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Topic: Isaiah 28:17: "Justice also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet.!"

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Oh, how we would all love to reach the point where our lives belong to God and we take joy in serving the Lord, and then our strength will be in the joy of the Lord. [Neh 8:10]

May God, as has already been said, bless us all and be with us.

We are of course observing what is going on. Who knows what the greatest event of recent days has been? Who knows? I hear it now.

The greatest event of recent days was Operation Solomon. Over 15,000 Jews from Ethiopia were brought to Israel in a lightning operation. What a blessing!

In the past, they came individually, and then in ever-increasing numbers, and then it stopped. And lo and behold, the great Soviet Union opened up, and they came in their thousands. And now, this was truly a marvelous act of God's guidance and providence, they are returning in droves.

This tells me that time is running out and that God's people simply must enter the promised land, so that the Lord can and will reveal himself to them there, just as he has promised.

You know, this was made possible in the midst of Ethiopia's long-running civil war, and who made it possible? One might say George Bush, or one might say this person or that. No, we say: the hand of the Lord has done it, and God still directs hearts like rivers of water, and causes all things to happen gloriously for the honor and praise of his name. God is still on the throne and in control. Everything is subject to him.

I would like to read two or three scriptures from the prophetic Word in particular, which are intended to show us what is happening in these days, and it is not just beginning, it is coming to a conclusion.

No one needs to wait for all the Jews on Wall Street to return. God will see to it that those who belong to the elect are there. And that is what matters, for it is with them that God will begin.

In the prophet Jeremiah, there are several scriptures that follow on from one another so beautifully. Jeremiah chapter 30, verses 1 to 3.

Jeremiah chapter 30, 1 to 3:

[1] ***The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying,***

[2] ***Thus speaketh the Lord God of Israel, saying, Write thee all the words that I have spoken unto thee in a book.***

[3] ***For, lo, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel and Judah, saith the Lord: and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it.***

Thus has the mouth of the Lord spoken, and thus it is coming to pass before our very eyes.

Brother Branham made such an excellent and apt statement on this subject: **God can only bless Israel when it is in the land he has given them as an inheritance.**

And then he adds: **God can only bless the church when it is in possession of the promises God has given for this time.**

And that is really what matters.

It has been said here: '***Thus says the Lord.***' I like this phrasing: not the prophet Jeremiah, not a man, the Lord.

[2] Thus speaketh the Lord God of Israel, saying, Write thee all the words that I have spoken unto thee in a book.

How often have we said it: there were men on earth who were so closely connected to God, who heard his voice just as you now hear my voice, men to whom the Lord God spoke. And as it is recorded in Hebrews 1, ***"God spoke to the fathers through the prophets, and in these last days, he has spoken to us through his Son."*** [Heb 1:1–2]

And then comes the promise:

"***For, lo, the days come...***"

Today we can say: "the time is here, the time is fulfilled, the time has come."

"For, lo, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel and Judah..."

And then again: ***"...saith the Lord: and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it."*** [Jer 30:3]

In parallel with Israel, God is also leading the church from the nations into the promised land, into the promised Word in these days. And blessed are all the believers who can take the words of promise for our time to heart and believe them wholeheartedly.

In Jeremiah chapter 30, from verse 10, perhaps verses 10 and 11, it says:

[10] ***Therefore fear thou not, O my servant Jacob, saith the Lord; neither be dismayed, O Israel: for, lo, I will save thee from afar, and thy seed from the land of their captivity; and Jacob shall return, and shall be in rest, and be quiet, and none shall make him afraid.***

[11] ***For I am with thee, saith the Lord, to save thee: though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee: but I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished.***

This word too shall be fulfilled. The nations will face their punishment. Israel will be saved from all its sorrow, distress, and tribulation.

Now from the prophet Isaiah, the well-known word in chapter 14. Isaiah chapter 14, verse 1. Most people are of course familiar with these scriptures. Yet we rejoice beyond measure when we can exclaim: today, this scripture has been fulfilled in our hearing.

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.***

One could read many scriptures on this subject. Thanks be to the Lord, who knew the end even before the beginning, who knew in advance the entire course of events concerning Israel and the nations, as well as that of the church, and had it written down so that we might have a guide and know in what age we are living.

Politically too, we hear it time and again from authoritative sources, it is not limited to the Western unification of Europe. The whole of Europe is part of it, with a European Central Bank, all one great house under one great roof, and so on, so that it may be fulfilled that they must all surrender their power until the words of God are fulfilled. [Revelation 17:17]

And so, we are actually grateful that military blocks are disintegrating and are falling apart, so that the final world empire may arise, and thus the final phase before the return of Jesus Christ may take its course. And we as believers may lift up our heads, for we know that our redemption is drawing near.

I would now like to read a few scriptures from the New Testament. In recent sermons, we have emphasized that the proclamation of the Word must be the same at the end

as it was at the beginning, that God's Word is unchangeable. And when God speaks today, he says what he would have said yesterday and what he will say tomorrow. People change their minds and their decisions, they regret having said or done this or that. God's decisions are perfect, and all his words are purified seven times, as written in a psalm. [Psa 12:6] We can rely on God and God's Word.

Brother Russ has already read this wonderful passage as an opening word from 2 Timothy chapter 2. 2 Timothy chapter 2, here I would like to highlight verse 9 in particular.

2 Timothy 2, verse 9:

[9] ***Wherein I suffer trouble, as an evil doer, even unto bonds; but the Word of God is not bound.***

I believe that most of us can testify that the Word of God is quick and powerful, that it penetrates, that it separates soul from spirit, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart, as we are told in Hebrews chapter 4, verse 12.

Paul, a preacher of the Word of God, was put in chains and imprisoned, but the Word he preached was not imprisoned, it was not bound. It was free and set others free who heard it. They were blessed. So it remains to this day.

Our Lord's message is a message of salvation, a liberating, divine message.

And Paul does indeed refer to this, namely to the gospel, to the message of salvation, with this in mind, he says:

[9] ***Wherein I suffer trouble, as an evil doer, even unto bonds; but the Word of God is not bound.***

Beloved, as I read this here, I wish that this evening, in this service, it might become evident that God's Word is alive and gives life, that God's Word is not bound, but is free and sets us free, so that it may become evident that we do not merely preach, but that the fruit of the preaching might become visible in our lives.

In Ephesians chapter 6, we find a passage that brings to mind Paul's chains. Ephesians chapter 6, verses 18 to 20.

[18] ***Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;***

[19] ***And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel,***

[20] ***For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.***

True men of God took the proclamation of the gospel very seriously. Just as the prophets received revelation through inspiration and passed it on with holy earnest-

ness, so the apostles received the same Word through the same inspiration and passed it on with full responsibility before God.

And Paul says here: '***Whenever I open my mouth.***' Not just once, or on occasion, or now and then, but "***whenever, every time I open my mouth, the Word is given to me.***"

My soul cries out to God: 'Lord, grant this to me too by your grace.'

Whenever the mouth of a messenger of God opens, may the mystery of Christ, indeed all the mysteries of God, who are hidden on the one hand, yet revealed on the other, flow into the sermon, so that we may not merely hear knowledge, but receive revelation fresh from the throne and be filled with the Holy Spirit and with power from on high.

This is what God desires. We see it and we emphasize it once more.

Paul is not ashamed to ask that prayers be offered for him. Not that he might prosper, that the chains may fall away, that his imprisonment might cease, or that his suffering might come to an end. That is not what he prays for.

From an earthly perspective, we would like a life without trials, carried gloriously above the clouds so that we may not stumble over any stone. But God knows the paths he must take with his people.

"***Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth...***"

Thanks be to God for such a man, for such an apostle.

'***Whenever I open my mouth.***' What did he mean by that? When I open my mouth, God is to speak through me. Then they should not be human words, but the words of God. Then it is not a human plan that is to be proclaimed, but the counsel of God.

[19] ***And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel.***

The mystery of the gospel.

If we were to ask today: 'What is this mystery of the gospel?' Who could give an answer to that?

Many preach, but they preach past God, because they have not been introduced to this mystery of God concerning Christ and the church through revelation.

They have an intellectual faith that has taken root in them on the basis of a certain understanding, and they think that this will lead to their salvation.

Faith, as Brother Branham rightly said, must become a revelation, and only then does it ignite. And when that divine spark is present, the matter slips from the mind

into the heart, from knowledge and understanding to a blessed revelation, which is then bestowed upon each individual by God, by his grace.

In Galatians chapter 2, in that well-known passage where Paul was having a dispute with some brothers, he testified…

Galatians chapter 2, verse 4 and 5:

[4] ***And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage:***

[5] ***To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour;***

Now comes the reasoning:

[5] ***…that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.***

Paul had no choice, he could not make compromises in order to bring the matter to a successful conclusion on his own part.

A matter is only brought to a successful conclusion if God has begun it and can see it through to the end. Anything else is doomed to failure.

Sometimes, I too have meant well and thought: 'Well, perhaps…' Such thoughts can occur to anyone. But when it comes down to it and matters get serious, we have no choice, then there's no room for compromise.

God must have his way. And if God is to have his way, then his Word must be placed upon the lampstand, and only then will he have his way.

So, this reason for not having given in is therefore justified: "***that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.***"

Just think of all that has been taught, interpreted, and proclaimed over the course of almost 2,000 years since the early Christian era, and everyone has invoked and continues to invoke God, Holy Scripture, and so on.

It is therefore essential to find the truth as it has been handed down here in the Word of God, namely in its original form.

And whilst it may sometimes seem as though we have nothing else to do but repeatedly emphasize what really matters, but we must, and I'll tell you why: because it is not being done anywhere else. I know a thing or two about this.

And when I say here today that compromises are being made everywhere, even when people are completely unaware of it, I'm happy to admit that there are evangelists, even great evangelists, who believe, as well as preachers, men of God, lay people, or whoever they may be, that they are convinced they are serving the Lord correctly and rightly divide the Word. [2 Tim 2:15]

But then comes the guideline, then comes the standard that must be applied, and it happens in the same way all over the country. The standard is always applied to others, and is always one's own standard, and one's own standard is a creation of one's own making. It does not fit at all into God's design or God's plan.

If we are in the kingdom of God, then the standards of the kingdom of God must be applied. And if we belong to the New Testament church, then the standards of the New Testament church must be applied.

One cannot measure or preach past God. One must face God, and that only happens where one faces up to his Word.

Martin Luther in his day said something truly marvelous about the pope, basing his words on 2 Thessalonians 2, where it is written that this Antichrist will exalt himself above all things, and so on. And then in his preface to the book of Daniel, Martin Luther writes: "No human being on earth can exalt himself above God himself, who is highly exalted in glory." And then he takes this step and says: "This man of sin exalts himself above the God of the Scriptures, namely, above the Word of God who became flesh." [Jn 1:14] And with that, he has hit the nail right on the head and driven it in even further.

You all know, anyone who is a bit handy—I'm not, but a nail only holds once the head has been driven in flush. As long as you can still see the head sticking up, nothing is properly nailed down.

Oh yes, there were men of God who in their time had already received the revelation of that part of the Word which had to be placed upon the lampstand.

Let us return to this Word here. Paul knew what he had to do. He was aware of his responsibility.

And look at what it was actually all about. It was about ensuring that the New Testament church would receive a guiding principle regarding faith, doctrine, and practice for all time. And that is why the New Testament was given as a measuring rod, a standard, by which all things must be measured, and how things should be done.

I would like to read from 1 Timothy. And we kindly ask that the aim here is merely to draw a comparison, namely, with the church in early Christianity, and with the preaching that existed in the early days of Christianity.

In 1 Timothy chapter 4, verse 6, Paul writes…

1 Timothy chapter 4, verse 6:

[6] ***If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained.***

Or "which you have taken as your guiding principle."

Anyone can repeat and say, "***Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word.***" [Mat 4:4, Luk 4:4] But if the person who uses this saying is not prepared to heed every word, to face up to every Word, and to believe the whole Word, then that person is deceiving themselves.

So we must make all of God's words our guide, and thus the words of faith, and our spiritual nourishment. For as it is written: "***Man does not live by bread alone.***" [Mat 4:4, Luk 4:4] Nor does he live on a little here and a little there. He lives on the Lord's table laid out in its entirety, on the whole Word.

I shall read again:

[6] ***If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained.***

"Which you have taken as your guiding principle."

That is what matters, dear brothers and sisters, dear friends—a return to the true teaching, which is true nourishment, a return to the guide that has been left to us in the Word of God.

Then comes the admonition in verse 7:

[7] ***But refuse profane and old wives' fables...***

Thankfully, we have none of those amongst us today.

[7] ***But refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself rather unto godliness.***

[8] ***For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.***

This is about a promise, not merely a promise that applies in this life, but a promise that applies for all eternity.

For God, as we have often enough said, is eternal, and his plan must therefore be an eternal plan. And that is why he has incorporated us into this eternal plan himself and guided us so that we may be with him for all eternity.

And now comes verse 9:

[9] ***This is a faithful saying and worthy...***

Indeed, if the Word were not trustworthy, what then would be trustworthy? Heaven and earth will pass away, but God's Word remains forever.

As you know, ever since the days of Bultmann, one of the greatest theologians in the German-speaking world, the miracles of the New Testament have been treated with skepticism. Indeed, everything supernatural has been treated with skepticism.

He really wanted to make Jesus Christ of Nazareth nothing more than a human being, a Jew, perhaps of a special kind, and chose the scripture: "***Behold, what a man!***" [Joh 19:5] One can take anything from the Bible, and anyone can take anything from it and then twist it to one's own destruction [2 Pet 3:16]. But what I actually wanted to say is the sad fact that unbelief has been sown from the pulpits.

When Pastor Schults in Hamburg stepped up to the pulpit—it was only three and a half years ago—he said, "I don't believe in anything at all, certainly not what is written in the Bible." I think you all read it in our weekly magazines. That was the seed sown by such men who called themselves theologians, who were even professors, but who had no living hope, had had no personal experience of God, no connection to God, no access through revelation to the spiritual sources of life.

And so they spoke from their knowledge, which was shrouded in ignorance. Only he to whom the Lord has spoken should speak in the Lord's name. And when God has spoken, then his words are in our mouths.

And then we can pray, as Paul prays: "May I always speak in this way, and each time with a joyful opening of my mouth, as is pleasing to you, O Lord."

We see that the guiding principle is spoken of here because you make the words of faith and sound doctrine your nourishment. It also depends on sound doctrine, not on teaching alone, but once people have become believers, once they have experienced God, been born again, and become the Lord's own, then they have the right to be taught in accordance with Scripture. For this is simply a core element of the proclamation, that the true and sound doctrine is passed on.

In 2 Timothy chapter 3, we read a similar passage. 2 Timothy chapter 3… Sorry, I mean 2 Timothy 3 verse 10:

[10] ***But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, patience…***

Here was a role model. Paul was able to say: "***Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.***" [1 Cor 11:1] His example was Christ, and he could say: "***Be ye followers of me.***" His life, his teaching, his practice, his preaching, were exemplary in character and remain valid for us all, even today.

[10] ***But thou hast fully known my doctrine…***

Can all preachers in every denomination say the same? Do they all possess the teaching as it was given to Paul by God, namely, through the revelation of Jesus Christ? [Gal 1:12]

Beloved, I cannot read minds, but one might suspect that once again someone is thinking, "Is that Word really so important?" Oh yes, and I'll tell you why: from the very beginning, Satan has twisted the Word. It began as far back as the garden of Eden, and he continues right up to the last days.

God had spoken. Finish. The enemy came and, first of all, cast doubt: "***Did God really say?***" [Gen 3:1] And then when it comes to the trees, the singular is turned into the plural, and the plural into the singular. They were still trees, but the matter has been twisted.

I can see that brothers well-versed in the Bible are now looking it up. You can all look this up with confidence in Genesis 3 to see what God said in Genesis 2, and then compare it with Genesis chapter 3.

One must take the matter of God and God's Word very seriously. The enemy has twisted the Word just a little. God had said: "***You may eat from all the trees, but please not from that one.***" [Gen 2:16-17] And the enemy turned it round: "***Did God say you must not eat from any of the trees?***" [Gen 3:1] Look it up. It was still about trees, but the trap had been set and the distortion was there.

You must not just read; you must examine what you read. One must not merely listen to a sermon; one must examine whether it is consistent and in the correct context.

Even when the Lord Jesus was tempted by the enemy for 40 days in the wilderness, it went like this: "***It is written...***" and again: "***It is written...***" And our Lord said: "***It is also written, 'Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.'***" [Mt 4:7, Lk 4:12] The enemy can also quote scriptures, but he takes them out of context and twists them to the destruction of those who listen to him.

And that is why it is so important to keep God's Word crystal clear, to take it into our hearts, so that we may then experience the full effect of the Word.

In Romans 1 verse 18, Romans 1 verse 18, we have a very beautiful comparison, which is then linked to verse 17. Perhaps we could read it together. Romans chapter 1 verse 18. Here it says:

[18] ***For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness.***

Woe to the person who unjustly suppresses divine truth and does not allow it to come to light.

Bible truths are meant to be placed on the lampstand so that the darkness may give way, and we may see the path we are to follow.

Paul explains this very clearly here in connection with Romans 1:16 and 17. These two verses are very familiar to us all:

[16] ***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.***

And now comes:

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

Now, in connection with this, read it through without interruption:

[18] ***For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness.***

The truth comes to light; it breaks through, but it has been suppressed time and time again. Throughout the ages, whenever it happened, whenever Bible truths came to light, there was the pious fire brigade that would gladly have nipped every fire of revival in the bud. But God has also watched over all these revivals, and as we have explained, it moved from clarity to clarity and from knowledge to knowledge. It was never possible to put a stop to the matter, whether in the days of the Reformation or in all the revivals that followed. Time and again, God has made a new beginning with those who did not stand still, but were prepared to take courageous, spiritual steps forward.

And so it is in our own day as well. There is always a remnant from all churches and denominations who break free from spiritual bondage so that they may then serve and follow the Lord freely and joyfully.

So, the wrath of God will come upon all who suppress the truth in unrighteousness. [Rom 1:18] One cannot emphasize the biblical truth of salvation and all that is connected with it highly enough.

Blessed is the person who hears this true message from God and no longer allows anything to be suppressed, but on the contrary, who experiences freedom in the Spirit, according to the Scripture: "***Whom the Son sets free is free indeed.***" [Jn 8:36]

But whoever wishes to be set free must call upon him, according to the words of Psalm 2. Do you all know this passage? There too lies the gospel. Whoever wishes to be saved cannot simply say, "Heavenly Father, have mercy on me." They must call upon the Son of God, for it is in the Son of God that our salvation has been accomplished. And that is why it is written in Psalm 2 verses 11 and 12:

[11] ***Serve the Lord with fear...***

Here the word Yahweh appears in the Old Testament. [11] ***Serve Yahweh with fear, and rejoice with trembling.***

[12] ***Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.***

Indeed, in whom else should we trust? Brother Russ already said it in the opening word: there is no other name under heaven given to man by which they may be

saved except the name of Jesus. [Acts 4:12] And whoever believes in the Son of God has eternal life, but whoever does not believe in him does not have life. [Jn 3:36]

How many scriptures could we read on this subject? We shall now turn to Romans 3, another truly wonderful passage often quoted. Romans 3 verse 26, referring to God, it states:

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

Here we see what kind of righteousness is at stake, where it is written that the truth is suppressed by unrighteousness. [Rom 1:18] Here it speaks of divine righteousness. God himself wished and had to remain righteous. And so it came to pass that in Christ he made amends for all wrongs, imputed nothing to us, and placed us before his face as though we had never sinned. He has removed the middle wall of partition [Eph 2:14]. This "***My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?***" [Mt 27:46, Mk 15:34, Ps 22:1] has been transformed into "My God, you have reconciled me to yourself." "***For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself.***" [2 Cor 5:19] And so we proclaim this glorious, life-giving, divine message of salvation. Jesus Christ, the only way, the truth, and the life. [Jn 14:6] Let no one seek other ways. One way that leads to the goal is enough. And we have found this one way. Thank God for that.

One more word from the prophet Isaiah chapter 28, also very well known, as regards rest in God, and so forth. We have indeed been told many things here. I shall read from Isaiah 28 verses 16 and 17, perhaps including the last part of verse 15 as well:

[15] ***...for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves:***

[16] ***Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth will not be put to shame.***

What a marvelous word! What is this about? Not about Peter, who was just a stone. We are all stones and are being built up together unto a spiritual house, to offer living sacrifices to God. [1 Pet 2:5]

This is about the foundation stone, the cornerstone, and today it is about the capstone. For the cornerstone is also the capstone.

He who began will also finish, and he will finish in our days what he has begun.

We are living in the last days, in a time when Bible prophecy is being fulfilled before our very eyes.

What a privilege God has bestowed upon us by his grace!

Let us rejoice in this and give him the glory.

But now comes verse 17, which I would really like to highlight.

[17] ***Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies…***

I wish that God through his Word would send down such a storm upon some houses that have erected a roof of lies, so that all these roofs under which they think they are sheltered, and God declares them as refuge of lies; anything that does not accord with God and God's Word, no matter how beautifully constructed it may be, is a canopy of lies and it must be torn away.

It is written: ***"Blessed is the man who dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High and under the shadow of the Almighty."*** [Ps 91:1]

And that is what we want, not what we have read here. I shall read it again:

[17] ***Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet…***

These are the divine decrees. And for this to work properly, the hail must come down to tear away the refuge of lies.

As it is written here:

[17] ***…and the waters shall overflow the hiding place.***

Oh, that God's word might pour forth, oh, that it might come down in a most mighty way, as Paul said, that we might take captive everything that sets itself up against the knowledge of Christ and destroy the strongholds of Satan through faith in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord! [2 Cor 10:4–5]

All the shelters of falsehood will collapse. They cannot stand before God.

Jesus said, ***"I will build my church…"*** [Mat 16:18], not the 312 denominations now united in the World Council of Churches.

He is building his church, not just anywhere on sand, but on himself, the rock of righteousness, as was revealed to Peter by grace.

And here it is indeed said to us:

[16] …***I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation.***

And I'm not twisting the Word when I say, just as firmly as he is founded, so are all those founded upon him, the rock, of whom he himself said, ***"On this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."*** [Mat 16:18]

Do you believe this? That is the truth. May God grant us the grace to allow ourselves to be incorporated into this building.

Before he can build and take us under his protection and shelter, he must bring down the canopy of lies, as we have read here, and wash the whole thing away, so that people may come to their senses and realize that they have been spiritually deceived and led astray.

They felt safe, it was like a refuge, but it was a refuge of lies, as it is written here:

[17] …***and hail will fall upon these canopies of lies.***

And then those who are destined to experience salvation will come out and find their shelter and refuge in the Lord, and will realize that it is not man-made canopies of lies under which we can find safety, but truly only under the shelter of the Most High, under the shadow of the Almighty, who says to us all here in connection with the laying of the foundation: ***"Whoever believes will not be put to shame."*** [Isa 28:16]

And this is followed by verse 17:

[17] ***Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet…***

And Paul says "***that those who suppress the truth in unrighteousness…***" [Rom 1:18] and there are many who tell people many things and put on a show in the name of the Lord without it being in accordance with God and God's Word.

Do we truly believe? Do we believe as Scripture says? Then we shall not be put to shame. Then we are firmly founded on the cornerstone.

Let the winds rage, let the downpour fall, and let the floods run their course; by grace we shall stand firm, because we are not built on sand, but founded on the rock.

Beloved, this is what matters. We must know this, not merely accept it, we must know that this is how it is.

And it is so, if we believe according to the Bible, and let ourselves be aligned by this Scripture, "***that in Zion a foundation stone is laid, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone.***" [Isa 28:16]

But back then, it was precisely the builders who rejected this precious cornerstone.

What benefit did all their labor bring them? Only harm. They had erected a canopy of lies and thought they were safe beneath it. The Lord tore it all down, for he himself was the truth and proclaimed the truth. And all his servants and prophets did the same. So too did the apostles and those sent by God.

There, wherever God can reveal to a person what is right in his eyes and serves as a guiding principle for him, whoever is granted this through revelation from the Lord will immediately see where the canopy of lies is.

It is not what people have established that constitutes the canon or canon law for us, but what God has said in his word, now and forever. And let all the people say, Amen!

For we are part of this Word, and we are founded on Jesus Christ, this unshakable, tried, precious cornerstone. And just as he can only be known by revelation, so too we can only enter into him by revelation, through the revelation of the Holy Spirit, which is given to us by God by his grace.

Let us summarize. God has a church on earth throughout the ages, beginning with the New Testament, nearly 2,000 years ago.

Alongside this true church, there were various movements: one became the Roman Catholic Church, another the Greek Orthodox, the Russian Orthodox, the Coptic Church—there are so many denominations.

Then came the Lutheran Church, the Calvinist Church, the Church of England, many others and more and more. But in the midst of all that came and went, the Lord built his church. And the Lord knows his own, and his own heed his Word. They take it seriously, and they flee lest they perish when the canopy of lies collapses.

And I tell you this: by the time of the return of Jesus Christ, at the very latest, everything will have collapsed. Jesus Christ alone will be proved right, and all others will be found to be in the wrong.

Here the Lord himself says:

[17] ***Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies.***

Do you realize the context in which this Word is written? Paul refers to some verses earlier in his letter to the Corinthians from Isaiah 28, where it is written here in verse 12:

[12] ***To whom he said, This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing: yet they would not hear.***

Look, one must listen. It is not enough simply to hear the sermon with our ears. We must pray that God will open something within us so that we may receive it.

The prophet Isaiah proclaimed, "***They have eyes, but do not see, they have ears, but do not hear, and their hearts have grown callous.***" [Isa 6:9–10]

Blessed is the person to whom God speaks. Blessed is the person who is then safe under his shelter, in his shadow, and in his presence.

Blessed is the one who knows: I am not in an edifice of lies with a roof of lies, with false apostles, but I am in the church of the living God, which is the pillar and foundation of the truth, and that we are built upon this unshakable, tried, precious cornerstone, Jesus Christ, our Lord, and hence, the solemn proclamation.

Who would want to remain in a building over which a roof of lies has been spread? It will collapse when everything collapses, according to Hebrews, where it is written: ***"God will once more shake heaven and earth, and everything that can be shaken will be shaken."*** [Heb 12:26–27]

Do not worry, of all the churches and denominations, of all the fellowships, only the church of Jesus Christ, our Lord, will endure.

In him alone are we safe for time and eternity. We have not only placed our hope in him in this life—no, we carry within us a blessed, eternal, living hope.

And this hope does not lead to disappointment, but to the fulfillment of what we believe. And we believe as Scripture has said.

We also believe this Word: ***"…cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing…"*** [Is 28:12]

Dear heart, a hymn writer sings:

There is rest for the poor, weary heart,

In the wounds of the Lamb of God all pain is soothed.

There you find rest in God, there you rest from your own works.

Then you no longer have to do this or that, as our beloved brother said in that brief conversation, then outwardly one no longer needs to do this or that of one's own accord.

No, then one rests in what God has done for us in Christ, and we find rest from all our own works.

For this is what I wish to tell you: whoever wishes to be saved on the basis of their own works will still be busy on the very last day before the rapture and will not have finished. But whoever rests in the work of God, in the work of redemption that took place on Golgotha, finds rest in God.

They receive peace with God.

As a hymn writer sings to us:

When peace like a river attendeth my way…

Today in this very place, we can experience God.

All the shelters of falsehood are to be torn down, so that people may go forth freely and be established upon the unshakable foundation, upon the cornerstone, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

As has been said here, this is the guiding principle:

"Justice will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet." [Is 28:17]

We read earlier from Romans 3 that God himself is and remains righteous, and that everyone whom he has justified is justified. And no one must tamper with this, but must leave it as it is, experience it as such, believe it, and find peace in God.

My dear heart, accept this for yourself quite personally today and say, 'Lord, I too have tried this and that, I thought that by doing so, whatever it may be, I might somehow please you. Grant me the grace to recognize today that it is only in him on whom your well-pleasing rested, I myself have become well-pleasing to you.'

Matthew 3:

"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." [Mat 3:17]

Matthew 17:

"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him." [Mat 17:5]

God's well-pleasing can rest only upon those who are in Christ.

And may it come to pass that we become true believers, are edified and are baptized by the Holy Spirit into one body, a living organism at God's disposal.

May the Lord bless us all. May he cause his Word to grow ever greater within us. May he grant us the grace to take it as our guiding principle and our plummet, as our standard for all things, and then we shall know that the Lord is with us, as he was with our fathers.

And that he will now bless us at the end just as he blessed at the beginning.

To him, the living God, be praise and honor, glory and worship, now and forever. Amen.

Dear Lamb of God, we come to you, our Redeemer.

You have redeemed us, not with gold or silver, but with your precious, holy blood.

We belong to you. We are your possession.

Beloved Lord, have mercy on us all.

O Son of God, do not pass us by.

When you were on earth, people cried out, '***Son of David, have mercy on me.***' [Luk 18:38]

Today we cry out, 'Son of God, have mercy on us.'

Oh, how we would love to embrace you, we would love to kiss you, O Lord, as it is written: ***"Kiss the Son, lest he be angry..."*** [Ps 2:12]

Lord, embrace him, welcome him, accept him, receive him. Then salvation comes, then forgiveness comes, then everything comes. And then the wrath of God subsides.

Then the wrath is over.

Dear Lamb of God, you bore the punishment, the wrath, the sicknesses, the sin, the guilt, you bore it all.

You bore all of God's wrath, for the law has to do with punishment and wrath.

That is why it is written: ***"whoever remains an unbeliever, upon him rests the wrath of God."*** [Jn 3:36]

In Christ, this wrath is taken away from us.

Son of God, Jesus Christ, our Lord and Redeemer, we accept you, we welcome you, we wish to embrace you, we welcome you.

Be gracious to us and accept us, forgive us everything, O Lord, all guilt, every sin, every injustice, every transgression.

Wash us in Jesus' precious blood, in the cleansing flood of grace.

Lord, to you alone I will dedicate my life, now and forever, I am yours.

Let everyone speak these words to their God and tell him so.

Let us also sing the chorus together. Who knows how it begins? I believe '*Wash me in Jesus' precious blood…*' Do you know it?

Wash me in Jesus' precious blood,

In the cleansing flood of grace;

Lord, to you alone I wish to dedicate my life,

Now and forever I am yours.

Wash me in Jesus' precious blood,

In the cleansing flood of grace;

Lord, to you alone I wish to dedicate my life,

Now and forever I am yours.

Can you all say Amen to that? Amen.