen with the Jews and Gentiles, destroys it and leaves it in utter and eternal ruin.

But where Christ's Word and Sacraments are found, there is Zion, an eternal Church and the heavenly Jerusalem which lives gloriously now and forever.

Amen.

³⁵“He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.”
Psalm 23:2.

³⁶**Revelation 21:2-3.**