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We have sent an invitation to the people we support titled Vision 7000 and a few other topics.

Are we facing the greatest event in human history? Are we on the cusp of the transition from the 6th to the 7th millennium? Are we on the brink of a turning point? Do world events lead to the apocalyptic judgments? Is the new world order within reach? And so forth.

Now we must honestly say that today is Good Friday and on such a day of significance in the plan of salvation one must get to the heart of what this is actually about.

And yet with God's help, I will do my best to follow through on what we have announced.

Whenever special events occur somewhere, the question is: What is happening now? Where do we find it in the Bible? What can we use as a guide?

And I believe I may say that the best informed people are those who have had God's Word revealed to them through spiritual understanding, people who have gained insight into the prophetic part of the plan of salvation.

Well, I'm sure you've all noticed that we are showing Brother Branham in the top right-hand corner and the reason for that is simply this: God has used him in our generation in a very special, indeed extraordinary way.

You know, God had one Moses, not two or three, just one Moses, only one Joshua, only one Abraham.

At specific times, in connection with what God was doing on earth, there were always men whom he sent, to whom he spoke, and whom he could use in his service.

In the New Testament, at the transition, we find John the Baptist, who appeared as a man sent by God with God's message to God's people to ***"prepare the way for the Lord and to make a path for our God,"*** as the prophet Isaiah had announced in chapter 40, verse 3. ***"Every high place shall be brought low and every low place shall be exalted, but all flesh shall see the glory of God."*** [Isa 40:4–5]

And that is actually what every church age is about, that people do not celebrate themselves or present themselves, but that men sent by God proclaim the Word of the hour, give divine information to humanity and provide guidance from the Holy Scriptures, and not "I mean" or "I think".

I don't care at all about opinions or my own thoughts, perhaps others can, but I cannot.

When it comes to spiritual matters and about the long eternity, we must be certain that we do not merely believe anything, but that we believe as the Scripture has said.

And then some will say, "but there are over 300 Christian denominations now, united in the World Council of Churches, and they all have the same Bible."

So it is not enough simply to have the Bible.

One must have a personal relationship with God, one must have had an experience with God and received his Spirit, who guides us into all truth [Joh 16:13], so that we may see what the prophets saw and proclaim what the apostles and men of God proclaimed.

We are pleased to be able to say that there have not only been great evangelists of renown, standing, and fame.

I heard at a major international conference in Florida two years ago, that 1 of the greatest, best-known US evangelists in Europe receives an annual salary of exactly 1 million US dollars.

We were then told how much tax he pays and so on, and then there is his own private jet, his own staff, and everything that goes with it.

That is one side of the story, with some of the great, world-famous evangelists: those who don't have their own airplane have a Rolls-Royce, and those who don't have that have two Cadillacs.

But I can say this much, I know my way around this field quite well; I'm not here to criticize, I just want to make one point:

Brother Branham was not cut from that cloth; he was the humblest man, as both friends and foes can testify, that has been seen on earth for a long time, a true man sent by God.

And the beautiful thing about him was that God confirmed the Word he preached.

There have been many who have spoken great things, but this man specifically cited Hebrews 13, verse 8: ***"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever."***

And also John 14, verse 12: ***"The works that I have done, ye will do also, and even greater than these, for I'm going to the Father."***

And it is one thing to preach about it and quite another to have the courage and faith to take God at his Word and witness such a Word coming true.

And so I'm grateful to the Lord that I knew this man of God for exactly ten years until he was called from this life into eternity.

And it was also him who back in the year 1933 on June the 11th, at around two o'clock in the afternoon during a baptism in the Ohio River in the USA, the border river between Kentucky and Ohio, there he was told: "Just as John the Baptist was sent to forerun the first coming of Christ, so the message you bear will forerun the second coming of Christ."

And this man had no message of his own, he has placed the original Word, the original Gospel, back upon the lampstand.

And God has, as I have just said, also confirmed it.

And the divine legitimacy is beyond all doubt.

Today, as just announced, and as promised in the announcement, we will indeed deal very briefly with these two areas: on the one hand, the end times in which we live; on the other hand, the events in the plan of salvation that are of significance to us all.

When we read Matthew 24, Luke 21, and many other passages of Holy Scripture, we gain a certain sense of direction.

If we then move on to the book of Revelation, the picture becomes even clearer, particularly as regards the Gulf region and what has happened there.

I can tell you on the basis of the Word of God how it will all end, where it will end, and in what context.

Many were afraid when the war broke out; I said straight away that this is a temporary matter.

It is to the east of Israel and the prophet Ezekiel said three times in succession: "***From the north disaster will come upon Israel.***" I shall read it out later.

And so we have the big picture there: just as the whole world has now turned against a man who had occupied foreign land and territory, so the world will shortly turn against Israel and seek to force the country to return the occupied territories, as they call them, namely the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and the Golan Heights, to be returned.

And so the whole world will then, but this time not under the leadership of the USA, but under the leadership of the Soviet Union, specifically the Asian part, not the European part, for it must remain the north.

And we have exactly 50 million Muslims in the Soviet Union and they will all ally themselves with the entire Muslim world, which has been Israel's arch-enemy since

the days of Isaac and Ishmael.

And I shall, God willing, publish one of the old maps to show that God did not merely give the people of Israel the territory they possess today, but that by divine order and decree, two and a half tribes had their land on the eastern side of the Jordan: Gad, Reuben, and the half tribe of Manasseh. [Jos 13:8] One can read of this in the Word of God.

And so the people of Israel are entitled to much more land than they have today, and Solomon even ruled as far as the Euphrates, that too is written in Holy Scripture. [1 Kin 4:21]

But as I said, we will publish all of this.

And I have indeed resolved, in my humble capacity, to inform every diplomatic representative we have in the country and thus to make known to all peoples and tongues what God has said in his Word, and then let them do with it as they please, but let them also have no excuse on the day of the Lord.

You know, of course, that Basra translates as Paradise in German, and that the cradle of humanity stood there, on the Euphrates, Ur in Chaldea. One can read about it in the ancient scriptures, Mesopotamia. That is where all the great cities were: Nineveh, Babylon. That is where the cradle of humanity stood, and there where the cradle of humanity stood, where civilization began, from there, so it is written in the Bible, destruction will then befall all of humanity.

I shall read two scriptures on this, one from Revelation chapter 9, verses 13 to 15.

Revelation 9:13-15:

[13] ***And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God,***

[14] ***Saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates.***

[15] ***And the four angels were loosed, which were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year, for to slay the third part of men.***

From Revelation chapter 16, verse 12:

[12] ***And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared.***

Let us read verse 15, perhaps even verse 14 is also necessary:

[14] ***For they are spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.***

What we have just seen was but a small matter compared to what will take place in the final battle, in the final conflict, that will be waged against Israel.

The prophets of the Old Testament wrote about this very clearly and at length.

In this context, we read two scriptures from the prophet Joel. Joel chapter 2, verses 1 and 2:

[1] ***Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the Lord cometh, for it is nigh at hand;***

[2] ***A day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, as the morning spread upon the mountains: a great people and a strong; there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it, even to the years of many generations.***

From chapter 3, and here we have the word of "holy war", which the entire Muslim world speaks of and is prepared to die for, there is after all a special place in Paradise for all those who take part, so they are told. Joel chapter 3, from verse 9:

[9] ***Proclaim ye this among the Gentiles; Prepare for an holy war, wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near; let them come up.***

Then it is described in detail where it will take place: in the Valley of Jehoshaphat. Anyone who has been to Israel has seen this valley, situated on the other side of Mount Carmel to the north, this beautiful plain.

And it will indeed be the conflict in which the Lord will intervene from heaven.

Then hailstones will rain down, and fire and brimstone will fall.

It will be God's judgment upon the nations that will rise up against Israel once again.

What God said to Abraham stands: ***"I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you shall be cursed."*** [Gen 12:3]

The ways in which God walks with the people of Israel may seem strange, but let's be honest, are we any better? We may sometimes look down on other people and nations, overlooking our own faults, our own stubbornness, our own paths that we walk, and marching past what God truly desires, with trumpets and cymbals.

And that is why we must not judge at all, not pass judgment whatsoever.

Who among us could be certain that everything is right between them and God and that we are already found to be in perfect accordance with God's will?

We believe that we are now moving towards this, and that we are on the very brink of the Lord's return.

I would just like to return very briefly to this Vision 7000.

Someone reading this might get the impression, "Isn't this yet another rather peculiar group?" "Couldn't this somehow…"

I don't like the name, but it does appear three times in the Book of Acts, namely the word "sect".

People said to Paul: "***We have heard from you that you belong to this sect, which is opposed everywhere***," [Act 28:22] and so on.

The word "sect" simply means "section", and the word "section" means a fraction of the whole, no more and no less.

And if you look at it that way, then we have a general division within Christianity and throughout the whole world.

We simply have sections and each of them believes it is right.

I would like to make it very clear at this point that we do not claim to be absolute, but simply agree with God and not with a human being.

Simply put, if we believe as Scripture has said, without adding anything to it, without interpreting it, then we are right, not because we want to be, but because we stand on God's side.

And there is this wonderful word in Psalm 119: ***"How can a young man keep his way pure?"*** And the answer is: ***"By keeping God's Word alone."*** [Ps 119:9]

And then there is also this wonderful verse: ***"Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light on my path."*** [Ps 119:105]

And then we come to the passage in Peter's epistle: ***"We have a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place…"*** [2 Pet 1:19]

I shall read it so that everyone may hear the exact text. 2 Peter chapter 1, verse 19:

[19] ***We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts:***

Once you have grasped that God had the entire plan of salvation, which he had conceived from eternity, written down in advance in Bible prophecy, you gain confidence in God and his Word.

The Holy Scriptures are the only book on Earth in which the entire history of humanity was written in advance. Everyone else writes after things have already happened. God had it written down even before anything happened. He saw the end from the very beginning. And so, through the prophets and the apostles in the Old and New Testament, he was able to proclaim this all-encompassing plan of

salvation. And blessed is the person who finds this divine guidance. For that person, a light truly dawns.

So, let us come to the point. When we write Vision 7000, it is very simple. Anyone can look it up in any history book, whoever has studied chronology. From Adam to Abraham, about 2000 years. From Abraham to Christ, about 2000 years. And now we are approaching the third epoch, the last 2000 years. And then 6000 years are complete. And the 7th millennium, according to Revelation 20, will be the millennium of which we read there: ***"Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall... reign with Christ a thousand years."*** [Rev 20:6]

Without wishing to cause panic, we stand at the end of human history under the present world order, and we find ourselves on the brink of the transition into the kingdom of God. We know that a number of things must happen first. The bride Church must be called out, must be prepared, so that it may then be caught up according to 1 Corinthians 15, verse 51 and 1 Thessalonians 4, from verse 13. ***"For the Lord will return, and those who have fallen asleep in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall be with the Lord forever."*** [1 Th 4:16-17]

And then there is the brief period for the people of Israel with the two prophets according to Revelation 11. And then we have the announcement that the millennium will begin.

We must also know that it is written in the Word of God, likewise in Peter, 2 Peter chapter 3, verses 8 and 9:

[8] ***But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.***

[9] ***The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.***

God is patient. There are people on Earth who are destined to behold the glory of God. And these people must be called out through the proclamation of the gospel with a divine call. And according to Romans chapter 11, verse 25, it is written: ***"...when the fullness of the Gentiles has come in, then God will turn to Israel."*** [Ro 11:25]

This full number is now coming in. And therefore, it is also written in Matthew 24, verse 14: ***"...that the gospel of the kingdom will be preached for a witness to all nations and tongues, and then the end will come."*** [Mt 24:14]

Never before in human history have the means and opportunities existed to proclaim the gospel so freely and to reach the peoples of this Earth. When I think that I myself

have been to 104 countries, and yet have reached a great many people through personal preaching and via the mass media, and these in turn have reached others, and those others yet others, so that the spreading and proclamation of the gospel across all continents is being carried out by many who have likewise recognized their responsibility before God and who bear and proclaim the same message of the Lord so that the number may be complete and the last may be called out and come to it.

It is simply necessary that the truth be told to us here today. And the truth is God's Word. ***"Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven."*** [Mt 7:21]

Concerning our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, it is written in Hebrews: ***"I have come to do thy will, O God."*** [Heb 10:7]

The point today is that God has a church on Earth which recognizes his will, places herself at his disposal, and is ready as his instrument so that he may reveal his will and then also carry it out.

As for the end times, let me make two or three brief remarks. This has been spoken of for a long time. I have read about it in church history. Martin Luther expected the coming of the Lord in his day. All men of God have waited for the return of the Lord in their own times. But Scripture, the prophetic Word, had not yet been fulfilled. Events had not yet taken their course. Today, without needing to interpret, we can say with absolute certainty: the end of all things is at hand. [1 Pet 4:7] Today we can repeat with the Lord: ***"When you see all these things coming to pass, lift up your heads, for you know that your redemption is drawing near."*** [Lk 21:28]

In all those earlier times, the fig tree did not put forth buds. You know, of course, perhaps you can look it up for yourselves, that is always best, that is written in both the New and the Old Testament. I shall read one passage to you; you can look up the other yourselves. Matthew 24, verse 32:

[32] ***Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh.***

Look it up in the prophet Hosea, chapter 9, verse 10. There God speaks in the Old Testament of the people of Israel as being the fig tree. When we turn to the Gospel of Luke, then it speaks not only of the fig tree, but of all the other trees. Luke 21, verses 29 and 30:

[29] ***And he spake to them a parable; Behold the fig tree, and all the trees;***

[30] ***when they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand.***

The Lord has taken examples and symbols from nature that everyone can easily understand. Here the fig tree and all the other trees are mentioned. When the

Balfour Declaration was issued in Basel, people had little idea of what was to come. When the British General Allenby captured Jerusalem at the end of the First World War, people still did not know what would happen. The British Mandate lasted until the 14th of May, 1948. And then the State of Israel was born, just as the prophets had foretold, particularly Ezekiel, also Isaiah, and then especially Jeremiah. I shall read two passages relating to this subject, one from the prophet Isaiah, chapter 14.

Isaiah chapter 14, verse 1:

[1] ***For the Lord will have mercy on Jacob, and will yet choose Israel, and set them in their own land: and the strangers shall be joined with them, and they shall cleave to the house of Jacob.***

Specifically, Jeremiah chapter 31, from verse 7:

[7] ***For thus saith the Lord; Sing with gladness for Jacob, and shout among the chief of the nations: publish ye, praise ye, and say, O Lord, save thy people, the remnant of Israel.***

[8] ***Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the coasts of the Earth, and with them the blind and the lame, the woman with child and her that travaileth with child together: a great company shall return thither.***

[9] ***They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them...***

And so forth.

God had already declared through Moses that the people of Israel would be scattered throughout the world and then brought back at the end of days. Deuteronomy chapter 4, verses 27 and 29:

[27] ***And the Lord shall scatter you among the nations, and ye shall be left few in number among the heathen, whither the Lord shall lead you.***

[29] ***But if from thence thou shalt seek the Lord thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul.***

As I have just said, God is an all-knowing God. He knew what would happen in the end. And here is a parallel between the people of Israel and the New Testament Church. At the first coming of Christ, two things ran parallel in a generation until 70 AD. On the one hand, there was the continuation of worship in the temple and in the synagogues, as was custom and practice. On the other hand, God had begun something new in Christ. A New Testament church had come into being. What Jesus had said became reality: ***"This is the new covenant in my blood."*** [1 Co 11:25]

He had spoken through the prophets saying:

"After those days... I will make a new covenant with you... and I will put my spirit within you, and my law within your hearts." [Jer 31:33]

Two things ran parallel, namely, that concerning the people of Israel and that concerning the New Testament church. That is exactly how it is now, only in the opposite direction. Now the church is coming to an end, so that it may continue and be fulfilled with Israel. And just as the people of Israel must return to the land of their fathers, to the promised land, so the New Testament church, which is scattered across all denominations and still finds itself in a kind of Babylon, must be called out, return to the faith of the fathers, to the faith of the apostles, and we must be brought back to the Word of promise for our time.

There are people who do not even know what God has promised. Yet it is precisely these promises that run like a thread through the entire Bible. And whoever has no promise cannot have faith either. A person's true faith must, after all, have a point of reference. It cannot float in the air. It needs a promise. As we read in Romans 4: ***"And Abraham believed God, and it was imputed to him for righteousness."*** [Ro 4:3]

What did he believe? He believed the promise that God had given him. And everything might have spoken against it, that did not bother him. He looked upon the invisible One as though he saw him, and trusted that God is able to fulfill what he had promised.

As regards the end times, we could read many more scriptures from the Old and New Testaments. Paul also addressed this theme, particularly in his letters to his co-worker Timothy, describing how things would be in the end. 1 Timothy chapter 3, a very important chapter, and especially chapter 4. 1 Timothy chapter 4:

[1] ***Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith...***

...and, and, and.

But particularly the word from 2 Timothy chapter 3, and then also chapter 4:

[1] ***This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.***

Look, even back then, this man of God was able to look into our time by the Spirit and wrote it down so that we might know what would happen.

[2] ***For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers...***

...a whole catalogue is listed here.

And then in 2 Timothy, in chapter 4, comes this exhortation:

[1] ***I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom;***

[2] ***Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.***

[3] ***For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;***

[4] ***And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.***

I have experienced this, and it has always been a bitter experience, that people have presented the true as false and the false as true. People speak of a world turned upside down, but that is how it is today. And the majority of Christians believe whatever is said in the Vatican or they believe all sorts of things. But who tests it against the Holy Scriptures? Who convinces themselves on the basis of the Word of God whether it is really true? We make no secret of it. We believe God. We believe his Word. We believe that Holy Scripture contains the whole counsel of God. No one can go beyond this Word. No human being can add anything to it, and no one may take anything away from it. Nor should anyone alter it. And if we then turn to early Christianity, please forgive me for mentioning it here, but did not Peter in his first sermon on the day of Pentecost set the direction for every sermon that would ever be preached? Did not God use him on the day the New Testament church was founded as his mouth, as his mouthpiece? That is what we must pay attention to.

In the second chapter of the Book of Acts we read of the mighty outpouring of the Holy Spirit, of being equipped with power from on high. And then of what followed, namely that the proclamation of the Gospel was accompanied by this spirit power of God. And so was fulfilled what Paul writes to the Romans in chapter 1, verses 16 and 17:

[16] ***For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.***

[17] ***For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.***

In Mark 16, the Lord gave the great commission: ***"Go ye therefore into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature."*** [Mk 16:15]

"These signs shall follow them that believe." [Mk 16:17]

And then those who believe are told, ***"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved."*** [Mk 16:16]

Today, when people are eight days or three weeks old, they are redeemed saved through a baptismal rite. That is in fact merely a sprinkling. And later, when they are able to think for themselves, they realize that they are not believers at all. They have a baptismal certificate, a confirmation certificate, one certificate after another,

and in the end they realize that it was all just a sham Christianity without a personal relationship and connection to God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

And so we believe that we have the serious and honest task of proclaiming the true Gospel to humanity as a message of salvation. Not merely as entertainment, but as a message of salvation, so that all who come to faith in Jesus Christ may be saved through him.

How often have I experienced this on my missionary journeys, whether Hindus, Muslims, the Buddhists, or whatever there may be. They all believe that they too have a share in God. But when we get to the heart of the matter, and we must get there, God help us, the heart of the matter is that there is only one personal revelation of God here on God's earth, and this personal revelation of God took place in Jesus Christ our Lord.

He was the only one who could say, "***Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.***" [Joh 14:9] Whoever saw Buddha saw a somewhat wayward Indian who first went to Nepal and then a little further. And whoever saw Muhammad saw a man who could neither read nor write, to whom his Khadija had to read the books aloud, who was in a cave where it was haunted. And whoever saw others, saw others. But whoever sees Jesus Christ with eyes anointed by the Spirit sees Immanuel, God with us. And that is why the Holy Scripture says, "***God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself.***" [2 Cor 5:19]

People have their ideas, their philosophies; one says, "When I go out into nature, I find God." In nature I find nature; when I stand before a tree, I see a tree. But I want to see God, I want to experience God. Do you understand what this is about? Not the pious philosophies that lead people past God, but the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which even today offers salvation, blessing, and deliverance to everyone who can believe in it with all their heart.

I know we cannot delve further into the Prophet Daniel, who speaks of the end times, nor into all the other Prophets to quote the Scriptures. After all, time is almost up. Let us just briefly consider this core point, and I would like to quote from the Prophet Isaiah chapter 40. I have already quoted it, but I would like to read it, Isaiah 40 from verse 1.

[1] ***Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God.***

[2] ***Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins.***

Then verse 3:

[3] ***The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord...***

We are in the Old Testament. Here the original text uses the word Yahweh, which is used in conjunction with Elohim, with God.

[3] ***Prepare ye the way of Yahweh, make straight in the desert a highway for our God*** [Elohim].

[4] ***Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low…***

And so forth.

Then verse 6:

[6] ***The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field:***

[7] ***The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass.***

[8] ***The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever.***

We who have grown older know this too. Especially when the ladies were young, they loved to look in the mirror. When things change, they no longer like to look in it so much. The people are like grass. One blossoms, the wind blows, one withers, and one passes away. Today we watch as someone walks across the street with a walking stick; tomorrow it will be us walking across the street with a walking stick. Life takes everyone along, no one is spared. Humanity is like the flower of the field. One blossoms, everything is glorious and full of joy, and then one realizes things are going downhill. One feels it in almost every limb. See, God has made it so. But during our lifetime, God gives us the chance to experience peace with him, to experience God's salvation, to have a personal encounter with God. Not to philosophize about the conversion of Saul to Paul, but to experience a personal conversion to Christ.

Sometimes people go from door to door, some with a Watchtower, and others with other things; they want to convert people. And when you ask where they are to be converted to, they say, "To our faith." To which faith? I don't want an "our faith." A conversion must always be to the Lord. "***Turn to God***", as it says in the Prophet Isaiah, "***all ye ends of the earth.***" [Isa 45:22] A true conversion to Jesus Christ is a conversion to the Almighty God. And we must not merely have known this, we must have experienced it.

In Isaiah 40, I shall read verses 10 and 11, so that everyone may know that Jesus Christ was not merely a man, but the Lord himself. Let me read it.

Isaiah 40, verse 10:

[10] ***Behold, the Lord God will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him.***

[11] ***He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.***

One must also know that God revealed himself personally in Christ. And that this revelation of the Father in the Son was essential for salvation. For God wishes to make us sons and daughters, and that is why he first had to reveal himself in the Son, so that he might become the firstborn among many brethren, and so that we too, who have been born again unto a living hope, might be allowed to be sons and daughters of God, born again of the same seed, through the same Word and the same Holy Spirit. That is very important. Perhaps I have simply heard too much of this in my missionary work, namely that Christ is compared with other founders of religions. And I cannot bear that at all. My Lord is incomparable to any human being on earth. My Lord is my God. And back then, Thomas declared very clearly, "***My Lord and my God.***" [Joh 20:28]

But there had to be a revelation of God as a human being. And mortality had to be guaranteed. For death had indeed penetrated all mankind. So someone had to come who is both God and man. Man so that he might die, God to swallow up death in victory, to conquer hell, and then emerge and rise again on the third day.

That is in fact the great mystery of the incarnation of God our Lord for our salvation and our bliss. For thus it is written: "***and so death passed upon all men.***" [Rom 5:12] And where would there be anyone who would have already escaped death? All have been taken away without being asked.

Paul made this particularly clear in his letter to the Romans and also to the Corinthians. I would like to read two or three scriptures. The first is from Romans chapter 3 from verse 21.

[21] ***But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets;***

[22] ***Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference:***

[23] ***For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;***

[24] ***Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:***

[25] ***Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;***

[26] ***To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.***

This is what Martin Luther experienced back then, divine justification through faith

in Jesus Christ, the crucified and risen one. No longer lighting candles, sliding on one's knees, performing the prayer, but having an experience of salvation, a personal experience of salvation with God, justified by faith.

Beloved, I have experienced it, and so have many among us. We must recognize a day in our lives when divine condemnation comes upon us, a condemnation that makes us see ourselves as separated from God, lost, condemned, without hope in this world. And then remorse and repentance take hold of us, and tears come, then the great lament begins, and we call upon the Lord with the words, "Have mercy on me, save my soul, and forgive all my iniquity and my sin." And when this prayer, this remorse, this repentance leads to conversion, then the peace and joy of God enter our hearts. Not the adoption of a new faith, but as it is written in the Gospel of John, chapter 1: ***"But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the children of God, even to them that believe on his name."*** [Joh 1:12]

We do not need a form of godliness, we need God. We do not need a nominal Christianity, we need Christ. Once we have understood this, we are on the right path and can have our connection with God.

I read from Romans 4 from verse 23:

[23] ***Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him;***

[24] ***But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead;***

[25] ***Who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification.***

Here we have before our eyes the divine act of salvation in Christ. Not a Christian doctrine, not a Christian tradition, not a Christian church, not Christian principles, but Jesus Christ. Truly, no other name has been given to mankind under heaven by which we may be saved. In him, God's salvation has been bestowed upon humanity. And I read from 2 Corinthians chapter 5.

2 Corinthians chapter 5 from verse 17:

[17] ***Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.***

[18] ***And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation.***

Imagine, "***and has given to us the ministry.***" When we serve God, when we minister with the Word, then we must point to God's reconciliation with humanity in Christ. Otherwise, we have preached past Christ and led people past him. And

it was him who cried out, "***Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest for your soul.***" [Mat 11:28]

Verse 19:

[19] ***To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.***

But that is not all. The apostle goes one step further:

[20] ***Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.***

[21] ***For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.***

That is the Gospel. That is the good news. God does not hold anything against us. There are, however, people who have done absolutely nothing wrong in their entire lives. But their claim of having done nothing wrong ends with them saying, "I haven't killed anyone, nor have I robbed a bank." So what does God want from me? My dear friends, this must be stated clearly, and you will be grateful to me, that I'm saying this: every person born into this world is born into it separated from God. A natural birth is a birth into sin and transgression. And that is why it is written in the Gospel of John chapter 3, ***"Marvel not that I said to you, ye must be born again."*** [Jn 3:7]

Otherwise no one can see the kingdom of God. ***"What is born of the flesh is flesh... and flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God... But what is born of the Spirit is spirit."*** [Jn 3:6, 1 Cor 15:50]

So every human being, whoever they may be, even if their great-grandfather was a man of God, or even a prophet, and their mother holy and their father even holier, birth occurs in the same way for all people who are born into this world.

With God, there is no distinction. All are born in sin, shut up in unbelief [Rom 11:32] so that God might have mercy on all, in Christ. And only those who truly understand that they are lost and separated from God will also understand why Jesus Christ, the Son of God, cried out on the cross of Calvary, ***"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"*** [Mt 27:46]

There he took upon himself your place and mine, your guilt and mine, all our sin, our separation from God. He took our place, died for you and for me. The curse that would have fallen upon us fell upon him. And that is why he did this for us and in our stead, and truthfully cried out, "***My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?***"

We were the ones forsaken by God. I know one thing: through sin, people are spiritually dead. And there are so many religious activities and programs that keep

them occupied, so that they do not come to their senses. And the preaching is always such that it does not strike the conscience. People stick to their old ways and are even encouraged. After all they are pious; they do go to church, are in the choir, do this and that, there are many Christian fellowships, everything Christian. What in the country is not Christian? Christian trade unions, everything Christian. No, not like that.

I'm not making fun of this; it pains me. I see the deception at every level. And when at the grave it is said, "It pleased God to take our brother into glory," and the brother did not want to go to God at all, he wanted nothing to do with God, the deception cries out to heaven.

May God grant grace that reconciliation in Christ may be preached once more, and that people may be given the opportunity to have their own personal experience with God.

Isaiah 53 is a chapter that describes the Lord on his path of suffering from Gethsemane to Golgotha.

It says here, in the last verses of chapter 52—Isaiah 52 and then 53:

[13] ***Behold, my servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high.***

[14] ***As many were astonied at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men:***

[15] ***So shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him: for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider.***

[1] ***Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?***

I then read verse 4:

[4] ***Surely he has borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.***

[5] ***But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.***

One could read this chapter in its entirety. I shall read verse 10:

[10] ***Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.***

Beloved, all the others whom I mentioned earlier as founders of religions, lived in splendor and joy. I believe it was Buddha, whom they cut into 12 pieces; everyone

wanted him, and so they each received a part of him. But none of them gave a promise; none rose again. Death and the devil took them all. But here was one who died for us. The sting of death struck him, and so we read it in the first promise, Genesis 3 verse 15, concerning the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent, ***"he will strike your heel, but you will crush his head."*** [Gen 3:15]

And that is why Paul was able to write to the Corinthians, ***"O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? … Thanks be to God, who has given us the victory through Jesus Christ, our Lord.***" [1 Cor 15:55, 57]

Not a founder of a religion, but the Lord of glory became man, became a servant for our sake, and took our place, becoming like us in every respect. He ate and drank, was tired and slept, and was found in fashion as a man. [Phil 2:8] And the people said, "***We know him, we know his mother, his brothers and sisters, all live among us.***" [Mt 13:55-56] And our Lord called out to the crowd, "***Who is my mother? Who are my brothers? Who are my sisters?***" [Mt 12:48] And he gives the answer: "***All who do the will of my heavenly Father, these are my mother, my brothers and my sisters.***" [Mt 12:50]

Beloved, this is not about religion, not about a new fellowship, not about a change of faith. It is about our entering into fellowship with God, about us receiving the reconciliation that took place in Christ. This new covenant, which was inaugurated and made legally binding in the blood of the Lamb, that we become children of the new covenant, that we experience God, are born again unto a living hope. [1 Pet 1:3] And then, when the time comes, or when our time is up, be truly certain that we will pass from believing unto seeing.

If I were to ask today, right now, how many truly have the certainty of faith, that they are the Lord's own, that they have experienced God, received peace with him, and the certainty of having experienced the forgiveness of all their sins? We read it in Psalm 103, ***"Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases."*** [Ps 103:3]

God is a good God. He did not want humanity to be lost, separated from him. He wanted humanity to live eternally, reconciled with him. And that is why we proclaim God's reconciliation through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

The others, as I mentioned earlier, they accuse us of believing in someone else besides God. I have had to hear this personally. People say, "You do not just believe in the one God, you also believe in Jesus Christ."

Let me make this clear: only those who truly believe in Jesus Christ from the heart truly believe in God.

And I will also tell you why I say that. Many believe that there might be some sort of God, however he may be conceived in people's minds. But that God has revealed himself in Christ for our salvation, that is what only a few believe, and that is precisely the point. For God did not become our Savior as the Father, but in the

Son. And that is why it is written, "***whoever believes in the Son of God has eternal life.***" [Jn 3:36]

One must simply see why God has revealed himself in this way. Today, all religions may say, "God is the Father of us all." But only those have God as their Father who have been born again through Jesus Christ, the Son of God, unto a living hope. All others do not. They have an earthly father, but not a Father in heaven. Only those who have truly been begotten by the Spirit of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, and the redemption and forgiveness accomplished in him, only such a person has the possibility of being saved.

We do indeed live in a deceitful age. Everyone wants to save the world. The Pope will soon save the whole world. And then it will be lost all the same. There is only one in whom we can truly believe and trust, and that is Jesus Christ, our Lord. And whoever has him, has God; whoever does not have him, does not have God.

It really is like that. That may be a bit hard to understand for some at the moment. But look, may I ask you, which of us would have known what God wants, who he is, who would have known anything, if God had not revealed himself personally in Christ?

Then we would have found it just as Paul did in Athens, in the midst of Mars Hill, "***to the unknown God***". [Act 17:23] He would have remained unknown; we would not have known who he is, what he is, what he wants, and so on.

In Christ, God has revealed himself and made his will known. And that is why he was able to say, "***Whoever has seen me, has seen the Father;*** [Jn 14:9] ***I and the Father are one.***" [Jn 10:30] The one is the revelation of God in the Spirit, in heaven; the other is the revelation of the same God in the flesh, on earth. So it had to be: the Word had to become flesh. John 1:1 and 14:

[1] ***In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.***

[14] ***And the Word became flesh, and dwelt amongst us.***

Beloved, we cannot, of course, delve into the depths in a talk like this. But I would like one thing to have been achieved today: that we have been awakened, shaken out of our slumber, that from today onwards, we will search the Bible, asking God to reveal himself and his will to us.

Let us summarize what today's gathering is all about.

It is about receiving from God an overview of the times in which we live, gaining certainty about the promises he has given us in his Word, and also about us, as human beings, recognizing God's will for us, for this life and for eternity, and asking him to give us the strength to be found in his will.

Please consider Matthew 7 from verse 21.

[21] ***Many will come to me on that day and say, "Lord, Lord, did we not perform great deeds, prophesy, cast out devils, and perform great signs and wonders?"***

And the Lord will look at them and say:

[23] ***Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity, I do not know you.***

God wants to make us into people who are reconciled with him, who have the adoption as sons [Gal 4:5], who have become not merely children of men, but children of God. [Jn 1:12] And furthermore, people who are also informed about what he desires and has promised in his Word.

We live today, we must know today what this is all about. And we can only do that if we find the relevant promises in the Word of God. Then we will also have the necessary guidance that we all need. Then we will not run after various teachings, but will take a firm stand before God in his Word. And thus, he will lead us to perfection.

We can say with absolute certainty, on the basis of the authority of the Word of God, that we are now living at the end of the last days.

And that the day of salvation and the time of grace is drawing to a close. That the last ones are being called out and snatched from the fire like a brand [Zech 3:2, Jude 1:23] so that the number may be complete and the Lord may come.